

**COSHOCTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
2007 STATE OF THE COMMISSIONERS ADDRESS**

**Submitted by Dane R. Shryock  
2007 Chairman of the Board**

OPENING STATEMENT

2007 has been an extremely productive year for the Coshocton County Commissioners. As we, the Board of Commissioners, address the various issues that affect Coshocton County we are also citizens of this county, and are very aware of the changing times in Coshocton County, and how it has affected our daily lives. As we have welcomed over one hundred and eighty million dollars worth of expansion and job creation at places like AEP Conesville, Kraft, Coshocton Ethanol, Ohio Heritage Bank, Annin, Frontier Power and Propane, Intrinergy and other various employers, we realized just how vulnerable our economy was with the announcement and relocation of Pretty Products, LLC.

The relocation of Pretty Products reminds me of just how flat our world has become. Several years ago a friend introduced me to a book called *The World is Flat*, by Thomas Friedman. I encourage you and other citizens of this community to follow his recommendations and read this book as it will explain to you why the job loss and economic loss has taken place in Coshocton and also how we as a community must change and educate ourselves so that we can move Coshocton forward. It was announced last week that five out of every six jobs in southeastern Ohio, including Coshocton County, will require a post secondary education. So, in closing my opening paragraph I would like to welcome The Coshocton Campus of COTC and Muskingum College to its new permanent location at Roscoe Village, as education is the future and the hope for Coshocton County.

NEW COMMISSIONERS

We the Board of Commissioners opened our first meeting of the year by welcoming Mr. Gary Fischer to the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Fischer brings to the Board over eleven years serving as the mayor of Warsaw and he served twelve years prior to being mayor on the village council in Warsaw. Along with his prior public service Commissioner Fischer brings a number of years of running a private business with his family in Warsaw and Danville.

On April 15, 2007, Commissioner Kathy Thompson resigned her position as Coshocton County Commissioner and accepted the position as Director of the Coshocton Foundation. As a result of her resignation, the Central Republican Committee met and installed Larry Stahl, a thirty year Adams Township Trustee as well as a long time farmer and business man in that township, to fill her position and so the Board welcomed the second new Commissioner , Mr. Stahl on May 17, 2007.

## OFFICE SPACE

The Board of Commissioners over the past several years had struggled with office space at 349 ½ Main Street in Coshocton and also with the fact that they were not handicap accessible. So, when the Home Loan Savings Bank announced they were moving to a new location, the Commissioners agreed to lease their existing building at 401 Main Street. As a result of that lease, we were able to sub-lease office space in the same building to the Coshocton County Chamber of Commerce, the Coshocton Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Coshocton Port Authority. This move has created a very convenient partnership for the public. In turn with the joining of these offices into one building, we have renamed the building The Coshocton County Progress Center. With the moving of the Commissioners Office to the Progress Center, this allowed several other offices to utilize the open office space in the Annex Building. The County Auditor's Office expanded their offices upstairs, Tax Map moved their offices to the end of the hallway, The County Dog Warden's Office was moved to the Annex Building, Regional Planning was given new office space and Coshocton County Coordinated Transportation moved from the Buckeye Building, to the Annex Building which saved the county lease and utility payments that were incurred at the Buckeye Building.

## PERSONNEL CHANGES

The Commissioners office in 2007 realized numerous personnel changes. They are as follows, Robin Schonauer was promoted to the newly created position of Fiscal Officer for the Commissioners Office, and Jennifer LaVigne was hired as a receptionist in the Commissioners Office, Mr. Andrew Jones was hired as Regional Planning Director and approximately six months later resigned and took a position with the Coshocton County Engineer's office. He was replaced at the end of the year by Mrs. Tiffany Swigert. Additionally, Chad Lawrence was hired into our I.T. department as a Programmer, Tyler McKee was hired in the Maintenance Department to fill our post-secondary employment opportunity, Bob Walsh was hired in the Vehicle Maintenance Department and Steve Cox was hired as an Enforcement Officer with the Dog Warden Office.

In February of 2007 the Coshocton Port Authority announced the hiring of a new Port Authority Director, Mr. T.J. Justice. Mr. Justice has been a very positive influence here in Coshocton and we the Board of Commissioners welcome him and the experience that he brings to this position. The Commissioners continued their support of his office in 2007 with their annual contribution of \$40,000. Additionally in late 2007 the Commissioners gave a one time payment of \$10,000 to his office, bringing their total contribution to \$50,000 for 2007. It should be noted that we budgeted \$55,000 for the 2008 annual contribution. Additionally, we have offered our support in the form of letters, resolutions, and enterprise zone discussions on various projects that he is working on such as, the West Lafayette Industrial Park and the Coshocton –Dresden Ohio 16 Connection.

## COMMISSIONER PROJECTS/EMPLOYEES/PROGRAM RECOGNITION

- We made a change from the use of an insurance broker to a consulting firm at the recommendation of the Clerk/Administrator, Mary Beck, who handles the county insurance benefit program for all the county employees. Mrs. Beck made this suggestion after researching several options for the county and determining that the best possible savings for the county would be to utilize a company that will constantly look at the county's plan and trends in healthcare today. This company also negotiates with other companies for the stop-loss coverage, prescription coverage and administrative coverage to get the best pricing for the county. As a result we were able to find reductions and savings in a number of areas that totaled \$85,000 for the county health plan.
- The Commissioners office partnered with Job and Family Services to pave the parking lot at that facility with the Commissioners Office funding \$40,000 of this project with formula grant money. The remainder of the money came from Job and Family Services.
- The Commissioners Office had the county personnel manual rewritten which included new changes that took effect July 1, 2007 as required by law.
- We received a \$60,000 grant from Ohio Department of Transportation to help support the Coshocton County Coordinated Transportation efforts which was \$12,000 more than we had anticipated.
- The Commissioners want to recognize employee Pat Harsh, Safety Coordinator for the Commissioner's Office, for her efforts in working with the Bureau of Worker's Compensation for Coshocton County. As a result of her attending the various safety meetings that were required, we were able to receive a check in the amount of \$8000 from the Bureau of Worker's Compensation.
- We received word that Coshocton County Memorial Hospital's operating levy of one-half mill that had been previously approved by the Commissioners back in the late 70s and has been their operating levy for its emergency room doctors, was not going to be renewed by them. This would result in a one-half mill levy not being put back on the ballot.
- The Commissioners also went to four other counties which were Knox, Perry, Muskingum and Fairfield to look at their animal shelters and dog programs.

## CHIP PROGRAM

After two years of failing to get funding for the county's Community Housing Improvement Program (CHIP) through the Ohio Department of Development we contracted with Mr. John Cleek of CDC of Columbus, Ohio to have him apply for the 2007 CHIP grant. As a result of his efforts, Coshocton County has been funded for \$490,900. As for the grant, we are proposing six owner rehabs, thirteen home repairs (that are of emergency needs), assist three first time homebuyers and also allow us to set aside \$10,000 to update our Community Housing Improvement Strategies (CHIS). In addition to the CHIP grant the Commissioners applied for Community Development

Block Grant (CDBG) monies from the Ohio Department of Development, which we apply for annually. This year we were funded \$105,000 and we have three communities that we are assisting with these funds. They are the village of Nellie where we are replacing nineteen sections of deteriorating sidewalks in the village, we are purchasing 300 radio read water meters for the Village of Warsaw, and we will be assisting the Family Violence Victims Shelter to rehab it to meet the state building code standards

## SOLID WASTE

The county again participated in the four county solid waste district as required by law. The other counties that participate in the district are Fairfield, Licking and Perry. The county funds a number of projects under this program and this year's program that is highlighted in this state of the county address is a Litter Collection Supervisor Program that is run by John Fielding. This program cleans up dump sites and picks up trash along county and township roads. A total of 1074 hours of trustees labor from the County Justice center and 282 hours from community service workers were used to clean up 140 miles of Township and County roads, they cleaned-up ninety-six small dump sites, forty-one medium dump sites, and twenty large dump sites in Coshocton County. Some of the items collected were:

- 918 bags of trash
- 1,254 tires
- 22 TVs
- 24 Couches
- 13 Mattresses
- 11 appliances
- 4 Truck loads of carpet
- 8,150 pounds of roofing shingles
- 363 pounds of aluminum cans that were recycled

A number of other projects are coordinated by John and we thank him for his dedication to this project.

## TUSCARAWAS TOWNSHIP PRIMATIVE PARK PROJECT

Mr. Don Brown, a long time Tuscarawas Township Trustee attended a meeting in November asking us, The Board of Commissioners about transferring a piece of property to the township that is located along State Route 83 and Otsego Avenue. This piece of property can be viewed by driving down Otsego avenue and looking down to the right and you will see what appears to be a collection pond or the same can be viewed from State Route 83 in the south bound lane. The township feels that they could obtain funding from the Ohio Nature Works Program to make this into a primitive park with walking paths, access to the pond area for fishing and just an overall beautification of that area. All parties have agreed that this is a win/win situation and arrangements are being made at this time to try to make this project happen.

## SAFETY FACILITY

Coshocton County has hired Shremshock Architects INC of Columbus, Ohio to help plan for a new Safety Facility (jail). In trying to plan for future funding from the state of Ohio it is important to make sure that we are positioned here in Coshocton County point wise to score very well for these grants, if they become available. With that in mind we contracted with Shremshock to do a phase I and phase II study for the new safety facility, which they are presently doing. The Commissioners set aside \$75,000 in 2007 and \$75,000 in 2008 to do this study, which includes the needs assessment analysis, analysis of various sites, the functional program of operational policies, and the architectural design for the Coshocton County Detention Facility. The Commissioners are committed to stay on top of this issue and try to find a way to fund this needed safety facility including talking with our state legislators, senators, and state organizations such as the County Commissioner's Association and the Buckeye State Sheriff's Association. Additionally, we are looking at the present voted millage to see if there is a way to propose a change to the public, as to what today's voter approved millage is used for, and its duration so it can better serve the public and fund this needed facility.

#### EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS)

The Commissioners have been looking at the operation of the EMS and the levy it operates under and have had discussion about taking the Coshocton County Emergency Ambulance Service back under county control. It has been operated by the Ohio Medical Transport LLC a non profit company doing business as Med -Flight of Ohio Inc. Med-Flight took over the EMS in 1999 and a number of deficiencies have been corrected since Ohio Medical Transport has taken over. However, approximately \$180,000 leaves this county and goes to Columbus to support the administration of the EMS. By the county taking control again, this money will stay here, open other job opportunities and keep this money in our local economy. Additionally, the Commissioners have heard from a number of local residents expressing concerns that we are using tax dollars to support a private corporation even though it is a not for profit corporation. This matter is being followed up on in 2008 and the conclusion of this process will be reported in the 2008 State of the Commissioners Address. This move should be nothing more than a turn-key operation and the general public should see no change in their service.

#### WATER/WASTE WATER

Coshocton County is one of the few counties in this area that does not operate its own water and waste water district. Presently, the few customers that are county customers are being managed under a contract with the City of Coshocton. However, job and residential growth is very dependent on the availability of water and waste water treatment so the county has taken a very aggressive approach to develop and plan the county's water and waste water needs. We have hired W.E. Quicksall and Associates to develop a county water plan. This plan looks at the availability of water in given areas and the residential and commercial needs in those areas to determine what water is needed today and what will be needed in the future, and how best to deliver treated water. The county has been in negotiations with the city for the last year and a half to try and establish a bulk water

rate for the county so that the county can purchase water from the city and redistribute it through our lines to our customers with the intent to manage our own water system. This will include billing, distribution, installing lines, repairs, testing and etc. We believe that the best solution to move Coshocton County forward is to have our own water system as does surrounding counties. These negotiations are still on going, however at the same time we have started exploring owning and operating our own water wells and treatment facilities. We have purchased property at the Airport for the future site of a water tower. We have also had test wells drilled and we've had meetings with engineering firms and discussions about funding and designing our own wells and treatment facility.

In 2007 the Commissioners Office was able get the Three Rivers Fire District a waterline to it's facility and was also able to have a fire hydrant installed at the intersection of SR 621 and US 36 for fire protection and also, for the fire department to have the ability to load water. Issue I Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC) grant funding was applied for by the Commissioners in 2007 for 2008 to offset the costs of extending waste water lines from Canal Lewisville under US 36 to the new fire district building.

In 2006 the Commissioner's Office applied to the OPWC Issue I grant and loan program to help fund a very much needed waterline to the Lake Park Complex. The Lake Park Complex has been working with the Ohio EPA to become environmentally compliant. The EPA required having treated potable water at Lake Park. As a result to the county's request, we were funded by the OPWC Issue I, both grant and loan funds to make this project happen. Bids were received and the low bidder was William Albert Inc. for \$159,000. This bid has been awarded and we are just waiting for the weather to cooperate for work to begin.

In 2006 the Ohio EPA ordered Coshocton County to install a waste water treatment plant for the community of Fresno, Ohio. An Engineering firm was hired, GGC of Gahanna, Ohio and the engineering of this project has been nearly completed. Additionally, in 2007 the Commissioners purchased a parcel of land in Fresno on which to locate the treatment plant. The additional engineering and permitting process is ongoing in order to follow the orders that have been issued by the Ohio EPA.

## BROADBAND

The Commissioner's Office understands the necessity for the residents of this county to have high speed internet access or broadband. Additionally, a number of small businesses have expressed that in order for their business to survive they also need this high speed internet. Starting in 2006 the Commissioners attended various workshops and seminars that were being sponsored by our Legislators, Congressmen, Senators and state organizations. It has become clear that this is an economic variable and if private business were to expand and run service to isolated areas it has to be affordable and presently there is nothing being offered that met this situation. It is believed by the Coshocton County Commissioners that private enterprise should expand these needs and not the local government. In early 2007 Commissioner Fischer was made aware of a company in Holmes County that was starting to explore and operate a wireless high speed

internet service. He immediately contacted the company and invited them to our office to see if we could help them or another company expand service into Coshocton County. As a result of that meeting, additional meetings were set up with the state of Ohio, Office of Information and Technology to use the state's MARCS tower system, which has three towers located in Coshocton County and several more located on the fringes of the county. The idea is that the county could use these MARCS towers which range from 300 feet to 450 feet high to submit a signal to the county's existing 911 towers and emergency towers, that we have located through-out the county, to broadcast high speed wireless signals. Presently the county has been forwarded a contract from the state of Ohio Attorney Generals Office for us to review and sign to accomplish this needed project. The details are still being worked out on this, however the basic concept would be that the county would contract with the state of Ohio for the use of towers and we would then sublease to a private company the use of these towers and other county owned towers to broadcast high speed wireless signal out over much of Coshocton County. This type of technology is being used in other parts of the country and the world including our downtown courthouse area. We are very excited about this and anxiously awaiting on the review of this contract so we can see how private corporations or companies respond. There have been approximately six companies from around the United States so far that have called and expressed an interest in this concept. Additionally, with us signing the contracts for the towers it allows us to locate some of our emergency services such as fire, EMS Sheriff, EMA and police antennas on the MARCS towers. Our goal through this effort is to have high speed internet access provided to our county residents not served by existing providers to increase community education and overall access.

## I.T. DEPARTMENT

Sometime in the fall of 2005 the Commissioner's office recognized the need for the county to become electronically convenient to its employees and the public and additionally wanted to make it more efficient. So, with that in mind and the fact that the internet in the electronic world is being referred to as the new industrial revolution, we undertook the process of trying to find an employee to bring Coshocton County forward. We hired Mike LaVigne who is a certified computer engineer, and instructed him to rebuild the county's I.T. department. Even though we were receiving a lot of pressure to have a web page posted immediately, we felt that it was very important to build this system from the ground up. So with that in mind he started laying the foundation that was needed by purchasing the security, the back up, the firewalls, the policies, writing password protected programs, providing back-up, and educating the county employees. This all took time. He wanted to separate the phone systems so that we could have better security because a lot of departments also operated separate state run computer systems, and we needed to separate all the phones and computers. An existing phone contract with AT&T was renegotiated and new phones were installed in various county offices in the fall of 2006. This process was completed in the spring of 2007. Additionally, fiber optic cable was laid throughout Coshocton to the county's Job and Family Services Building, the County Services building, the County Engineer's office located on County Road 621 and to the Airport located on County Road 202. This allowed all of our County buildings to be connected together with high speed internet fiber, which is necessary when you are

operating a business that is supplying a tremendous amount of mapping data over the internet. The broadband bandwidth it takes to do that efficiently and quickly is tremendous and that was one of the reasons for the fiber. At this point in early 2007 we realized that our I.T. department was ready to move forward and needed to hire an additional employee. So with that in mind, we hired Chad Lawrence who has a four year degree from Ohio State University and is a Computer Programmer and Network Technician for the county. We welcome him aboard. Additionally, with all of the foundation and groundwork that was established a county webpage template was developed by our I.T. department to standardize our county web page. This would make them user friendly and a lot more serviceable for the I.T. department should they need support. As a result of the last two years of work and ground building work done on the county's I.T. structure the various county web pages went live on May 16, 2007 and the county's GIS mapping became available this year.

In regards to the web pages you can visit the Commissioner's web page and search the minutes, we have "search by text content" available in that program, which makes it a lot easier to find things. Our county policy manual and numerous other government records are also available online. The main county web page has a number of links including The City of Coshocton, West Lafayette, Warsaw, Coshocton Port Authority, The Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau, etc. with direct links from our web page. Again, we encourage the residents of our community to view our web sites. Since May the county has tracked how many hits we have had on our county web sites. To date, on the main county web site we have had 59,394 people that have logged on to the website and have looked at 214,098 different pages that were available. In regards to the Commissioner's Office web site, there have been over 17, 321 pages displayed over the internet. With that in mind; if each website visitor came into the office and stood at the counter and asked to look at the records, it would take a lot more time for employees to do that which costs more tax dollars. This investment allows the public to access our records without the need to visit our office, wait in line and wait for copies.

## GIS Mapping

At the same time we gave additional money to the Tax Map Department which is run by the County Engineer to help purchase equipment and fund a part time employee to load survey data into a scanner to eventually make that data available on the GIS Mapping. Barb Mainwaring, a one time employee of Tax Map and now an employee of Coshocton Soil and Water Conservation Office has worked for a number of years to make GIS System a reality here in Coshocton. Without her dedicated efforts I am not sure that we would not be where we are at today with the GIS. I encourage everyone in the county who has a computer with high speed broadband to log on to the county's website and take the time to learn how to use this GIS mapping system because it has tremendous potential and is a gem for Coshocton County.

The GIS mapping is a huge asset for Coshocton County, it allows landowners, attorneys, real estate agents, hunters, and site locaters etc. to view parcels of lands including surveys, tax information, flood plains, roads and etc. The amount of time and effort that went into this project was phenomenal and we applaud all who were involved.

## COUNTY FINANCIAL POSITION

I would like to open with thanking all the county offices for their dedication and professionalism they exhibit in providing the services they are entrusted to provide to the public. With the creation of the new Fiscal Officer position that the Commissioner's office created in 2007, it allowed the office to provide a constant point of contact with all the other officials in regards to the budget process. By the Auditor's Office embracing this new position it allowed the Commissioner's office to have a better understanding of the county budget, and also, to work closely with these offices on a daily basis to assure this budget process was a success. That being said, all the budget changes that took place in 2007 could not have happened without their cooperation, in particular, Auditor Sandy Corder, Deputy Auditor Chris Sycks, and the staff of the Auditors office.

2007 saw the closure of the state mandated independent 2005 Audit. The county was given an unqualified opinion, which is the best a county can get and there were no reportable findings. So, congratulations to all county offices and the Auditor's staff for this great Audit report.

## DEBT

The County continues to pay down its long term debt in 2007. The following numbers reflect the debt for the county. The 2007 overall county operating debt including all departments is \$4,653,891. The General Fund debt minus Hopewell and the Engineer's departments for 2007 was \$ 3,523,656. No different than you as an individual or a small or large business, the county sometimes has to borrow for future investments. We just need to make sure what we borrow is manageable. We feel that Coshocton County is very well positioned in that regard at this time.

## COUNTY REVENUE

With regard to the county revenue, last year was good to Coshocton County. The revenue stream for the county general fund operating expense is made up primarily from fees that various county offices collect including Ohio's, state and local government fund, interest income, sales tax revenue and inside millage that was approximately 4.6% of the local property tax assessment. I would like to focus in this report on two areas of that revenue stream, First, interest income: 2007 has been a good year for the interest income; \$700,231 was earned on investments made by County Treasurer Michelle Darner. A total of \$881,263 was generated with the interest income and fees collected in her office, which was approximately \$150,000 more than she anticipated for 2007. I applaud Michelle for her wise investments.

Secondly, the county's sales tax is the primary source of revenue for the general fund. In 2007, as a result of the eight to nine hundred constructions workers and the products that they purchased in the county this had a significant affect on the total of \$4,360,310 that was collected in sales tax. This total was 17.25 % more than was collected in 2006. This

was unusual when in other parts of the state sales tax collections have been declining. The sales tax collected here in the county was \$560,000 more than we projected and was welcomed into the county general fund.

However, County Treasurer, Michelle Darner, County Auditor Sandy Corder and The Board of County Commissioners, are very concerned that Coshocton County could very likely be losing revenue in 2008 because of interest rates falling. This affects our interest income. Also, the fact that the sales tax is declining around the state due to the tightening economy with the high price of gas and food, will mean that people have less money to purchase the products that the sales tax is paid on. We the above mentioned offices are keeping our fingers on the pulse of the county and we will be quick to react if we need to because of this tightened economy.

Finally, in closing on the financial portion of this report I would like to note that in December 2007 we were able to set a ten million dollar general fund operating budget that took effect January 2, 2008 at 8:31 am. This was the first time anyone could recall that a budget was set the first operating day of the year. This budget process could not have happened without each county agency understanding and cooperating with their June anticipated budgets and would not have happened had it not been for the cooperation between the Auditor's and the Commissioner's Office.

## CLOSING

In closing, we the Board of Commissioners are prepared to continue to be proactive and move the county forward by evaluating every position, procedure and activity that we are involved in. Additionally, we want to continue to educate ourselves in the most efficient business practices to try and manage your tax dollars to obtain its maximum benefit.