

**2026 State of the County Address #40 - 2026
Fairfield County Commissioners' Office
September 29, 2026**

2026 State of the County

Registration for the State of the County address officially began at 11:00 a.m., at the Levacy Center, 1550 Sheridan Dr., Lancaster, OH. The following Commissioners were present: Jeff Fix, Steve Davis and Dave Levacy. There were approximately three-hundred and forty in attendance including County Administrator, Aundrea Cordle, the Commissioners' staff, elected officials from Fairfield County and the State of Ohio, and residents and business owners from throughout the region.

Welcome

Travis Markwood, President of the Lancaster Fairfield County Chamber of Commerce, welcomed everyone to the 2026 State of the County Address, and thanked the event sponsors and all who made the event possible.

Kim Barlag, President of the Pickerington Chamber of Commerce, acknowledged all the elected officials in attendance.

Posting of the Colors/Pledge of Allegiance

The Sheriff's Honor Guard posted the Colors, and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mr. Markwood.

Invocation

Dr. David Uhl, Superintendent of the Fairfield County Board of Developmental Disabilities, gave the invocation.

Introduction of County Commissioners and County Administrator

Mr. Markwood introduced County Administrator Aundrea Cordle as the first speaker.

A video introduction played.

County Administrator Aundrea Cordle

County Administrator Aundrea Cordle welcomed everyone in attendance to the 2026 State of the County Address. She thanked the Chamber staff and Pickerington Chamber for their assistance, as well as members of the county facilities staff, county administration team, and catering staff.

She provided an overview of the subjects that the Commissioners would speak about at the address, including growth within the county, workforce development projects, and recent changes in the economy.

She described public service as recognizing what needs to be accomplished within the community, developing a plan, and acting—even when the work is difficult. She expressed her belief that the County Commissioners do not simply wait for challenges to resolve themselves; instead, they proactively seek solutions and work to address issues facing the community. She also emphasized a commitment to help shape the future of Fairfield County.

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Commissioner Steve Davis

Commissioner Steve Davis expressed gratitude to everyone in attendance and stated he was proud that so many citizens were invested in the future of their community.

He explained the fiscal role of the Board of Commissioners within the county. He then reflected on Fairfield County's bond rating upgrade Aa1, expressing how proud he was that this accomplishment was achieved. He explained that the improved rating came after years of hard work. He stated that this rating reflected excellence, and that Fairfield County now has one of the highest bond ratings in Ohio. He went on to speak about the primary revenue stream of the county, which is sales tax, and how Fairfield County has one of the lowest sales tax rates in Ohio.

Commissioner Davis also cited efforts to eliminate leases and purchase buildings for county operations to eliminate rent costs, and ultimately improve the county's long term financial outlook.

A video played, featuring Treasurer Jim Bahnsen and members of 5/3 Bank investment advisory staff, who commented on the financial wellness of Fairfield County.

Commissioner Davis thanked Treasurer Jim Bahnsen for his work in improving the county's financial position. He explained that county governments are limited on investment opportunities, but Treasurer Bahnsen's work has led to a better rate of return and growth of investment revenue.

Commissioner Davis also addressed recent growth within the county, stating that Fairfield County has established a balanced approach to growth and development in our community. He stated his belief that some counties in Ohio have a substantial amount of growth while not preserving important parts of their community. In contrast, he stressed the importance of maintaining farmland and other integral landmarks in the county.

He highlighted Westerman Inc. in Bremen, which has grown dramatically and continues to offer high-paying employment opportunities to residents in Fairfield County. Westerman Inc. has partnered with the Workforce Center for training and hiring opportunities. He thanked the General Manager, who was in attendance.

Commissioner Dave Levacy

Commissioner Dave Levacy thanked his fellow commissioners. He focused on the importance of improving the workforce through bringing job opportunities to the area and providing training opportunities through the Workforce Center. He also shared Workforce Center statistics such as 217 students enrolled in career readiness programs, 58 students in pre-apprenticeship programs, 113 junior high students who attended summer camps, 216 high school seniors who attended the Discovery Days program, and 214 students enrolled in the drivers ed program over the last year.

The Commissioner stressed that the key to the Workforce's success is the partnership with local high schools, businesses, and funding and other support from the Board of Commissioners. He also expressed his gratitude to Economic Development Director Rick Szabrak and his staff.

A video was shown highlighting educators and students at the Workforce Center.

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Commissioner Levacy announced that the Workforce Center has been working with Ohio University-Lancaster to grow their offerings in healthcare related fields like radiology and respiratory therapy.

Lastly, he shared that he and his wife, Ann, were approaching their 60th wedding anniversary and spoke about the happiness she has always brought him. He thanked his fellow commissioners and Administrator Cordle for naming the Levacy Center for him in 2025 and stated that he felt it was an honor for which he was undeserving.

Commissioner Jeff Fix

Commissioner Fix stated he wants the county to be a place where people can build lives and families. He addressed “growing pains” experienced in Fairfield County and the efforts taken to manage and embrace change and growth. He shared he was currently revisiting officials in townships and villages around the county to learn more about their on-going needs and learn about changes that need to happen as they continue to grow.

Transportation needs are being addressed by Engineer Jeremiah Upp and the Engineer’s office as they work to expand roads and improve intersections. Housing development continues to be a focus, as more employment opportunities keep people in and bring people to the area.

He discussed the new cooperative economic development agreement “CEDA”, which is partnership between Greenfield Township, the city of Lancaster City, and the county. The partnership allows Lancaster and Greenfield Township to both partner in and benefit from economic development growth. The agreement is the first of its kind in Fairfield County and Commissioner Fix recognized city and township officials for their work in bringing the agreement to fruition.

Commissioner Fix also shared some of his recent experiences from meetings at the County Commissioners Association of Ohio. He indicated there are counties that are shrinking and struggling to fund essential operations. He indicated things like emergency services, road and bridge repair, and public park maintenance are suffering from declining population and lack of growth. He expressed his preference for a growing community rather than one that is shrinking, so that citizens can live their entire lives in Fairfield County if they choose without feeling the need to leave because of lack of resources. This goal requires perseverance and collaboration among all public officials as well as careful planning.

A video was shown featuring Executive Director of MORPC, William Murdock, who spoke about Fairfield County’s efforts in collaborations between officials and communities.

Commissioner Fix spoke on the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan and Comprehensive Land Use Plan, which both were drafted to provide a path to the future. He cited the county’s efforts to continue communicating with townships and villages, so that they can be connected with resources needed to address and manage growth. He shared his belief that growth and change should be purposeful and shaped, so that future generations can see the benefits of it and still see everything that has made and makes Fairfield County great today.

A video was played discussing the meaning of “leadership.”

