

**MORGAN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
RIECKER BUILDING**

The Board of Morgan County Commissioners met in their office Tuesday, February 17, 2026. The meeting was called to order at 8:30am with the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

Heidi Maxwell, President
Steve Best, Vice-President
Cecil Mayle, Member

The commissioners did the following over the past week:

Wednesday, Commissioner Maxwell and Commissioner Best attended a meeting at the Sheriff's Office.

Commissioner Maxwell attended a Work Ohio meeting on Thursday and a CCAO meeting on Friday.

Commissioner Best attended a Family and Children First Strategy meeting with Ty Moore and a Representative from Troy Balderson's Office.

26-092- Motion by Mr. Mayle and seconded by Mr. Best to approve the minutes of February 9, 2026

Mrs. Maxwell yea, Mr. Best yea, Mr. Mayle yea Motion Carried

Al Eltringham, Riecker Maintenance

Able's Heating Cooling has ordered a new Fan Motor for the air handler on the 2nd floor West side of the Courthouse. Unit is still under Warranty, but we will have to pay the Labor, the repair was scheduled for 2-12-26 but they didn't show.

Chevrolet Truck has a broken brake line for the rear brakes, truck has been parked in the old garage until lines are replaced 1-7-26

Right side overhead door at the garage won't go up, checked breakers for power. We will need to contact Westfall Doors and Buildings check out the door after the first of the year.

Contacted Apperson's to look at and give estimate on replacing all sewer pipes in the basement 2-2-26

Advanced Heating and Cooling is scheduled to do the Fall/Winter service on RTU's 1,2 and 3 to replace all the filters, belts and lubricate all grease points, plus check all electrical connections and reset all failure codes on Wednesday 2-18-26

Monarch Roofing Re-inspected the lower-level roof again and took a core sample of the roofing insulation under the roofing fabric. 2-13-26 (Core sample was taken 2-16-26)

Heidi Burns, JFS

No Report

Sophia Wiseman, OSU Extension

Sophia Whisman- 4-H Extension Educator

On January 26th Sophia attended a 4-H committee meeting. February 2nd Sophia attended a staff meeting with the Morgan County Extension office. February 3rd Sophia attended a 4-H professionals Inservice with all Ohio 4-H for statewide program updates and attended a STEAM design team meeting. On February 4th and 5th Sophia held new volunteer interviews, we had 7 applications. February 12th Sophia held new volunteer orientation to train new onboarding volunteers for the Morgan County 4-H program. February 16th Sophia held 2 separate sessions with Pam Montgomery for mandatory advisor update. This is to update and train all returning volunteers. On February 17th Sophia will attend Junior Fairboard and Senior Fairboard meetings. Sophia works on prepping QA and Skillathon.

Pam Montgomery-4-H/FCS Extension Educator and Area Leader

4-H Activities

- 1/20/26 4-H Hot Topics Zoom meeting topic: How to work with new families in the 4-H program
- 1/26/26 4-H Horse Committee via Zoom due to weather
- 1/26/25 4-H Advisory Committee via Zoom due to weather
- 1/28/26 4-H Healthy Living Design Team meeting via Zoom
- 1/30/26 Clover Connections – Monthly update from 4-H State Leader
- 1/30/26 4-H Advisory Executive Committee meeting

- 1/30/26 One-on-one meeting with a Master Clothing Educator Volunteer to plan presentation for Sew Ohio.
- 2/2/26 2ndCamp Counselor/CIT training for 2026
- 2/3/26 4-H Fashion Board 2nd meeting for 2026
- 2/9/26 CARTEENS Organizational meeting
- 2/9/26 1st Camp Counselor/CIT workday for 2026
- 2/10/26 4-H Master Clothing Volunteer Executive Committee

FCS Activities

- 1/14/26 Basics to a Household Budget offered for DJFS
- 1/22/26 Basics to a Household Budget for youth and families active with creative options
- 2/10/26 Trauma Informed Approaches Instructor Update
- 2/13/26 Attended Morgan County Family and Children First Council

Area Leader Activities:

- One-on-one sessions with employees in Area 19 (Morgan, Muskingum, Perry, and Washington Counties) regularly. Continuing to work on Fall check-ins reviewing both performance and professional development goals for the year.
- In the hiring process for new Office staff in Washington County.
- Attend monthly two online monthly Area Leader meetings.

Other

- 2/9/26 Ohio JCEP Policy Committee meeting

Betsy Ellingsworth- FCS Extension Educators Coordinator 3

Betsy co-taught Basics to a Household Budget with Pam Montgomery to kinship families through Family & Children First on January 22 at the library.

She began a Captain Cash series to teach basic financial literacy to Job Club members at Morgan High School on January 23.

And, January 28, she presented at the Adult Protective Services meeting to inform the committee of FCS programs that can be offered.

In February, Betsy launched a 6 week “Taking Care of Me” Series at Tabor Ridge School which is being taught to all Preschool- 8th grade students.

She continues to partner with Morgan United Ministries to distribute recipes and healthy eating resources at the monthly food distributions in Malta, Stockport, and Chesterhill which she participated at on February 4.

Betsy continues to seek opportunities to learn and grow in her FCS role. She just enrolled & began the ABCs of AI for Extension Webinar series to be familiarized with these technologies, become more knowledgeable about AI, how to use them to increase efficiency for daily tasks, and to improve communication with clientele.

Jordan Penrose- Agriculture and Natural Resources Educator

In January, Jordan gave his monthly TV interview on WHIZ News, discussing upcoming events, winter weather preparedness on the farm, and livestock in cold weather. Jordan also worked with the Ag Navigator and Alivia to put on the Brewing Connections and Back 40 Connections programs on January 15th. Jordan also helped host the Row Crop Producers Meeting for Athens-Meigs-Morgan-Washington Counties. In February, Jordan held the Morgan County Pesticide and Fertilizer Recertifying producers so that they could renew their license for another three years. He also had the Morgan County Cattlemen’s Ladies Appreciation Night, where the group got together, and 80 people were in attendance for a meal and program by Barry Ward on an Economic outlook. Jordan has also assisted with other Pesticide and Fertilizer Recertifications in Muskingum and Licking Counties. He also attended the Ohio Forages and Grassland Council Annual Meeting and presented a poster at the meeting. Jordan has also continued to participate in various meetings, including the bi-weekly corn call meeting, bi-weekly between-the-rows meetings, monthly beef team meetings, and monthly forage team meetings, to share updates about crops, forages, livestock, and conditions in Morgan County with his coworkers around the state. He has also been writing weekly for the Herald, posting weekly blog posts on the Morgan County ANR Blog, and sending monthly email newsletters.

Alivia Mock- Extension Educator Coordinator

Alivia will be out of the office from February 3rd 2026 until April 8th 2026 for maternity leave.

Shannon Wells, Development Office

Shannon Wells met with Bernie Anderson and attorney to discuss Brownfield project at the CIC property on Miba campus.

Shannon Wells and CIC members met with State Rep Ty Moore and Congressman Balderson's aid Javan Johnson on February 13, 2026 to discuss strategic planning for the CIC.

A virtual meeting is scheduled for February 20, 2026 at 1pm to discuss the jail renovation project.

Sheriff Fisher, Pam Weaver, Administrative Assistant

IT Service and Server Upgrade Discussion

- **Current Issue:** The office's technology is outdated and needs major upgrades. The current approach—purchasing and self-maintaining equipment—has caused ongoing problems for years.
- **Proposed Solution (Cloud-Based Service):**
 - Monthly service cost: \$2,289.
 - Includes management of phishing protection, firewalls, backups, and storage for five years.
 - Provider handles equipment maintenance and upgrades, including computer cleaning to extend hardware lifespan.
 - Includes 33 Microsoft Office 365 licenses, saving about \$6 per person on email licensing.
- **Alternative (Physical Server):**
 - Upfront cost: additional \$20,000 to purchase a physical server.
 - This is in addition to the \$2,289 monthly IT maintenance fee.
 - Cloud-based option is preferred to avoid upfront costs and ongoing upgrade responsibilities.

Financial and Budgetary Considerations

- **Funding Strategy:**
 - \$15,000 already set aside to cover costs through August.
- **Quote Details:**
 - Current quote valid until March 4.

Internet Connectivity and Redundancy

- **Current Problem:** Multiple internet outages, including a 45-minute outage during a snowstorm; current fiber comes from only one direction.
- **Proposed Solution:**
 - Add redundant fiber to ensure fail-safe connectivity.
 - Install a second fiber line from a different direction.
- **Cost:** Estimated \$480/month for fiber for the entire building.
 - Cost to be divided among departments (e.g., Sheriff's Office, County Court) based on the number of computers, calculated by Jeff.
- **Uncertainty:** Unclear whether the server decision depends on the fiber decision; assumption is that it will not cause a hold-up.

Transition to Digital Operations

- **Digital Transformation:** Moving to a digital-first workflow, including digital signatures.
- **Required Upgrades:** Software upgrades needed (e.g., Adobe).
- **Benefits:** Reduced paper usage and streamlined processes, moving away from “the way it’s always been done.”

26-093- Motion by Mr. Mayle and seconded by Mr. Best to enter executive session with Sheriff Fisher at 11:25am pursuant to ORC. 121.22 section (G)(1) Employment, Personnel.

Mr. Mayle yea, Mrs. Maxwell yea, Mr. Best yea Motion Carried

26-094- Motion by Mr. Best and seconded by Mr. Mayle to exit executive session with Sheriff Fisher at 11:35am pursuant to ORC. 121.22 section (G)(1) Employment, Personnel.

Mr. Mayle yea, Mrs. Maxwell yea, Mr. Best yea Motion Carried

John Lutz, CCAO; Phil Dysard, Energy Consultant

CCAO Energy Program Overview for Morgan County

Representatives from the CCAO and Palmer Energy delivered a comprehensive presentation on their energy purchasing program, detailing its history, structure, and benefits. The discussion focused on two primary offerings: a pooled purchasing program for county facilities and a government aggregation program for residents, concluding with a proposed path for Morgan County to participate in both initiatives.

Program History and Evolution

This section recounts the origins and development of the CCAO energy program, which began in 2009. The initial strategy involved the CCAO owning natural gas to sell directly to counties, aiming for cost savings. While Hamilton County participated, this model proved unsustainable due to high self-storage fees. A pivotal change occurred when Dale Arnold of the Farm Bureau recommended a new approach and introduced the CCAO to Palmer Energy of Toledo, Ohio.

Palmer Energy was initially engaged to resolve the challenges of self-owned gas supplies. Convinced that aggregated purchasing remained a valuable strategy for achieving cost savings through volume, the CCAO, with further guidance from the Farm Bureau, formalized its own program. Following a Request for Proposal (RFP) process, Palmer Energy was again selected as the program manager. The program, primarily run by Kirk Mazzarick of Palmer Energy, has since expanded from its natural gas origins to include electricity. A recent significant change involved transitioning the electric program from individual county contracts to a fully pooled model, mirroring the structure that had been successful for natural gas from the start.

County Facilities Program

This section details the energy purchasing program designed for county-owned facilities, which operates on a pooled model to leverage collective buying power. To be eligible, facilities must

receive service from a publicly traded utility like AEP or Columbia Gas, as state law prohibits shopping for energy for facilities served by co-ops. The program currently includes 77-80 counties, with 68 participating in the electric pool and 59 in the gas pool. The combined electric pool manages over 600 megawatt-hours of energy.

Key benefits of the program include:

- **Cost Savings & Rate Stability:** The program offers competitive rates, such as a recent natural gas price of **51.09 cents per CCF** (\$5.109 per MCF), achieved through hedging strategies that protect against winter price spikes. The electric pool is divided into three tiers by usage, with one tier offering a fixed rate of **8.086 cents per kWh** for usage under 700,000 kWh annually. Higher-usage tiers may have a lower base rate (e.g., 5.65 cents) but include a capacity pass-through charge, which has recently increased due to regulatory changes.
- **Administrative Simplicity:** Counties join via a single Master Participation Agreement, with separate amendments for each energy type (gas or electric). Palmer Energy handles the administrative burden of adding or removing facilities, which only requires submitting a bill.
- **Flexibility:** The large size of the pool allows counties to add new facilities or drop old ones without incurring the early termination fees typical of individual contracts.
- **Value-Added Services:** Palmer Energy actively manages member accounts by tracking meters, providing annual energy cost estimates for budgeting purposes, and distributing a weekly "Palmer Report" to keep members informed about market trends.

Residential Aggregation Program

This section explains the government aggregation program, which allows communities to create a large purchasing pool for residents to secure better energy rates. State law permits this through a ballot initiative, where residents of a specific territory vote to authorize the aggregation. While Morgan County has some existing programs—McConnelsville and Deerfield Township (electric and gas), and Morgan Township (electric only)—they remain in over 4,000 households in unincorporated areas that would be eligible.

The primary benefits for residents include:

- **Competitive, Fixed Rates:** By banding together, households gain purchasing power to secure fixed rates for the entire contract term.
- **Consumer Protection:** The program shields residents from predatory suppliers who use low introductory rates that later escalate, as well as from hidden contract terms, hefty early termination fees, and unexpected auto-renewals at high market rates.
- **Flexibility and Control:** The program is "opt-out," meaning eligible residents are automatically enrolled but can leave at any time without a penalty. Multiple notices are sent, including an initial opt-out letter and a rescission notice from the utility. If the program is paused, all participants are automatically returned to the standard utility service, avoiding any risk of variable or un-contracted rates.
- **Simplified Management:** Palmer Energy manages all administrative aspects, including paperwork and fees with the Public Utilities Commission (PUCO). The program authority must be recertified every two years, and by law, the program must re-solicit residents with a new opt-out process at least every three years.

Program Governance and Decision-Making

This section clarifies the management and oversight structure of the CCAO energy program, emphasizing that member counties retain ultimate control. Palmer Energy serves as the program administrator and provides expert analysis and data-driven recommendations on market conditions and potential contracts. However, Palmer Energy does not make final purchasing decisions.

All strategic choices, including when to hedge and which contracts to sign, are made by the CCAO's Executive Energy Committee. This committee is composed of 16 members from participating counties, and by rule, at least half of its members must be county commissioners. This governance model ensures that all decisions are made collectively and in the best interest of the program's members.

Path Forward for Morgan County

This section outlines specific, actionable steps for Morgan County to engage with the CCAO energy programs. For its facilities, the county could join the natural gas pool relatively easily once its current variable-rate contract with IAPG expires. However, its current electric contract runs until September 2027; because the rate is favorable and breaking it would incur significant termination fees, it is recommended to wait until closer to the expiration date before seeking to join the electric pool.

For residential aggregation, the proposed path involves placing a gas aggregation initiative on the ballot for the unincorporated areas of the county, potentially as soon as the November election. It was suggested that the county engage with the townships that already have programs (Deerfield and Morgan) to explore consolidating all local programs into a single, county-managed pool to maximize purchasing power. If a county-wide program is approved, Palmer Energy would handle the administrative setup with the PUCO. It was noted that gas aggregation may not be practical if a large portion of the county uses propane or is served by a co-op, but data indicates over 4,000 households are eligible for an electric program.

Concerned Citizen, Road Maintenance

Authority and Responsibility for Private Roads

- The concerned citizen asked who designates a road as “private” and who is responsible for its maintenance.
- The commissioners explained that when they adopt a subdivision, control reverts to the residents.
- Subdivision residents have the authority to make decisions regarding roads and property use.
- The commissioners advised that documentation (a plot map) exists and can be obtained from the Engineer’s Office; this map should clarify the private road agreement

Amber Wilson, Senior Center Director

Upcoming Events and Activities

- Shrivvers Hospice will host a Bingo event on Friday.
- The annual health fair is being planned for May.
 - They are seeking resources and organizations to participate.
- A chair yoga class will continue to be offered.
 - It provides a daytime option for seniors, some of whom also attend an evening class at the library.
 - It has been attracting new participants to other activities.

Department and Building Updates

- The monthly RAC meeting is not scheduled for this month; the next one is in May.
- The aging department will be located in the garage of a new building, which requires conversion.
 - The building will be handicap accessible.

Jeff Babcock, IT Administrator

No Report

Transfers, Then & Nows, Supplemental Appropriations & Utility Applications

26-095 Motion by Mr. Best and seconded by Mr. Mayle to request the establishment of an expense line item for “Unspent Grant Funds” in the FY2425 T-CAP Grant Expense account (057-2425-5310) and make the supplemental appropriation of \$8,915.66 for the purpose of returning this balance to the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction.

Mr. Mayle yea, Mrs. Maxwell yea, Mr. Best yea Motion Carried

26-096- Motion by Mr. Mayle and seconded by Mr. Best to request the establishment of the expense for line item for “Unspent Grant Funds” in the FY2425 Probation Services Grant Expense account (055-2425-5310) and make the supplemental appropriation \$12,414.22 for the purpose of returning this balance to the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction.

Mr. Mayle yea, Mrs. Maxwell yea, Mr. Best yea Motion Carried

26-097- Motion by Mr. Best and seconded by Mr. Mayle to approve all establishment of expense line items. Attachment A

Mr. Mayle yea, Mrs. Maxwell yea, Mr. Best yea Motion Carried

26-098- Motion by Mr. Best and seconded by Mr. Mayle to approve payment of bills. *See attached*

Mrs. Maxwell yea, Mr. Best yea, Mr. Mayle yea Motion Carried

26-099- Motion by Mr. Mayle and seconded by Mr. Best to recess the commissioners meeting February 17, 2026 at 4:00pm.

Mr. Mayle yea, Mrs. Maxwell yea, Mr. Best yea Motion Carried

26-100- Motion by Mr. Best and seconded by Mr. Mayle to reconvene the commissioners meeting for a Jail Board meeting Friday, February, 20, 2026 at 1:00pm.

Mr. Mayle yea, Mrs. Maxwell yea, Mr. Best yea Motion Carried

26-101 Motion by Mr. Mayle and seconded by Mr. Best to adjourn the commissioners meeting on Friday February 20, 2026 at 2:00pm.

Mr. Mayle yea, Mrs. Maxwell yea, Mr. Best yea Motion Carried

Heidi Maxwell, President

Steve Best, Vice-President

Cecil Mayle, Member

Sheila Welch, Clerk

Attachment A:



**MORGAN COUNTY COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
JUDGE JOHN A. WELLS**

19 East Main Street
McConnelsville, OH 43756
Common Pleas Division: 740-962-3371
Probate & Juvenile Division: 740-962-2861

February 17, 2026

Morgan County Commissioners
155 E. Main Street
McConnelsville OH 43756

RE: FY 24/25 T-CAP Grant Unspent Funds

Commissioners:

The Morgan County Common Pleas Court requests the establishment of an expense line item for "Unspent Grant Funds" in the FY2425 T-CAP Grant Expense account (057-2425-5310) and make the supplemental appropriation of \$8,915.66 for the purpose of returning this balance to the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction.

Respectfully,

Trina Webb, Grant Administrator
Morgan County Common Pleas Court

HEM 2/17/26
SCB 2/17/26
CMM 2/17/26



MORGAN COUNTY COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
JUDGE JOHN A. WELLS
19 East Main Street
McConnellsville, OH 43756
Common Pleas Division: 740-962-3371
Probate & Juvenile Division: 740-962-2861

February 17, 2026

Morgan County Commissioners
155 E. Main Street
McConnellsville OH 43756

RE: FY 24/25 Probation Services Grant (PSG) Unspent Funds

Commissioners:

The Morgan County Common Pleas Court requests the establishment of an expense line item for "Unspent Grant Funds" in the FY2425 Probation Services Grant Expense account (055-2425-5310) and make the supplemental appropriation of \$12,414.22 for the purpose of returning this balance to the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction.

Respectfully,

Trina Webb, Grant Administrator
Morgan County Common Pleas Court

HRM 2/17/26
SCB 2/17/26
Cmm 2/17/26

\

