

THE BOARD OF ATHENS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, met in regular session, with Lenny Eliason presiding, Chris Chmiel and Charlie Adkins in attendance.

A motion was made by Mr. Adkins and seconded by Mr. Chmiel to approve the following agenda:

Athens County Board of County Commissioners

Meeting Agenda for Tuesday, August 18, 2026 Convenes at 9:30 a.m.

Approve Agenda

Approve Minutes August 11, 2026

Approve Appropriations, Transfers, New Line Items Requests/Changes, Then & Nows & Bills

9:45 DJFS - Weekly Updates

10:00 Teresa Imler-911/EMA Update

10:30 W&S Supt Oscar Carson - weekly updates

Agenda Items

Amended Certificate

W&S Extensions/Payment Agreements

Resolution Declaring A State of Emergency

Resolution - Ohio Proud- Made in Ohio

DeBra-Kuempel Invoice in the amount of \$358,200.00 to be paid with ARPA Funds

Surplus - EMS

Sheriff JAG Grant Pre-Award (Ratify Lenny's signature)

9-1-1 Resignation

Nelsonville Bigfoot Festival

August 24th - blue and yellow on courthouse

~TRAVEL

Common Pleas: Magistrate Meg Saunders; OAM Fall Conference, Columbus OH; 09/09 - 09/11/26

Auditor: Samantha Sinisgalli; Microsoft Skills Workshop Series, Nelsonville OH; 10/1, 11/5

DJFS: Tami Collins - 9/2- Ohio Dept of Children Kids Summit - Columbus, Ohio

DJFS: Tami Collins - 10/4-10/6- Annual CFIS Users Conference - Lewis Center, Ohio

DJFS: Tami Collins - 10/19-10/20 - OCSPA Fall Training - Columbus Ohio

DJFS: Tami Collins - 9/10-9/11 - OJFSDA General Session -Columbus Ohio

Mike Biggins - October 30, 2026-Nelsonville -OTCO Backflow Refresher

ADJOURNMENT

The roll being called upon for adoption, the vote resulted as follows: Mr. Eliason, yea; Mr. Chmiel, yea; Mr. Adkins, yea.

Minutes

A motion was made by Mr. Adkins and seconded by Mr. Chmiel to minutes of August 11, 2026.

The roll being called upon for adoption, the vote resulted as follows: Mr. Eliason, yea; Mr. Chmiel, yea; Mr. Adkins, yea.

Appropriations, Transfers, New Line Items Requests/Changes, Then & Nows & Bills

A motion was made by Mr. Adkins and seconded by Mr. Chmiel approving the Appropriations, Transfers, New Line Items Requests/Changes and approving the payment of the required County Bills, which are included in the Auditor's Office INVOICE TRACKING REPORT - From: 08/06/2026 To: 08/11/2026, INVOICE TRACKING REPORT - From: 08/11/2026 To: 08/13/2026 and the bills are hereby the same and authorize the County Auditor to issue warrants on the County Treasurer for payment in the same. Complete list of bills maintained in the Auditor's office.

The roll being called upon for adoption, the vote resulted as follows: Mr. Eliason, yea; Mr. Chmiel, yea; Mr. Adkins, yea.

Surplus - DJFS

A motion was made by Mr. Adkins and seconded by Mr. Chmiel to declare the DJFS items as surplus property and authorize their sale through GovDeals.com. Any items not sold through GovDeals.com shall be made available for redistribution to other county departments or, if no longer needed, disposed of in accordance with county policy. See the list of surplus items on page 296.

The roll being called upon for adoption, the vote resulted as follows: Mr. Eliason, yea; Mr. Chmiel, yea; Mr. Adkins, yea.

DJFS Closes October 30, 2026

A motion was made by Mr. Adkins and seconded by Mr. Chmiel to approve the request to close the agency for the one-day staff retreat on October 30, 2026. The retreat provides an opportunity for mandatory annual training, policy and procedure reviews, and other agency-wide professional development activities.

The roll being called upon for adoption, the vote resulted as follows: Mr. Eliason, yea; Mr. Chmiel, yea; Mr. Adkins, yea.

Suspend the Rules

A motion was made by Mr. Adkins and seconded by Mr. Chmiel to suspend the rules and declare an emergency and add the following to the agenda:

Doug Brooks - Resident with concerns about Frontier Communications' planned discontinuation of copper-based land line telephone service

The roll being called upon for adoption, the vote resulted as follows: Mr. Eliason, yea; Mr. Chmiel, yea; Mr. Adkins, yea.

Doug Brooks - Resident with concerns about Frontier Communications

Doug Brooks, an Athens County resident, addressed the Board regarding Frontier Communications' planned discontinuation of copper-based land line service in rural areas. He expressed concerns that the loss of land line service, combined with limited cellular coverage and unreliable internet access, would leave many rural residents without dependable communication or access to emergency services. Commissioners explained that telecommunications service is regulated at the federal level and outside the County's authority, but acknowledged similar concerns identified through the County's broadband studies. The Board agreed to send a letter to Ohio's congressional delegation requesting review of the issue and encouraged continued communication with federal officials while recognizing the challenges facing rural residents as providers transition away from legacy copper infrastructure. See letter on back of page 298.

Amended Certificate

A motion was made by Mr. Adkins and seconded by Mr. Chmiel acknowledging receipt of the Amended Certificate for Athens County Commissioners, dated August 18, 2026 prepared by Jill Davidson, Athens County Auditor.

The roll being called upon for adoption, the vote resulted as follows: Mr. Eliason, yea; Mr. Chmiel, yea; Mr. Adkins, yea.

W&S Extensions/Payment Agreements

A motion was made by Mr. Adkins and seconded by Mr. Chmiel ratifying Commissioner Adkins Signature authorizing a Payment Agreement as requested by Zakery Lindstome for monies owed the Athens County Water and Sewer District for water and sewer service, the total amount due is \$499.21 with payments to be paid 08/31/26 of \$141.41; 09/30/26 and 10/31/26 for \$141.40 each month plus current monthly bill. If the terms of this agreement are not met, the account will be considered delinquent and service could be shut off.

The roll being called upon for adoption, the vote resulted as follows: Mr. Eliason, yea; Mr. Chmiel, yea; Mr. Adkins, yea.

Resolution Declaring A State of Emergency

A motion was made by Mr. Adkins and seconded by Mr. Chmiel to approve the Resolution Declaring A State of Emergency. See back of page 296 for Resolution.

The roll being called upon for adoption, the vote resulted as follows: Mr. Eliason, yea; Mr. Chmiel, yea; Mr. Adkins, yea.

EMA Update - Dir. Teresa Fouts-Imler

Dir. Fouts-Imler provided an update regarding recent flooding and recovery efforts throughout Athens County. She reported on documented residential flood damage, ongoing assistance provided through local organizations and volunteers, and available disaster recovery resources for affected residents. Discussion focused on the challenges of assisting uninsured homeowners, the need to strengthen the county's volunteer response capacity through a Citizens Emergency Response Team (CERT) or similar

Athens County Department of Job and Family Services
Department

2 Redistribute Surplus Property 3 Destroy Surplus Property

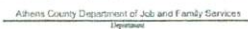
1 Auction or Sale



RESOLUTION NO. 124-812.

RESOLUTION DECLARING A STATE OF EMERGENCY

WHEREAS, the County recognizes the necessity of accurately documenting emergency activities, including personnel, equipment, materials, contracts, mutual aid, debris removal,



2 Redistribute Surplus Property 3 Destroy Surplus Property

1 Auction or Sale

75 Connett Rd.
The Plains, Ohio 45780

Athens County Department of Job and Family Services

☐ Redistribute Surplus Property ☐ Destroy Surplus Property

☐ Auction or Sale

Emergency Management Agency Director

Date: 8/12/2024

75 Connett Rd.
The Plains, Ohio 45780

program, and coordination of donations and recovery supplies. Commissioners also discussed additional disaster recovery resources and ongoing efforts to improve emergency preparedness and community response for future flooding events.

Resolution - Ohio Proud - Made in Ohio

A motion was made by Mr. Adkins and seconded by Mr. Chmiel to approve the Resolution Ohio Proud - Made in Ohio. See back of page 297 for Resolution.

The roll being called upon for adoption, the vote resulted as follows: Mr. Eliason, yea; Mr. Chmiel, yea; Mr. Adkins, yea.

DeBra-Kuempel Invoice in the amount of \$358,200.00 to be paid with ARPA Funds

A motion was made by Mr. Adkins and seconded by Mr. Chmiel to approve the DeBra-Kuempel Invoice in the amount of \$358,200.00 to be paid with ARPA Funds.

The roll being called upon for adoption, the vote resulted as follows: Mr. Eliason, yea; Mr. Chmiel, yea; Mr. Adkins, yea.

Surplus - EMS

A motion was made by Mr. Adkins and seconded by Mr. Chmiel to declare the EMS items as surplus property and authorize their disposal in accordance with county policy. See the list of surplus items on page 297.

The roll being called upon for adoption, the vote resulted as follows: Mr. Eliason, yea; Mr. Chmiel, yea; Mr. Adkins, yea.

Sheriff JAG Grant Pre-Award

A motion was made by Mr. Adkins and seconded by Mr. Chmiel to ratify Commissioner Eliason's Signature on the Sheriff JAG Grant Pre-Award.

Document available on file in the Commissioner's Office.

The roll being called upon for adoption, the vote resulted as follows: Mr. Eliason, yea; Mr. Chmiel, yea; Mr. Adkins, yea.

911 Resignation

A motion was made by Mr. Adkins and seconded by Mr. Chmiel to accept the 911 Intermittent Dispatcher Resignation Jacob Roach effective 08/16/2026.

The roll being called upon for adoption, the vote resulted as follows: Mr. Eliason, yea; Mr. Chmiel, yea; Mr. Adkins, yea.

Nelsonville Bigfoot Festival

A motion was made by Mr. Adkins and seconded by Mr. Chmiel to table the Nelsonville Bigfoot Festival until a later date.

The roll being called upon for adoption, the vote resulted as follows: Mr. Eliason, yea; Mr. Chmiel, yea; Mr. Adkins, yea.

August 24th - Blue and Yellow on Courthouse

A motion was made by Mr. Adkins and seconded by Mr. Chmiel to approve illuminating the Athens County Courthouse in blue and yellow on August 24 in recognition of Ukraine's Independence Day.

The roll being called upon for adoption, the vote resulted as follows: Mr. Eliason, yea; Mr. Chmiel, yea; Mr. Adkins, yea.

Travel

A motion was made by Mr. Adkins and seconded by Mr. Chmiel to approve the following travel:

Common Pleas: Magistrate Meg Saunders; OAM Fall Conference, Columbus OH; 09/09 - 09/11/26
Auditor: Samantha Sinisgalli; Microsoft Skills Workshop Series, Nelsonville OH; 10/1, 11/5
DJFS: Tami Collins - 9/2- Ohio Dept of Children Kids Summit - Columbus, Ohio
DJFS: Tami Collins - 10/4-10/6- Annual CFIS Users Conference - Lewis Center, Ohio
DJFS: Tami Collins - 10/19-10/20 - OCSPA Fall Training - Columbus Ohio
DJFS: Tami Collins - 9/10-9/11 - OJFSDA General Session -Columbus Ohio
Mike Biggins - October 30, 2026-Nelsonville -OTCO Backflow Refresher

The roll being called upon for adoption, the vote resulted as follows: Mr. Eliason, yea; Mr. Chmiel, yea; Mr. Adkins, yea.

Executive Session

A motion was made by Mr. Adkins and seconded by Mr. Chmiel to enter into executive session at 10:08 with Administrator JoAnn Rockhold to discuss appointment of a public employee.

The roll being called upon for adoption, the vote resulted as follows: Mr. Eliason, yea; Mr. Chmiel, yea; Mr. Adkins, yea.

Regular Session

A motion was made by Mr. Adkins and seconded by Mr. Chmiel to return to regular session with Administrator Rockhold at 10:14 with No Action to be taken.

The roll being called upon for adoption, the vote resulted as follows: Mr. Eliason, yea; Mr. Chmiel, yea; Mr. Adkins, yea.

W&S Weekly Updates - Supt Oscar Carson

1. Country Club water agreement. W&S Manager Stephanie Morris reported that, despite previous correspondence, the Country Club had not cashed the county's check and had requested modification of the previously negotiated agreement, seeking a reduced amount. Commissioners determined that the county would continue enforcing the existing agreement, maintaining the previously approved amount and continuing to bill accordingly. The Board agreed that if the Country Club disagreed with the terms, the matter could be resolved through the courts.
2. Sanitary sewer manhole near Subway in The Plains. He explained that the manhole cover and supporting ring had collapsed after severe corrosion caused the metal ring to fail. Upon inspection, Supt Carson determined that the entire manhole structure had significantly deteriorated, including the internal rubber sealing gaskets. After consulting with the county engineer, it was determined that the structure requires complete replacement. Supt Carson estimated the repair would cost approximately \$30,000 to \$35,000 and advised that a formal quotation would be presented to the Board before work begins. In the interim, the area has been secured with a steel plate and traffic cones to eliminate any public safety hazard. Supt Carson anticipated the repair would be completed after his scheduled vacation.
3. Gear Drive - Supt Carson also provided an update on replacement of a previously discussed gear drive, explaining that delays resulted from incomplete procurement paperwork. Supt Carson reported that the necessary documentation had now been submitted correctly and the supplier had agreed to expedite the order.
4. The Board discussed ongoing concerns from homeowner (Yan Zhu 7386 Whitlind Lane) who experienced repeated sewer backups following power outages affecting a nearby lift station. The homeowner provided an update on the recently installed check valve, insurance claims, and cleanup efforts, while expressing concerns about future outages and the financial impact of the damage. Commissioner Eliason explained the legal limitations on the County's ability to provide compensation outside the established insurance process and advised that any dispute with the county's insurance determination would need to be resolved through the courts. The discussion also included potential long-term solutions to reduce future backups, including backup power for lift stations, system design considerations, and regulatory restrictions on emergency wastewater discharges. Commissioners agreed to await the outcome of the homeowners' insurance claim before considering further action.

New Marshfield Sewer Scope Change Agreement

A motion was made by Mr. Adkins and seconded by Mr. Chmiel to approve the agreement for the New Marshfield Sewer Scope Change to add additional work at the Plains WWTP to the scope of the ACOE Funds. The New Marshfield Sewer project will consist of upgrades to The Plains wastewater treatment plant and the design and construction of a new sanitary pump station and force main line in vicinity of Five Points Road and SR 691, including approximately 20,000 linear feet of sanitary sewer pipe, manholes, connections to the existing sewer system, cleanouts, site restoration, and erosion control measures. And authorize Commissioner Eliason to sign all the additional forms for changes for the project.

The roll being called upon for adoption, the vote resulted as follows: Mr. Eliason, yea; Mr. Chmiel, yea; Mr. Adkins, yea.

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August 18, 2026

To: Members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

SUBJECT: Urgent Action Needed Regarding the Abandonment of Rural Landline Telecommunications Infrastructure

Dear Members of Congress,

On behalf of the residents of Athens County, Ohio, and rural communities across Appalachia, we write to bring your urgent attention to an escalating communications and public safety crisis. Incumbent telecommunications providers are systematically failing to maintain—and in many cases, outright refusing to supply—basic landline telephone service to rural residents. This de facto abandonment of traditional wireline infrastructure is leaving thousands of families and small businesses without reliable basic communications or emergency 911 access.

The Reality on the Ground: A Growing Safety Risk

In rural regions like Appalachian Ohio, terrain and dense foliage present severe physical obstacles to wireless connectivity. Millions of residents live in deep hollows and valleys where cellular coverage is non-existent. For these households, traditional copper landline phones have historically served as the sole lifeline to emergency services, healthcare, and public notification systems.

Today, that lifeline is rapidly failing:

- **Refusal of Service:** In parts of our county, major providers such as Frontier Communications are no longer offering traditional landlines to properties in rural hollows, referring residents instead to unreliable satellite alternatives that do not function in poor weather.
- **Decrepit Copper Networks:** The existing copper cables serving rural America are 50+ years old and well past their end-of-life. Neglect and understaffing have resulted in routine outages lasting weeks at a time.

- **Critical 911 Hazards:** When landline infrastructure fails in cellular dead zones, residents cannot dial 911 in life-threatening situations. Furthermore, first responders and law enforcement officers entering these areas are frequently left without radio or phone communication, endangering public safety personnel.

Alternative Technologies Are Not Ready to Replace Landlines

While federal policies often assume that low-earth orbit (LEO) satellite, fixed wireless, or 5G mobile networks can seamlessly replace copper landlines, the physical realities of rural terrain prove otherwise:

- **Fixed Wireless & 5G:** Signals above 2 GHz are heavily absorbed by foliage and obstructed by rugged hills, making 100% coverage impossible in topographically complex areas.
- **Satellite Options:** Satellite internet and voice services suffer from latency, high costs, terrain obstructions, and severe weather degradation, making them unsuitable as a sole emergency service mechanism.

Under the U.S. Communications Act of 1934, federal policy established that all people in the United States must have access to rapid, efficient nationwide communication facilities at reasonable charges. Despite receiving tens of billions of dollars in federal Universal Service Fund (USF) subsidies over recent decades, major telecommunications providers have allowed rural infrastructure to deteriorate while prioritizing urban and suburban buildouts.

Regulatory Framework

Current legal and regulatory standards, including ORC 128.23 and Administrative Code 4921.01, underscore the critical necessity of reliable 911 access. Furthermore, one of the FCC's top priorities is to ensure that the public can always reach 911. The FCC's rules require communications service providers to complete 911 calls, notify 911 call centers of outages, and certify that they are taking certain reliability measures. Completing 911 Calls: Wireless, wireline, and interconnected VOIP service providers must connect all 911 calls and transmit the caller's location information to 911 call centers. Ensuring 911 Reliability: Covered 911 service providers, or providers that aggregate 911 traffic from an originating service provider and deliver it to a 911 call center, must annually certify to the FCC whether they have implemented specific measures within the last year with respect to 911 circuit diversity, central office backup power, and network monitoring. Reporting Outages to 911 Call Centers: Communications providers must notify, as soon as possible, a designated official at the affected 911 facility, of an outage which potentially affects the 911 facility, and must convey all available information that may be useful to mitigate the effects of the outage.

Necessary Legislative Action

We urge Congress to take immediate federal action to protect rural citizens from losing access to essential communication services:

1. **Enforce Carrier-of-Last-Resort Obligations:** Require legacy carriers receiving federal support to maintain operational, reliable voice service—whether wireline or fiber-to-the-home—until a functional, weather-proof alternative is demonstrably available to 100% of the affected addresses.

The Board of Athens County Commissioners is an Affirmative Action employer
and does not discriminate for reasons of race, gender, age, religion or disability.



2. **Require FCC Oversight on Copper Retirement:** Mandate that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) thoroughly investigate claims by incumbent providers regarding service availability, preventing carriers from abandoning copper lines without certified replacement infrastructure.
3. **Prioritize Fiber-to-the-Premise (FTTP) Buildouts:** Direct federal rural broadband and telecommunications funding (including BEAD and RDOF funds) strictly toward reliable, future-proof fiber deployments that deliver simultaneous voice and high-speed data to the last mile.

No American citizen should be left without the ability to call for emergency help simply because they live in a rural area. We ask that you champion federal regulatory protections and funding accountability to ensure our rural communities are not left behind in the dark.

Thank you for your leadership and dedicated service to our region.

Sincerely,

Board of Athens County Commissioners

Lenny Eliason, Athens County Commissioner

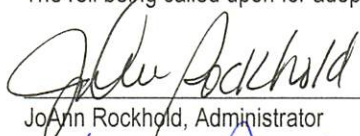
Charlie Adkins, Athens County Commissioner

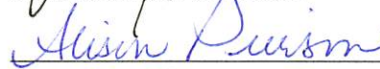
Chris Chmiel, Athens County Commissioner

Adjourn

A motion was made by Mr. Adkins and seconded by Mr. Chmiel to adjourn the above meeting.

The roll being called upon for adoption, the vote resulted as follows: Mr. Eliason, yea; Mr. Chmiel, yea; Mr. Adkins, yea.



JoAnn Rockhold, Administrator

Alison Pierson, Clerk

Lenny Eliason, President

Charlie Adkins, Vice-President

Chris Chmiel