



Date: February 29, 2024

Time: 11:30 a.m.

Location: MORPC Room 101 (Board Room)

Members Present in Person

Lourdes Barroso de Padilla (Chair)

Sloan Spalding (Vice Chair)

Todd Bailey

Gerard Basalla

Bob Bitzenhofer

Kelsey Ellingsen

Mike Schadek

Steve Tugend

Commission Members Attending Remotely

Ben Collins

MORPC Staff Present in Person

Parag Agrawal

Todd Bradley

Joseph Garrity

William Murdock

Kyle Probert

Padmini Roy-Dixon

Guests Present in Person

State Senator Andrew Brenner

Guests Attending Remotely

None

The Chair called the meeting to order at 11:40 a.m.

Members of the committee provided introductions.

Mr. Murdock provided an update on MORPC's work. He expressed his appreciation for the committee's work. He began the update by introducing new MORPC staff and a new Roundtable member.

Mr. Agrawal introduced himself. He began his new role in early January, and previously worked in Polk County, Florida and Prince William County, Virginia.

Ms. Roy-Dixon introduced herself. She began her new role 5 months ago, leading economic development. She previously worked at The Ohio State University on international partnerships and at the Ohio Department of Development. She will be leading implementation of MORPC's new Economic Development District designation.

Ms. Ellingsen introduced herself. She is the new Local Government Affairs Director at COTA. She is focused on LinkUS community coordination efforts. She previously worked at Columbus City Council.

Mr. Murdock reported that the Regional Water Study will be starting tomorrow, and will wrap by end of year. Passenger rail efforts are also moving quickly with more to come soon. Conversations with Amtrak and Brightline have been promising.

Mr. Schadek shared over 400 people attended a passenger rail event in Crestline, Ohio. William and the Chair emphasized the importance of rural areas being a part of the effort.

Senator Brenner provided an update on the Senate Select Committee on Housing. He emphasized the regional diversity of the committee. The committee met in Cincinnati, Lima, Marietta, and Cleveland. The committee will be issuing a report next month. The biggest takeaways from the report are that the rate of construction has substantially changed, spiking property values. 60,000 to 70,000 homes were being build each year in the 1970s and 1980s, while only 20,000 to 30,000 are build each year now. Zoning is believed to be part of the issue.

He further stated that the Ohio Housing Trust Fund, in impacting about 3400 homes per year by financing programs, is not sufficient to address the 300,000-home shortage statewide. He expressed a desire to make structural reforms like comprehensive zoning and referendum reforms, as well as examining timelines and fees for building permits. He does not believe township zoning authority will be ended – but would like to see reform, and would like to incentivize updates of comprehensive plans. Legislation may also be coming on infrastructure and ways to incentivize merging of townships. School funding reform is also needed as property tax and school performance are affecting affordability.

Mr. Schadek asked whether the current school funding scheme is constitutional.

Senator Brenner replied that it has been constitutional for 20 years, but the system is overspending on students and not getting results.

Mr. Agrawal stated any resources to help small townships with zoning re-writes would be helpful.

Mr. Tugend added that there is language in HB 315 to provide grants to political subdivisions for this purpose.

Vice Chair Spalding asked how the state would incentivize township merging.

Senator Brenner replied that some kind of financial incentive would be needed.

Mr. Garrity provided an update on recent advocacy activities, including a visit to Washington, D.C. for the National Association of Regional Councils conference and Hill visits, as well as a passenger rail fact-finding trip to Florida. Trails projects in the capital budget and One-Time Strategic Community Investment Fund (Heritage Trail and Capital Line) also continue to be priorities for MORPC.

Mr. Tugend continued the update, relaying that the Auditor of State has not yet released numbers that determine the size of capital budget. The One-Time Strategic Community Investment Fund (OTSCIF) dollars appropriated in HB 2 totalled \$350 million. The Senate passed legislation yesterday that makes some capital appropriations via the Ohio Public Works Commission (the deadline is coming for PWC to be funded) via a floor amendment. The subtext of House-Senate animosity is underscoring capital process. There is a remote possibility negotiations over OTSCIF break down and no funding is passed. HB 2 is not focused on infrastructure – the Senate may want to go in different direction. Nothing will happen until April. The Governor has the State of the State on April 10th. Ideally, something may be done by Memorial Day.

Mr. Basalla reiterated that the Columbus Partnership appreciates MORPC's collaboration on OTSCIF. He urged committee members to set expectations for members to continue advocating as though the process has just begun.

Mr. Garrity reported that no government shutdown is expected tomorrow because six appropriations bills will be passed by March 8th, with others punted to March 22nd. Eight Columbus Region Coalition Projects are being considered for FY 2024. FY 2025 presents a new community projects opportunity – the deadline for Senator Brown is the 22nd. The House is expected to release guidance next week.

Mr. Tugend added that The All Ohio Future Fund will provide improvements to properties for development. The fund is being administered by the Ohio Department of Development. Webinars are ongoing regarding the program for info. These are administered as loans, some of which are forgivable. Additionally, he provided an update on the Ohio primary election – there are 28 contested House Republican races, including many incumbents. Some primaries may jeopardize GOP seats in general.

He further relayed that MORPC and JobsOhio were at Rickenbacker yesterday regarding economic development & the 121st Refueling Wing. The group went through a KC-135 and toured with crew. The KC-46 is coming along, but with lots of flaws. Columbus may get KC-46s. Feelings are mixed about getting them. The Central Ohio Defense Group meets a week from tomorrow at 9:00a.m. at Kegler, Brown, Hill & Ritter. The Chair opened the discussion for updates from members.

Mr. Bitzenhofer shared that 9% LIHTC applications due today. A former United Way site is a candidate in CMHA's application. They hope to start construction next year a few blocks from MORPC.

Ms. Ellingsen shared COTA has been working with ODOT to study the east-west corridor from New Albany to Dublin. They have been awarded \$10 million to advance the study and \$15 million for the West Broad Street LinkUS corridor through TRAC.

The Chair shared that on March 1st, pay equity legislation goes into effect. Columbus-based employers cannot ask for past salary history after that date. The Columbus city budget will be passed later in March with approximately \$18 million in appropriations. There may be a town hall beforehand. Columbus City Council is also examining a DORA in the city center.

Mr. Bailey moved to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Mr. Basalla seconded the motion. The motion was approved without objection.

The meeting adjourned at 1:03 p.m.