Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission
111 Liberty Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215

Natural Resources Assistance Council District 3
Meeting Notes – Fiscal Year 2027 – Applicant Presentations & Project Updates

---

June 16, 2026, 1:00 pm

Members Present
- Ryan Andrews, EMH&T Inc.
- Vice-Chair Laura Ball, City of Westerville
- Shannon Brady, City of Whitehall
- Matthew Brown, Franklin County Economic Development & Planning Department
- Toni Chinchar, ISG, Inc.
- Stephen Farst, City of Groveport
- Terry Seidel, The Nature Conservancy
- Chair Kyle Wilson, Franklin Soil & Water Conservation District
- Catherine Eichel, City of Gahanna
- Jess Griffith, City of Obetz
- Jennifer Hufford, Ohio Public Works Commission
- Chloee Howard, ISG, Inc.
- James Jewell – Prairie Township
- Jacob Pries, Western Reserve Land Conservancy
- Trustee Cathy Schmelzer, Prairie Township
- Cassie Stiles, Metro Parks
- Brad Westall, City of Columbus

Public Present
- Sean Bock, City of Gahanna
- Stacey Boumis, City of Obetz
- Mike Corbitt, City of Obetz

MORPC Staff Present
- Lynn Kaufman
- Edwina Teye

Meeting Called to Order at 1:04 pm
Chair Wilson called the meeting to order and initiated introductions among Members and attendees. Participants identified their organizations and roles, including representation from municipalities, conservation organizations, and planning agencies. The introductions ensured all attendees understood the composition of the group and established context for the meeting discussions.

Approval of March 19, 2026, Meeting Minutes
Chair Wilson led the review and approval process for the March 19, 2026, meeting minutes.

Member Brady moved to approve the March 9, 2026, meeting minutes. Member Farst seconded the motion; motion carried.

Available Funds & OPWC Updates
Jennifer Hufford, Ohio Public Works Commission, provided a financial update, explaining that approximately $6.4 million in carryover funds combined with roughly $3.5 million in new funding resulted in just over $10 million available for the current funding round. She also announced leadership changes, noting that Abbey Dehart assumed the role of Director of the Ohio Public Works Commission after previously serving as Chief Financial Officer, and that Dan DeNiro joined as the new Chief Financial Officer.

Project Updates

City of Columbus

Brad Westall, City of Columbus, updated the Council on the following projects:

- CCKAF/11-03B: Eastmoor Green Line
  The project is complete and pending final administrative steps.

- CCPAD/ 16-03: West Franklinton Green Space
  The project is complete and pending final administrative steps.

- CCRAA/18 (24-01): Alum Creek Preservation (Agler and Sunbury Roads)
  The project is complete and pending final administrative steps.

- CCRAC/24-02 Alum Creek Preservation / Baha'i Assembly
  Brad reported active negotiations with the property owner and requested an extension to January 1, 2027, due to a pricing gap.

  Member Brown moved to extend Alum Creek Preservation / Baha'i Assembly to January 1, 2027. Member Farst seconded the motion; motion carried.

- CCSSA/19-01 Cooke Woods Preservation
  Brad reported that the Cooke Woods Preservation project faces property encroachment issues and requested an extension to January 1, 2027

  Member Brady moved to extend Cooke Woods Preservation to January 1, 2027. Member Ball seconded the motion; motion carried.

- CCRAC /18 (24-02): McNaughten Road Greenspace Preservation
  Brad reported that the McNaughten Road Greenspace project also faces property encroachment issues, including structures and fencing by adjacent landowners. The City of Columbus is pursuing resolution through enforcement actions while maintaining a preference for full property protection. He requested an extension to January 1, 2027

  Member Ball moved to extend McNaughten Road Greenspace to January 1, 2027. Member Chinchar seconded the motion; motion carried.

- CCRAA/24-01 Alum Creek Preservation (Sunbury /Mock Roads)
  Brad reported that the Alum Creek Preservation project that there is a significant gap between the appraised value and the seller's expectations. He stated the City of Columbus is willing to increase its financial offer and requested an extension to January 1, 2027.

  Member Farst moved to extend McNaughten Road Greenspace to January 1, 2027. Member Seidel seconded the motion; motion carried.

City of Obetz

Edwina Teye reported that the Jermoore Road Stream Restoration project is progressing on schedule with completed foundational work including field investigations, stream assessments, and floodplain evaluations. No extension is required.

Metro Parks
Edwina reported that the Walnut Creek Acquisition Phase 2 project closed in May and is awaiting reinbursement, also requiring no extension.

Prairie Township
Jacob Pries, Western Reserve Land Conservancy, delivered an update on the Hellbranch Run Preserve project in Prairie Township, describing successful land acquisition and restoration activities. He highlighted integration with adjacent park amenities, plans for ADA-accessible trails, and environmental restoration work supported by multiple funding sources. He emphasized strong community engagement, including participation by approximately 60 volunteers who planted about 1,300 saplings, reinforcing the project's ecological and public benefit.

Preliminary Screener Presentations
City of Columbus Recreation & Parks

- Southern Meadows Protection Project
  Brad presented a proposed acquisition of approximately 51 acres of farmland in southwest Columbus. He described the site as an important opportunity to expand green space in an underserved area with limited natural land. He noted plans to exclude existing industrial portions and prioritize conservation of wooded and natural areas. Members indicated the project aligns well with program eligibility.

- Hague Ravines Protection Project
  Brad described two parcels threatened by rapid development along Hague Avenue. He explained the project's importance in preserving remaining natural corridors and connecting to existing protected lands. The proposal includes potential acquisition or conservation easements. Members confirmed the project appears eligible.

- McNaughten Woods Project
  Brad reported that this project has been withdrawn, and that no screener will be presented to the Council.

City of Gahanna

- Academy Park Improvements Project
  Catherine Eichel, City of Gahanna, presented a redevelopment project focused on stormwater management improvements, including a detention basin to address runoff issues in a heavily utilized park. She explained existing drainage deficiencies and the need for infrastructure upgrades tied to broader park improvements. Jennifer Huffard clarified that projects primarily focused on stormwater management are not eligible under Clean Ohio unless paired with ecological restoration. Members suggested incorporating a wetland or restoration component to improve eligibility.

City of Obetz

- Big Walnut Wetland Restoration Project
  Mike Corbitt, City of Obetz, presented a conceptual wetland restoration project within a floodplain area tied to a broader development context. He described goals related to flood mitigation, water quality, and community access. Jennifer Huffard noted that projects tied to required stormwater management or benefiting private development would not be eligible. Members suggested separating eligible ecological restoration components or considering an alternate site not impacted by development requirements.

Metro Parks

- Metro Parks Acquisition Projects (Jackson Pike Acquisition & Big Run Acquisition
  Cassie Stiles, Metro Parks, presented acquisition opportunities including the Jackson Pike property near Great Southern Metro Park and an additional parcel adjacent to Walnut Woods. She emphasized restoration potential, floodplain habitat, and community access benefits. Members expressed support and indicated the projects are eligible for application.

Prairie Township

- Prairie Gateway Preserve
  Jacob presented a 13-acre acquisition adjacent to Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park. He described restoration plans including invasive species removal, prairie habitat creation, and potential collaboration with federal partners. He noted increasing development pressure in the area and emphasized the project's role in expanding an existing conservation corridor. Members confirmed eligibility.

Other Business

Virtual Meeting Policy

Chair Wilson led discussion on clarification of the virtual meeting policy. Edwina and Members discussed the fact that the Chair and liaison (Edwina Teye) determine whether meetings are in-person, hybrid, or virtual. Members must notify the Chair at least 48 hours in advance if attending virtually, and public access links must be posted. The policy prioritizes in-person meetings but allows flexibility to maintain quorum and accommodate extenuating circumstances.

Adjourned at 2:26 pm.