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

Natural Resources Assistance Council District 3
Meeting Notes – Fiscal Year 2027 – Application Scoring Session

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October 6, 2026, 11:00 am

Members Present
- Ryan Andrews, EMH&T Inc.
- Vice-Chair Laura Ball, City of Westerville
- Shannon Brady, City of Whitehall
- Matthew Brown, Franklin County Engineer's Office
- Stephen Farst, City of Groveport
- Brian Heath, Davey Tree
- Nathan Johnson, Ohio Environmental Council
- Terry Seidel, The Nature Conservancy
- Chair Kyle Wilson, Franklin Soil & Water Conservation District

Public Present
- Ashley Ellrod, Ohio Public Works Commission
- Jennifer Hufford, Ohio Public Works Commission
- James Jewell, Prairie Township
- Jacob Pries, Western Reserve Land Conservancy
- Kathryn Yazel

MORPC Staff Present
- Lynn Kaufman
- Edwina Teye

Meeting Called to Order at 11:04 am
Chair Wilson called the meeting to order and noted that the Assistance Council follows an established agenda and does not accept public comments during meetings. Guests with questions were directed to contact staff during normal business hours.

Introductions
Attendees introduced themselves and their affiliations. Additional introductions were provided by guests and staff in attendance.

Approval of June 16, 2026, Minutes
Member Brady moved to approve the June 16, 2026, meetings minutes. Member Farst seconded the motion; motion carried.

Current Balance Available
Edwina Teye reported that the current balance available for funding was $10,200,641.74. Ashley Ellord, OPWC District 3 representative confirmed the balance. Members received the update without discussion.

Review and Scoring of Applications
Chair Wilson reminded Members that application scoring is to be completed independently and that the purpose of the meeting was to establish consistent interpretation of scoring criteria and standard information used by all reviewers. Members reviewed methodology, scoring categories, and application-specific questions to ensure uniform scoring practices.

Members reviewed the scoring framework for Sections 1 through 4 of the application evaluation process. Edwina explained that Questions 1 through 13 are individually scored on a scale of 0 to 5 and are weighted according to established criteria. Additional sections address local coordination and support, cost effectiveness, economic conditions, and communications with landowners. Applicant match calculations and points were also reviewed. Staff confirmed that

the applicant match scores are calculated using the established methodology, with points earned for contributions exceeding the 25 percent baseline.

Cost Effectiveness

Edwina presented the cost-per-acre figures for the six applications under consideration:

App ID	Applicant	Project Name	Project Type	Total Project Cost	Local Match Dollars	Match %	Clean Ohio Amount Requested	Total Acres	Clean Ohio Cost Per Acre	Total Linear Feet	Clean Ohio Cost Per LF	#20
27-01	Columbus	Vandervort Woods Protection Project	Land Acquisition	$592,150	$ 159,880.00	27%	$432,270	5	$86,454.00			
27-02	Columbus	Southern Meadows Preservation Project	Land Acquisition	$6,110,700	1,710,996	28%	$4,399,704	35	$125,705.83			
27-03	City of Obetz	Big Walnut Floodplain Wetland Restoration Plan	Restoration	$1,969,559	$492,390	25%	1,477,169	33	$44,762.70			
27-04	Metro Parks	Big Run Acquisition	Land Acquisition	$914,000	$228,500	25%	$685,500	45	$15,233.33			
27-05	Metro Parks	Jackson Pike Acquisition	Land Acquisition	$649,000	$162,250	25%	$486,750	60	$8,112.50			
27-06	Prairie Twp	Prairie Gateway Preserve	Land Acquisition	$1,047,400	$ 261,850.00	25%	$785,550	13	$60,426.92			
			Totals:	$11,282,809	2,754,016		$7,481,393	191				

Members reviewed the projects and discussed appropriate low, medium, and high-cost groupings for Question 20. Consensus emerged that the two City of Columbus projects should be classified as high cost, the Prairie Township and City of Obetz projects as medium cost, and the two Metro Parks projects as low cost.

Members approved assigning zero points to the low-cost category, three points to the medium-cost category, and six points to the high-cost category.

Member Brown moved to adopt the proposed classifications and associated scores. Member Andrews seconded the motion; motion carried.

Economic Condition Criteria

Members reviewed the staff-calculated economic condition scores. Edwina explained that these scores had been entered into the scoring spreadsheet using the established methodology. Members found the proposed brackets and calculations appropriate and identified no concerns or requested changes.

Member Farst moved to accept the economic condition scoring recommendations. Vice-Chair Ball seconded the motion; motion carried.

Communications with Landowners

Members reviewed scoring criteria related to communications with landowners. The Council confirmed that applicants receive five points for documented communication with a landowner, ten points for a letter of intent from the landowner, and 20 points for a signed contract.

Discussion focused on documentation submitted for the City of Columbus Vandervort Woods Protection Project. Edwina explained that the project included a letter expressing the landowner's interest in selling the property for preservation purposes, but the document did not contain a signature. Members discussed whether the document should be treated as evidence of communication only or as a letter of intent.

Member Seidel noted that the document clearly expressed the landowner's intention regarding the property. Members discussed the distinction between a letter of intent and a signed contract,

observing that the methodology specifically references a letter of intent from the landowner and does not require a signature for that category.

Member Brown moved to award the City of Columbus Vandervort Woods Protection Project ten points for submission of a letter of intent. Member Farst seconded the motion; motion carried.

Resolution and Eligibility Documentation

Members discussed the eligibility of the City of Columbus Vandervort Woods Protection Project because the application did not include resolutions from the applicable township trustees and county commissioners per ORC 164.23(B)(1). Discussion focused on whether such resolutions were required because the property is currently located within township territory rather than within the City of Columbus.

Members reviewed statutory language and considered whether an exception may apply for municipal applicants if property ultimately becomes located within municipal boundaries through annexation. The application did not clearly state whether annexation would occur following acquisition.

Several options were discussed, including determining the project ineligible, seeking clarification from the Ohio Public Works Commission regarding the annexation exception, or contacting the City of Columbus to determine whether the required resolutions already exist but were inadvertently omitted from the application.

The Council agreed to table a final eligibility determination pending clarification. Members directed staff to seek guidance from OPWC regarding annexation-related eligibility and to contact the City of Columbus concerning the existence of the required resolutions. Members were encouraged to continue scoring the application so the project could be evaluated if the eligibility issue is resolved before final action.

Scoring Process and Schedule

Edwina informed Members that the completed scoring spreadsheet would be distributed during the week with all approved scoring decisions incorporated. Members were reminded that scores must be submitted by October 23, 2026.

Members also discussed access procedures for application materials and were reminded to use the approved authentication process. Staff cautioned Members that any request for payment associated with file access should be considered fraudulent.

The final action meeting was confirmed for November 10, 2026. Members were reminded that submitted scores will only be counted if the Member is present at the final meeting and a quorum is attained.

Other Business

The Council recognized Steve Farst for his approximately twelve years of service. Members expressed appreciation for his professionalism, expertise, institutional knowledge, and contributions to the Council's decision-making process. Member comments highlighted his willingness to answer questions and assist other Members throughout his tenure. Steve indicated he hoped to attend the November meeting.

Members also acknowledged personnel transitions associated with district reshuffling. Jennifer Hubbard was thanked for her service and support of the Council over recent years. Members

expressed appreciation for her responsiveness, technical knowledge, and guidance on policy and program requirements.

Ashley Ellrod, the new program representative, introduced herself and shared that she has five years of experience with OPWC and previously worked for the City of Upper Arlington for ten years. Members welcomed her to the Council.

Additional staff and organizational transitions were briefly discussed, including the departure of Member Toni Chinchar from her previous organization and other personnel changes affecting regional partners.

Adjourned at 11:41 am.