

**MAYORS
PARTNERSHIP
FOR PROGRESS**

**PROMOTING
REGIONAL
COOPERATION
AND ADVANCEMENT**

2018 Annual Review

Prepared by Jack Frech MPP VISTA

History

The Mayors' began meeting in 1995 as the vision of several regional mayors. In 1996 they were formally incorporated as the Mayors' Partnership for Progress, signing an agreement for technical assistance with Ohio University. The organization later became a nonprofit in 2003.

The Mayors' Partnership for Progress brings together mayors and city managers from cities and villages throughout Appalachian Ohio to share information and resources and tackle common issues faced by municipalities throughout the region.

Membership

The Mayors' Partnership for Progress is comprised of a 15-county area including:

Athens, Gallia, Hocking, Jackson, Lawrence, Meigs, Morgan, Monroe, Noble, Perry, Pike, Ross, Scioto, Vinton, and Washington.

Purposes of Mayors' Partnership

The Mayors' Partnership meets on a monthly basis. There are at least three core functions that the Mayors' Partnership to area municipalities:

1. **Sharing of Information, Concerns, Advice, Resources:** Mayors discuss successes and challenges their communities are facing:
 - a. Informal peer-to-peer technical assistance (particular with more established mayors providing assistance to newer mayors) and
 - b. Mayors identify opportunities, based on needs, to share resources (i.e.: snow removal equipment).
2. **Informational Forum Regarding Issues of Potential Impact and Technical Assistance:** Each month Mayors address a current, relevant topic. The Voinovich School helps identify speakers and collect information about the topics. Prior examples include:
 - a. Discussions about legislation that may have an impact on local communities
 - b. New state-level initiatives
 - c. Technical assistance around areas of shared concern
3. **Platform for Local Leaders to Communicate with Political Stakeholders:** There are typically various representatives from members of Congress who participate in the monthly meetings as well as representatives from state offices.

"Providing leaders from small, rural communities a stronger, regional voice."

November 2017

Greg Browning, Marsha Lewis and Tom Johnson provided an overview of the Rural Revitalization Partnership Initiative.

December 2017

Tom O'Grady of the Southeast Ohio History Center was the featured speaker. SOHC works to preserve Southeast Ohio history by creating a collation of historical societies to protect the history of the region. Sam Jones of Sam's Gym in Glouster was highlighted for its work with local youth since 1936. The MPP voted to add Monroe and Noble Counties to the partnership.

January 2018

An informational roundtable was held. Discussion included the Athens city pool completion schedule, Logan receiving over \$5 million in grant for water treatment, the Portsmouth bypass completion, and the potential re-purposing of the Hocking Correctional Facility. Jack Frech reported on the continued efforts to get TANF funds for the water and health products programs.

February 2018

Mark Snider, Financial Planner was the featured speaker. He discussed the issue of healthcare cost for public and private sector businesses. He presented the idea of the MPP municipalities partnering with his firm to create a consortium to address healthcare costs. The MPP received funding for an additional VISTA volunteer for next year. Jack Frech discussed the recent meeting regarding the Hocking Prison, his meeting with representative from the Community Reinvestment Act Collation, and money bail issues.

March 2018

Orman Hall presented information about the growing substance abuse issue in the region. Lively discussion ensued with all Mayors and other representatives present. Amista Lipot was introduced as the new MPP coordinator.

April 2018

Jack Frech, MPP VISTA provided a report regarding the growing problem of driver's license suspensions. Several Mayors with Mayor's courts echoed the concern. Strategies to address the issue were discussed. Also discussed were the challenges posed by the growing costs of state audits.

May 2018

The meeting was hosted by Mayor Tom Johnson and held in Somerset Ohio. Information about art grants was presented.

June 2018

The Voinovich School discussed a set of position papers being prepared to share with political candidates. A presentation of USDA housing assistance was made.

July 2018

Ohio University President Duane Nellis was in attendance to provide a presentation on the University's priorities and discuss regional concerns with the Mayors.

August 2018

Representatives from the ACLU of Ohio were present to discuss the issues of bail reform and driver's license suspensions. The Mayors shared their challenges with this issue through Mayor's courts and local law enforcement.

September 2018

Susan Schell of the Ohio EPA was the featured speaker. She addressed the issue of water asset management.

October 2018

A dinner meeting was held in Logan Ohio hosted by Mayor Greg Fraunfelter. Brian Williams of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission provided information on the Insight 2050 Academy.

Highlights

Childcare—The childcare in-home aide program promoted by the MPP has expanded to 12 aides with 45 in training over several counties. The Ohio Dept. of Job and Family Services is now encouraging counties throughout the state to adopt the in-home childcare aide program in hopes of reversing the decline of childcare providers in rural areas.

Bail reform -- The MPP hosted a meeting the Ohio Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union to discuss bail reform as a tool to reduce unnecessary incarceration and address growing jail costs.

Driver's license suspensions—The MPP VISTA worker compiled a report on the significant barriers to employment created by excessive suspensions of driver's licenses for purely economic reasons. As result our local legislators supported H.B. 336 which created an amnesty period for license reinstatement fees. The VISTA volunteer is currently coordinating outreach and support for implementation of the bill through collaboration with the Public Defender's office, the Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation and The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services.

Medicaid Transportation- The MPP VISTA volunteer offered testimony at a regional hearing on the proposed changes to the NET Medicaid program. The planned changes would have been very damaging to the region. As a result of these efforts and others, the State has agreed to delay implementation and allow for further study including a more practical approach for our region.

Water assistance—although the MPP has yet to achieve the full funding of its \$12 million TANF proposal, it did succeed in getting \$500,000 of CSBG funding for emergency water assistance for the MPP region beginning in October. Efforts to access the \$600 million of unspent TANF money continue.

Randy Lambert joined Jack Frech as a VISTA volunteer for the MPP. Jack has continued work on a variety of poverty related projects including childcare, transportation, bail reform, driver's license suspensions and financial assistance for low-income families. Randy has started work on land banks, veterans and housing issues.

The MPP developed a statement of positions and issues and submitted it to elected officials and interested parties.

The Mayor's Partnership for Progress mourned the passing of Bob Gordon. The much admired and respected coordinator of the group for many years. He will be missed.

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