

Infrastructure and recreation upgrades benefits city and county residents



Shawn Digits

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ZANESVILLE – Many local officials and community members packed into Weatherington Woods July 29, including commissioners, mayors, congressmen, directors, local business owners and Muskingum County citizens and more.

The Chamber of Commerce's inaugural State of the County luncheon was held to focus on some of Zanesville and Muskingum County's recent accomplishments and look ahead to the future.

The Zanesville Muskingum County Port Authority's Executive Director Eric Reed was one of the first to speak before the crowd with some highlights.

"Our total employment is at its highest level in 10 years. Our unemployment rate stands at about 3.5%, which is in line with state averages. Our wages continue to trend upward, clear indicators of a resilient and growing (local) economy," Reed shared.

"Over the past 10 years, business attraction and BRE (business retention and expansion) efforts have contributed to the creation of over 550 new jobs, 405 million in capital investment from new business projects. During the same period, existing employers retained and created nearly 2,300 jobs and added an additional \$192 million in capital investment in the same county," he added.

The port authority received more than \$36 million in infrastructure and development funding last year. Some of its major awards include a [\\$20.7 million grant from the All Ohio Future Fund](#) (AOFF) for the development of a 600-acre plot in Jackson Township and another \$3.6 million award, also through the AOFF, for continued site development of National Road Business Park.

Some of the recent or ongoing port authority projects include the [Genesis Eastpointe Health Center](#), [securing the first tenant](#) in the National Road Business Park's [spec building](#), additional railroad spurs to help with the [Eastpointe transloading station](#) and facilitating the [relocation](#) of air freshener company K29 (Sterling Teal International) to East Pike.

County level

Muskingum County Commissioner Melissa Bell also spoke at the event and covered a wide range of topics, including the Muskingum County's prosecutor, engineer and auditor offices.

For example, the prosecutor's office handled more than 2,100 cases in 2025 with almost 800 felony indictments.

"Nearly \$92,000 in criminal currency was forfeited, \$192,000 in delinquent taxes were collected, \$8.5 million in child support was disbursed, and over \$60,000 in restitution was collected from welfare fraud through our prosecutor's office," Bell said.

The auditor's office refinanced \$34 million in bond anticipation notes for the new Muskingum County jail and built a GIS septic mapping system, Bell added.

The new county jail, which broke ground last year, is a \$79 million build and was [approaching its midway point](#) in February.

The engineer's office received grant funding for 2026 and beyond including \$1.33 million for paving and almost \$8 million for bridges (through 2030).

Bell also touched on some more recent water and sewer milestones.

"In 2025, we completed nearly \$10 million in water and sewer infrastructure improvements, supported by \$2.4 million (in) grant funding secured by our water department," she said. Some of those include the larger and more recently completed [Maysville water main extension](#) and [Licking View sewer project](#).

"The Maysville water project includes 26,000 linear feet of water line, and funding for this project was secured through the Ohio EPA with \$445,000 in principal forgiveness, \$500,000 from the Appalachian Regional Commission, \$2.5 million dollars from the H2Ohio program, and nearly \$2 million in Small, Underserved, and Disadvantaged Communities grant program funds from the U.S. EPA," she added.

City level

Zanesville Mayor Don Mason was a third official that talked on some city-level highlights. One addressed a small bump in population growth.

Between 2020 and 2026, the city's population jumped around 0.14%, Mason shared.

"The city was on a constant decline in terms of population from 1980 to where we are now," he said. "0.14 is not a lot, but it's growth, right?"

He also mentioned housing for the year.

"In 2026... so far, we have 281 housing units, not including rehabs that have been permitted," he revealed. "To give you comparison, what's 281 mean? Well, the 2020 census had the city of Zanesville at 11,000 housing units. So that's 281 just this year."

Many of Zanesville's recent or current projects emphasize housing, like with the Community Improvement Corporation (CIC) and its [rehabilitated homes and new builds](#), the Leasure Farms housing subdivision, the [River Trace Master Development](#) (near the Kellogg's factory) and Woda Cooper's three recent complexes called Munson Crossing, Zane Commons and [Carol Crossing](#).

Other completed or in-progress projects include [Dug Road's reopening](#), [Cuddy Dixon Memorial Park's](#) improvements and renovations at [Secrest Auditorium](#).

More: [John Glenn Band program seeks golfers, sponsors for Sept. 13 scramble](#)

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