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Week in Review

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As a service to the clients and friends of Governmental Policy Group, Inc. and RH Resources we would like to extend the following weekly update of events happening around Capitol Square.

ADDICTION/SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Members of Gov. Mike DeWine's RecoveryOhio Advisory Council on Monday worked to nail down which mental health and addiction services needs should be featured prominently in the panel's final report, which will also make budget recommendations. Using a "nominal group technique," council members placed stickers next to their three personal highest priorities in the following four areas of the system: early intervention priorities; crisis intervention; treatment; and recovery. The three items with the most stickers will be featured in the final report, RecoveryOhio Director Alisha Nelson said.

The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) has awarded a \$250,000 grant to Ohio's SafeRx Collaborative for the purchase of more than 60,000 drug disposal pouches, along with education and evaluation of the program, the agencies announced Monday.

AGING

Sens. Steve Wilson (R-Maineville) and Kenny Yuko (D-Richmond Heights) introduced their co-sponsored SB24 Wednesday to establish the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Task Force, comprised of representatives from the Ohio Department of Aging, Ohio Department of Health and other experts, with the goal of preparing Ohio for what the sponsors characterized as the "pending Alzheimer's crisis."

Chairman Steve Arndt (R-Port Clinton) of the House Aging and Long Term Care Committee told *Hannah News* that Ohio is facing a significant "dementia bubble" that needs to be addressed with new policies and a bolstered caregiver workforce. Referencing last year's Speaker's Task Force on Alzheimer's and Dementia chaired by former Rep. Dorothy Pelanda, now director of the Ohio Department of Agriculture, Arndt said the committee seeks to continue the conversation that began in that task force and utilize information and recommendations made in its final report.

AGRICULTURE

Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) Director Dorothy Pelanda will host a series of informal meet and greet events across the state, the department has announced. A few have already taken place, and upcoming meetings are planned Friday, Feb. 22 in Marysville and Piqua; Friday, March 1 in Upper Sandusky; and Monday, March 3 in Eaton and Celina.

The state of Ohio should move to legalize hemp, House Majority Floor Leader Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati) said during the House Agriculture and Rural Development Committee's organizational meeting Tuesday. "It's a very valuable product. It has a lot of uses. We ought to pull our heads out of our posteriors and realize the many positive uses of hemp for our farming community," Seitz said. Committee Chairman Rep. Kyle Koehler (R-Springfield) told reporters he expects his committee to consider a hemp legalization bill.

The state needs to develop a "comprehensive statewide plan" to protect water from agricultural pollution without adding more regulations on farmers, House Finance Agriculture, Development and Natural Resources Subcommittee Chair Jim Hoops (R-Napoleon) said Wednesday. "One of the big issues is clean water. I know a lot of farmers are doing a lot of good things up there right now, but yet we know we have to deal with this issue with Lake Erie," Hoops said during the organizational meeting of his subcommittee, joined by Ranking Member Paula Hicks-Hudson (D-Toledo) and Reps. Brian Baldrige (R-Winchester) and Tracy Richardson (R-Marysville). Rep. Michael O'Brien (D-Warren) did not attend the meeting.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Agents with the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) searched the offices of Cuyahoga County Executive Armond Budish on Thursday, Ohio Attorney General's Office spokesperson Dave O'Neil told *Hannah News*. However, O'Neil said his office can't provide any more information about the "continuing investigation." Budish, a Democrat, is a former speaker of the Ohio House.

FY20-21 BUDGET

The Children's Budget Coalition began releasing issue briefs and policy recommendations to advocate for a variety of initiatives to address childhood poverty. They are available at <https://ohiochildrensbudget.org>.

CHILDREN/FAMILIES

LeeAnne Cornyn stressed to members of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Home Visitation that the group is heading into the final two weeks of deliberation before its recommendations are due to the governor on March 1. She said the meeting next week will focus on identifying the group's recommendations while the meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 27 will finalize those recommendations so they can be delivered to the governor on March 1. Wednesday's meeting was the first where the group broke into three subcommittees. The full committee heard presentations on "community hubs" that are operated by the Commission on Minority Health and the Every Child Succeeds program in Cincinnati.

Groundwork Ohio, the Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association (OCCRRA), Ohio Association of Child Care Providers (OACCP), Ohio Association for the Education of Young Children (Ohio AEYC), and Southwest Ohio Association for the Education of Young Children (SWOAEYC) Thursday announced the formation of the Ohio Early Childhood Equitable Access Coalition, a coalition of early childhood educators unified behind a common policy agenda and committed to mobilize stakeholders to advocate for increased quality and access to early education programs in the FY20-21 state budget and beyond.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Members of the House Criminal Justice Criminal Sentencing Subcommittee all spoke on the need for reform despite their diverse backgrounds in the criminal justice system during the subcommittee's first meeting on Tuesday. One of three subcommittees that feature a co-chair from each party, the Criminal Sentencing Subcommittee is a new addition to the committee lineup in this General Assembly.

Gov. Mike DeWine on Wednesday signed an executive order creating a task force to examine the current system of issuing and serving arrest warrants in Ohio. "New warrants are issued every day in this state, piling on top of a growing backlog of old unserved warrants. It is simply impossible for law enforcement to keep up, which threatens the safety of our residents and communities," DeWine said in a news release. "I'm asking members of this task force to take a good look at this problem and identify options for improving this overwhelmed system."

The House Criminal Justice Committee met very briefly Wednesday to welcome both new and returning members to the body. In the absence of Chair George Lang (R-West Chester), Vice Chair Phil Plummer (R-Dayton) oversaw the meeting and asked members to introduce themselves. Returning members include Jim Butler (R-Dayton), Bob Cupp (R-Lima), Tavia Galonski (D-Akron), John Rogers (D-Mentor-on-the-Lake) and Bill Seitz (R-Cincinnati). "As a firm believer in criminal justice reform, there is much that can and should be done," Seitz said.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Ohio House's Economic and Workforce Development Committee met for the first time Wednesday, with Chair Paul Zeltwanger (R-Mason) saying the purpose of the meeting was to kick things off, set a vision and coordinate timing and schedules, noting that he had originally hoped the committee would meet later in the morning and may still seek a time other than 9 a.m. The ranking member, Rep. Lisa Sobecki (D-Toledo), was named as secretary.

J.P. Nauseef, a former president and CEO of the Dayton Development Coalition (DDC), was named Thursday as the next president and chief investment officer (CIO) of JobsOhio starting in March.

Lt. Gov. Jon Husted Wednesday praised the news that Google would be opening a new data center in New Albany representing \$600 million in investment, saying the state is working toward "becoming the tech capital of the Midwest."

EDUCATION

Parties in the ongoing litigation surrounding the Educational Classroom of Tomorrow (ECOT) discussed three major issues at a status conference Friday, with Franklin County Common Pleas Judge Richard Holbrook saying he would make a decision on two of the issues in the coming days. Those two matters were whether the ECOT board should be able to ask interim master Myron Terlecky to indemnify individual former employees of ECOT and whether a group of seven public school districts should be able to pursue claims against Third Wave Communications, Midwest Communications & Media and Grant Street Consultants.

Applications are now being accepted for the Ohio Department of Education's (ODE) EdChoice Scholarship Program. The deadline to apply is Tuesday, April 30.

Superintendent Paolo DeMaria gave his forecast of upcoming legislative deliberations Tuesday to the State Board of Education, as part of a new standing agenda topic for the board's meetings. Board President Laura Kohler said when she was developing a new committee structure she'd heard strong interest from colleagues about reconstituting a legislative committee of the board, so she decided to effectively create a committee of the whole by making legislative updates a routine feature of the monthly meetings.

The State Board of Education is gearing up for deliberations on numerous revisions to state report cards for traditional district schools, career-technical planning districts and dropout prevention and recovery schools. The board's Accountability and Assessment Committee started talks Tuesday on upcoming work to revisit rules on the composition and calculation of report card measures.

Rep. Louis Blessing (R-Cincinnati), chairman of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, told *Hannah News* at the committee's first meeting Tuesday evening that he expects movement on bills to revamp school district report cards and early childhood education. He said districts are still upset about the state report card rating system, and he said a bill similar to 132-HB591 (Duffey) could be introduced early on in the session.

Reps. Bob Cupp (R-Lima) and John Patterson (D-Jefferson) said Tuesday their long-awaited report on a new school funding model is near completion but needs a bit more work before its public debut. The two spoke after co-chairing their first meeting as leaders of the House Finance Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee, under the new bipartisan subcommittee structure instituted by Speaker Larry Householder (R-Glenford). "It's no surprise that some of these things take a little longer to fine tune in the final form than one anticipates," Cupp said.

ELECTIONS 2019

Rep. Kris Jordan (R-Ostrander) has filed to run for Delaware County Municipal Court clerk, according to the Delaware County Board of Elections. Jordan's filing sets up a primary with

Republican Cindy Dinovo, the incumbent, who filed to retain her seat. Democrat Emma Mirles also filed to run for the seat.

ELECTIONS 2020

Secretary of State Frank LaRose Monday announced his office was beginning a process to send voter registration forms to addresses that did not respond to "last chance" postcards sent by their local county board of elections. LaRose's office said it had issued a request to county boards to provide the voter ID numbers of voters who did not respond to the postcards sent by former Secretary of State and now Lt. Gov. Jon Husted before he left office that warned voters who had not voted in several elections that their registration was in danger of being canceled. The voter ID numbers will be used by the secretary of state's office to send voter registration cards to each of the addresses provided, LaRose's office said.

ENERGY

Rep. Nino Vitale (R-Urbana), chair of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee, opened the first meeting of the group on Tuesday by having members introduce themselves. Several provided some background on previous experience in the energy area or what they hope to see the committee tackle.

The House Energy and Natural Resources Energy Generation Subcommittee met briefly Tuesday to introduce members and to informally address top policy questions going into the budget process. Chairman Dick Stein (R-Norwalk) affirmed his interest in supporting nuclear generation technology, old and new. "I want to find a way to keep our nuclear plants open," said Stein, whose district lies 50 miles south of the Davis-Besse Nuclear Power Station. "We need to figure out a path forward to try to save that."

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

House Financial Institutions Committee Chairman Kris Jordan (R-Ostrander) said Tuesday that his priority for the committee is to guarantee there is a strong banking industry in the state across the board. Speaking to reporters after the committee's first organizational meeting, Jordan said he wants to make sure consumers are able to get the types of loans they need, ranging from individuals with limited means to large developers and businesses that want to locate in Ohio.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY/STATEHOUSE

The House and Senate both released their lists of committee rosters and chairmanships and commenced hearings.

House committees and chairs are as follows: Aging and Long Term Care, Rep. Steve Arndt (R-Port Clinton); Agriculture and Rural Development, Rep. Kyle Koehler (R-Springfield); Armed Services and Veterans Affairs, Rep. Rick Perales (R-Beavercreek); Civil Justice, Rep. Steve Hambley (R-Brunswick); Criminal Justice, Rep. George Lang (R-West Chester); Criminal Sentencing Subcommittee, co-chaired by Reps. Sarah LaTourette (R-Chesterland) and Tavia Galonski (D-Akron); Commerce and Labor, Rep. Gayle Manning (R-North Ridgeville); Economic and Workforce Development, Rep. Paul Zeltwanger (R-Mason); Energy and Natural Resources, Rep. Nino Vitale (R-Urbana); Energy Generation Subcommittee, co-chaired by Reps. Dick Stein (R-

Norwalk) and Michael O'Brien (D-Warren); Federalism, Rep. John Becker (R-Cincinnati); Finance, Rep. Scott Oelslager (R-North Canton); Finance Agriculture, Development and Natural Resources Subcommittee, Rep. Jim Hoops (R-Napoleon); Finance Health and Human Services Subcommittee, Rep. Mark Romanchuk (R-Mansfield); Finance Higher Education Subcommittee, Rep. Rick Carfagna (R-Westerville); Finance Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee, co-chaired by Reps. Bob Cupp (R-Lima) and John Patterson (D-Jefferson); Finance Transportation Subcommittee, Rep. Dave Greenspan (R-Westlake); Financial Institutions, Rep. Kris Jordan (R-Ostrander); Health, Rep. Derek Merrin (R-Monclova); Higher Education, Rep. Candice Keller (R-Middletown); Insurance, Rep. Tom Brinkman (R-Cincinnati); Primary and Secondary Education Committee, Rep. Louis Blessing (R-Cincinnati); Public Utilities, Rep. Jamie Callender (R-Concord); Rules and Reference, Speaker Larry Householder (R-Glenford); State and Local Government, Rep. Scott Wiggam (R-Wooster); Transportation and Public Safety, Rep. Doug Green (R-Mt. Orab); Ways and Means, Rep. Tim Schaffer (R-Lancaster).

Senate committees and chairs are as follows: Agriculture and Natural Resources, Sen. Frank Hoagland (R-Mingo Junction); Education, Sen. Peggy Lehner (R-Kettering); Energy and Public Utilities, Sen. Steve Wilson (R-Maineville); Finance, Sen. Matt Dolan (R-Chagrin Falls); Finance Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee, Sen. Lou Terhar (R-Cincinnati); Finance General Government and Agency Review Subcommittee, Sen. Kirk Schuring (R-Canton); Finance Higher Education Subcommittee, Sen. Stephanie Kunze (R-Hilliard); Finance Health and Medicaid Subcommittee, Sen. Bob Hackett (R-London); Government Oversight and Reform, Sen. Bill Coley (R-West Chester); Health, Human Services and Medicaid, Sen. Dave Burke (R-Marysville); Insurance and Financial Institutions, Sen. Bob Hackett (R-London); Judiciary, Sen. John Eklund (R-Chardon); Local Government, Public Safety and Veterans Affairs, Sen. Joe Uecker (R-Loveland); Rules and Reference, Senate President Larry Obhof (R-Medina); Transportation, Commerce and Workforce, Sen. Robert McColley (R-Napoleon); Ways and Means, Sen. Lou Terhar (R-Cincinnati).

While Rep. Ryan Smith (R-Bidwell) himself did not get a committee chairmanship when Speaker Larry Householder (R-Glenford) announced committee assignments Friday, at least half of the Republicans who did get the top positions had supported Smith over Householder in the speaker's fight that saw Householder emerge victorious despite more Republicans supporting Smith.

Hannah News interview series with new legislators profiled Rep. Randi Clites (D-Ravenna), who comes to the General Assembly with experience as a member of a legislative study committee and advocate for children with medical handicaps.

Rep. Michael Sheehy (D-Toledo) recently announced his appointment as Ohio's representative on the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus (GLLC) Executive Committee, which represents all eight states and two Canadian provinces in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence basin.

Senate Republicans announced Tuesday their priority legislation for the 133rd General Assembly, with SB1 (Roegner-McColley) focused on cutting the number of state regulations by 30 percent over three years. Priority legislation also would address Lake Erie and water quality, criminal sentencing and drug addiction, and school construction, among other topics.

The House and Senate introduced nearly 100 bills in the first barrage of legislation filed Tuesday, though the House skipped straight to HB16 in the numbering to reserve space for House Republicans' priority bills.

Rep. Steve Hambley (R-Medina) ran his first meeting as chair of the House Civil Justice Committee on Tuesday, saying he's excited to continue his "paid sabbatical" as a committee chairman before returning to teach as a college professor. "My priority is to make sure we stay on track, on time and organized ... and that all sides have the opportunity to get a hearing. It's all about the process. That's one thing I've learned," Hambley said.

The Ohio History Connection will celebrate the state's birthday Wednesday, Feb. 27 at the Statehouse, and the organization is inviting local historical societies from around the state to Columbus to celebrate Statehood Day and meet with lawmakers.

Senate Democrats outlined legislative priorities Wednesday that they said will put the concerns of Ohio workers first, from job training to child care to anti-discrimination laws. "Without a workforce you're not going to move any state forward," said Minority Leader Kenny Yuko (D-Richmond Heights).

The House Federalism Committee hosted two speakers Wednesday on the prospect of an Article V constitutional convention, anticipating legislation on the topic and testing a debate format that Chairman Rep. John Becker (R-Cincinnati) wants to use on weighty proposals assigned to the panel. Becker said he'd like to precede committee votes on high-profile issues with a debate between a proponent and an opponent speaker to give those topics a full airing. The chairman said he expects the committee will deliberate on legislation in three focus areas: the Second Amendment; Article V conventions; and the 10th amendment.

The House Commerce and Labor Committee held an organizational meeting Wednesday, with Chair Gayle Manning (R-North Ridgeville) conducting introductions and talking with reporters afterward. Ranking Member Michele Lepore-Hagan (D-Youngstown) was named as secretary, and she also talked to reporters on her priorities for the committee. "One of the problems that we're finding with labor is the workforce. We're hearing, over and over again, that's an issue," Manning told reporters, adding that she'd recently talked to staff at a company forced to close due to lack of workers

GOVERNOR

Appointments made during the week include the following:

- Mary C. Mertz of Worthington (Franklin County) to the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission for a term beginning Feb. 13, 2019 and continuing at the pleasure of the governor.
- James E. Carnes of St. Clairsville (Belmont County) reappointed to the Liquor Control Commission for a term beginning Feb. 9, 2019 and ending Feb. 8, 2025.
- Ross W. McGregor of Springfield (Clark County) reappointed to the State Personnel Board of Review for a term beginning Feb. 9, 2019 and ending Feb. 8, 2025.
- David R. Harbarger of Lakewood (Cuyahoga County) reappointed to the Board of Tax Appeals for a term beginning Feb. 9, 2019 and ending Feb. 8, 2025.
- Beth Hansen of Bexley (Franklin County) to the Ohio State Racing Commission for a term beginning Feb. 13, 2019 and ending March 19, 2019.

- David Goodman of New Albany (Franklin County) to the Unemployment Compensation Review Commission for a term beginning Feb. 27, 2019 and ending Feb. 26, 2025.

GREAT LAKES

Gov. Mike DeWine Friday named Joy Mulinex to serve as the director of the Ohio Lake Erie Commission. The appointment will be effective Friday, Feb. 22. Mulinex currently serves as director of government relations for the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, where she develops and implements the organization's federal and state public policy platform.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) joined with U.S. Rep. Lloyd Doggett (D-TX) Thursday to announce legislation they said would address prescription drug affordability. Calling the bill the "Medicare Negotiation and Competitive Licensing Act," the bill would authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate drug prices and, if a drug company refuses to negotiate in good faith, the secretary would be enabled to issue a competitive, compulsory license to another company that is willing and able to produce the medication as a generic.

In remarks during the organizational meeting of the House Health Committee on Tuesday, Chairman Derek Merrin (R-Maumee) said he wants to open up the committee to more than just hearing bills. Merrin told the committee that he wants to invite in national experts and associations to discuss various health care issues and encouraged members of the committee who have issues or policies from their districts they want to discuss to bring it to the committee for short presentations.

Because of the partial federal government shutdown that concluded Jan. 25, Ohio Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households will receive 50 percent of their March benefits on Friday, Feb. 22 and the remainder on their assigned March issuance date, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) announced Wednesday.

Chair Rep. Mark Romanchuk (R-Mansfield) of the House Finance Health and Human Services Subcommittee stressed to his members Wednesday just how busy the subcommittee will be during the upcoming budget deliberations: "If one of us gets a cold, we will all get it: that's just how much we'll be seeing each other."

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Wednesday afternoon saw the first meeting of the House State and Local Government Committee, chaired by Rep. Scott Wiggam (R-Wooster), who said he would defer to his fellow members on how best to serve local communities statewide. The chair said he had no current plans to introduce his own legislation in the committee, and any legislative priorities for the committee would arise from his members.

The State Medical Board of Ohio (SMBO) on Wednesday awarded 39 more certificates to recommend (CTR) medical marijuana. There are now 413 physicians who can recommend medical marijuana to patients in Ohio.

MILITARY AFFAIRS

The chairman of the House Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committee Wednesday said he hopes to get the committee out to tour the various military installations around the state, as well meeting with veterans and their families to discuss their issues. Rep. Rick Perales (R-Beavercreek), chairman of the committee, told fellow committee members during an organizational meeting that doesn't know of a better time to support Ohio veterans and service members than right now. He said he believes the state could do more to take care of its veterans and military families.

NATURAL RESOURCES

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) says passage and signing of HB225 (Thompson) in the 132nd General Assembly has provided a lot more cash for "orphan" oil and gas well remediation across the state and therefore greatly increases need for certified private contractors to plug the wells. ODNR's Division of Oil and Gas Resources Management (DOGMR) has put out the all-call for oil and gas contractors interested in abandoned well remediation. Companies must respond to the Ohio Department of Administrative Services' (DAS) request for proposal (RFP) and complete a certification process. The deadline for proposals is Friday, Feb. 22.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) has announced an expansion of the ODNR Division of Forestry's Forest Fire Protection Area. The expanded area includes the entirety of the following counties: Adams, Ashland, Ashtabula, Athens, Belmont, Brown, Carroll, Clermont, Columbiana, Coshocton, Fairfield, Fulton, Gallia, Geauga, Guernsey, Harrison, Henry, Highland, Hocking, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Lawrence, Licking, Lucas, Knox, Meigs, Mahoning, Monroe, Morgan, Muskingum, Noble, Perry, Pike, Portage, Richland, Ross, Scioto, Stark, Trumbull, Tuscarawas, Vinton and Washington.

Ohioans should consider donating a portion or all of their state income tax refund to support state nature preserves and wildlife, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR). "When Ohio residents choose to donate some of their Ohio tax refund, it directly benefits some of our most endangered wildlife and our state nature preserves," ODNR Director Mary Mertz said in a news release. "We work hard to protect all of Ohio's precious natural resources, and the generous donations made to assist in those efforts help us move closer to all of our conservation goals."

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ohioans looking to defray the cost of installing tornado safe rooms in their homes can now apply for a rebate from the state government. The Ohio Emergency Management Agency (EMA) announced this week that it is accepting applications for safe room rebate funding for Ohioans who install extreme-wind shelters in their homes.

STATE GOVERNMENT

The Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review (JCARR) adjourned as quickly as it started Monday in the year's first meeting, with members reserving no comments for the brief agenda.

The Controlling Board Monday approved 49 items on its agenda through blanket approval, as none were held by members. A request for \$1.35 million by the Ohio Department of Higher Education toward expansion of the Ohio Cyber Range at the University of Cincinnati was deferred at the department's request.

The Ohio Poor People's Campaign, the state chapter of a national movement of activists who say they are building on a movement started by Martin Luther King Jr. before his death, came to the Ohio Statehouse to advocate for an agenda they say will help poor people, including a single-payer health care system, better protections for the environment and affordable housing. The group held a press conference at the Statehouse Wednesday, saying they plan to deliver letters to Ohio's legislators and Gov. Mike DeWine outlining their agenda.

TAXATION

As with other House committees, the House Ways and Means Committee Tuesday held its organizational meeting for the 133rd General Assembly. It is one of the larger committees, with 21 members.

TRANSPORTATION/INFRASTRUCTURE

In its first meeting of the 133rd General Assembly Tuesday, the House Transportation Committee adopted the House committee rules and Chairman Doug Green (R-Mt. Orab) appointed Ranking Member Michael Sheehy (D-Oregon) committee secretary. Green recommended members refresh their memories on last year's 100-page Autonomous Vehicles Report, and he said any road naming or license plate bills will typically

Leadership from the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the Ohio State Highway Patrol warned of growing deferred maintenance costs Wednesday at the first hearing for HB62 (Oelslager), the House's placeholder transportation budget bill.

With Gov. Mike DeWine saying there is a coming "crisis" in transportation infrastructure, Senate President Larry Obhof told reporters Thursday that multiple Senate committees will begin hearing testimony as early as next week from witnesses who've already spoken before the Governor's Advisory Committee on Transportation. Obhof said that the Senate's Transportation, Commerce and Workforce Committee and Ways and Means Committee, and perhaps the Finance Committee as well, will look at witnesses' "projections and ...what the actual numbers are."

The House Finance Transportation Subcommittee will do more than consider the transportation and operating budgets, Chairman Dave Greenspan (R-Westlake) said during the subcommittee's organizational meeting Thursday. "This committee in general will provide, on an ongoing basis, discussion as it relates to airports, seaports, rail and public transit. So we're going to be a little more active than maybe the committee has been in the past, with the purpose of fully vetting the financial needs and operational needs of all transportation in the state," Greenspan said. "Although I outlined those specifics, it's not limited to just those. Just wanted to make the point that our focus will be broader than just the current transportation budget."

UTILITIES

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) Nominating Council reset the hiring clock Monday as Chairman Asim Haque enters his final three weeks on the commission. The council opened the application process for Haque's seat after Gov. Mike DeWine last week appointed Commissioner Tom Johnson's replacement, Sam Randazzo of Industrial Energy Users (IEU) of Ohio, who will become chair.

Chairman Jamie Callender (R-Concord) of the House Public Utilities Committee acknowledged the far-reaching and likely contentious energy legislation heading his way Wednesday and called on committee members to keep things on an even keel as the 133rd General Assembly moves forward. "With a group of leaders and personalities in the room, that will be quite a challenge," he observed during an organizational meeting, vowing a policy of "openness" to ensure all voices are heard.

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio's (PUCO) PowerForward Collaborative continued its focus on electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure and rate design Thursday in the second meeting of its short life, though it was not clear whether outgoing commission Chairman Asim Haque's signature policy initiative will survive under the incoming chairman, Sam Randazzo of Industrial Energy Users (IEU) of Ohio.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Gov. Mike DeWine Thursday submitted his proposed budgets for the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) and the Ohio Industrial Commission (OIC) for the FY20-21 biennium, which were promptly introduced in the Ohio House as HB79 (Oelslager) for the OIC budget and HB80 (Oelslager) for the BWC budget.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY:

SENATE:

No legislative activity to report.

HOUSE:

No legislative activity to report.