

GrassrootsClippings

Monthly Newsletter of the Ohio Township Association

October 2009

Columbus State Announces New Public Administration Programs

Columbus State Community College is announcing a new associate degree track and a certificate program in Public Administration within the Business Management Technology Program of the Business Department beginning in the fall quarter of 2009. Courses in the new programs will include Principles of Public Administration, a Public Administration practicum, Public Safety Management, Public Administration Fund Accounting, seminar topics in Public Administration and a final, advanced capstone course in Public Administration. Also included will be courses from the Business Management Technology and Accounting programs.

These new programs in Public Administration may be important to your township for three reasons. First, there are likely those among your current staff whose skills and knowledge in government service would be greatly enhanced by participation in these new programs. Second, students who are taking the practicum may be assigned to work in selected government agencies as part of their course requirements. Third, as these programs develop, they could form a pool of trained and qualified applicants for job openings in your township government. We hope that you and your human resources professionals will give serious consideration to this new opportunity.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact Dr. Richard Bartlett, rbartlet@csc.edu, at Columbus State Community College in Columbus, Ohio.

Legislative Update

The following bills have been introduced into the 128th General Assembly. To view a bill in its entirety, please visit www.legislature.state.oh.us.

HB 255 FIREFIGHTER TAX CREDIT (Balderson)

To allow a \$400 income tax credit for volunteer firefighters.

HB 271 TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENTS (Patten, Stewart)

To modify coverage of the Public Employees' Collective Bargaining Law with respect to township fire departments.

SB 165 OIL/GAS DRILLING (Niehaus)

To revise the Oil and Gas Law.

Save the Date!

OTA Winter Conference 2010

Feb. 17-20



The 2010 conference will take place at the Columbus Convention Center.

Ohio Safety Councils

Safety councils are a combined effort of local businesses and the community. Their goals are to increase safety awareness and developing and maintaining a safe workplace.

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) Division of Safety & Hygiene sponsors more than 80 safety councils across the state, organized through chambers of commerce, trade and manufacturing associations, American Red Cross chapters or other safety-minded organizations. These safety councils provide their local communities with quality programs addressing occupational safety and health, workers' compensation and risk management education and information. They inform participants about new techniques, products and services, and provide a thorough knowledge of these services.

For more information on how to contact your local safety council, visit www.ohiobwc.com/employer/programs/safety/SandHCouncilsList.asp. Additional safety services are also available by contacting your Frank Gates Account Representative at 800-777-4283.

OTAN Fall Forum One of Many Educational Opportunities

The Ohio Township Administrators Network (OTAN) held its Fall Forum Oct. 2.

The purpose of the annual forum is to educate township administrators on a variety of issues which will aid them in serving their townships in a more efficient and effective manner.

Topics of the forum included "Understanding the Impact of Foreclosures on Townships," "Orienting New Trustees" and "Budgeting Strategies and Finding Resources in an Uncertain Economy."

ODOD Offers Home Energy Assistance Programs: Apply Now for 2010

Each year, more Ohioans find it difficult to pay their electric and natural gas bills. Although following energy efficiency tips may help to reduce the amount of energy used, unless a home has proper insulation or other systems in place to properly control temperatures, energy usage may still be higher and result in more expensive monthly energy bills. The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), your residential utility consumer advocate, offers a Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP) for customers who are income eligible.

The Home Weatherization Assistance Program is a federally funded energy efficiency program available to low income residential consumers. The program, administered by the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD), helps to lower energy bills by reducing the amount of energy used to heat and cool a home. Some of the free services included in the program are:

- Attic, wall and basement insulation
- Heating system repairs or replacements
- Reduction of air leakage from major sources such as a chimney or wall
- Personalized energy management plan
- Health and safety testing and inspections

Those accepted into the HWAP program will receive a home weatherization review in order to determine which services will be most cost effective. Consumers are eligible for the program if they are at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. They can also apply for HWAP if they participate in or qualify for any of the following:

- Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)
- Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP)
- Supplemental Security Income
- Temporary Aid to Needy Families

Similarly, ODOD also manages the Home Energy Assistance Program, another federally funded project. It is designed to help qualified customers pay for winter heating costs.

There are two different types of HEAP programs: HEAP and Emergency HEAP (E-HEAP). This program pays a portion of consumers' winter heating bills. Consumers can use HEAP one time per winter heating season. The amount of aid received varies and is determined by the following criteria:

- Household income at or below 200 percent of federal poverty guidelines (income is included for all members 18 years of age or older);
- Number of people in household;
- Cost or primary heating fuel or bulk fuel supplied;
- Amount of aid received from federal grants; and
- Geographic region of the state.

To apply for these programs, consumers must complete the Energy Assistance Program Application. Applications can be obtained by contacting ODOD, OCC or a community action agency. For more information on these and other utility assistance programs, contact the OCC at 877-742-5622 or visit www.pickocc.org. Consumers may also call the ODOD at 800-282-0880, or visit its Web site at www.odod.state.oh.us.



EPA Issued Debris Burning Guidelines

Cleaning up your yard before winter hits? Before you light that match, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has a few friendly reminders on burning debris. It is illegal to burn material in the following locations:

- Within the boundaries of any municipal corporation;
- Within 1,000 feet of a municipal corporation with 1,000 to 10,000 residents;
- Within one mile of a municipal corporation with more than 10,000 residents, such as Urbana; and
- In unincorporated areas between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. during October and November (an Ohio Department of Natural Resources requirement to prevent fall wildfires).

Brush, tree trimmings and leaves may be burned only on the property where they originated and if the burn site meets the boundary requirements. People responsible for the fire must ensure that the fire is located at a point on the premises no less than 1,000 feet from any inhabited building not located on the property. Garbage (food waste), dead animals and materials containing rubber, grease or petroleum (such as tires and plastics) cannot be burned anywhere.

2010 Membership Begins

The 2010 membership process has begun. Packets were mailed to each county's membership coordinator on Sept. 18.

Your township should be receiving a request for updated information for both active and associate members. Complete membership packets must be received by the OTA no later than Jan. 15, 2010, in order for all members to receive their membership cards in time for the annual winter conference. Those who do not receive membership cards in time for conference will be ineligible to vote in the OTA Board election.

Additionally, because this is an election year, it is imperative that membership be returned in a timely manner so new elected officials can receive an OTA welcome packet, including conference registration.

Board Elections Looming

The Ohio Township Association (OTA) Board elections are here yet again. Four officers and at least eight of the 16 directors will be elected at this year's winter conference. Officers serve for two years and may only be elected to two consecutive terms for the same office. Directors serve for four years and there is no term limit. The OTA Constitution states that only one director or officer can be elected from each county.

To be an officer or director, you must be a township trustee or fiscal officer, must be able to attend five board meetings each year, along with the annual winter conference and must be dedicated to township government.

If you're interested in serving on the OTA Board, mail your resume to 6500 Taylor Road, Suite A, Blacklick, Ohio 43304, or fax it to 614-863-9751 no later than 4 p.m. on Nov. 10. All officer and director candidates must interview before the appropriate nominating committee on Friday, Nov. 13, at the November board meeting. OTA staff will coordinate interview times for all candidates.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact a current officer or director (contact information can be found online at www.ohiotownships.org or in the front of your "Ohio Township News"). See below for nominating committee members.

<p>Officer Nominating Committee Karl Stroh, Wayne County (Chair) Terry Bell, Jefferson County Ron Cronley, Hardin County Tom Hans, Darke County Fred Leber, Huron County Nanette Yoder, Holmes County Larry Burkholder, Fulton County Marilyn Winn, Columbiana County Columbus Cheadle, Morgan County</p>	<p>Director Nominating Committee Dave Miller, Licking County (Chair) John Zizka, Portage County Larry Mansfield, Putnam County Shelly Webb, Coshocton County Stephen Bradley, Muskingum County</p>
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Public Records Trainings Continue

House Bill 9, passed by the 126th General Assembly to ensure that public employees are appropriately educated regarding obligations under the Ohio's Open Records Law, requires all elected officials or their appropriate designees to obtain three hours of training approved by the Ohio Attorney General (AG) per term served in elected office. See below for classes offered through the AG and Auditor's offices.

Attorney General Trainings (to register, call 800-282-0515)		
October 15 Lakeland Community College 7700 Clocktower Drive Kirtland, Ohio 44094 1:00 - 4:15 p.m.	October 20 Ohio University Chillicothe 101 University Drive Chillicothe, Ohio 45601 1:00 - 4:15 p.m.	October 26 OSU Mansfield 1760 University Drive Mansfield, Ohio 44906 9:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.
November 4 Wright State University 3634 Colonel Glenn Highway Dayton, Ohio 45435 9:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.	November 18 Canton City Hall 218 Cleveland Ave. Canton, Ohio 44702 1:00 - 4:15 p.m.	
Auditor's Office (to register, visit www.auditor.state.oh.us/conferenceinformation/HB9/Default.htm)		
November 5 Union County Services Center 940 London Ave. Marysville, Ohio 43040 5:00 - 8:15 p.m.	November 6 Embassy Suites - Dublin 5100 Upper Metro Place Dublin, Ohio 43017 8:15 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	November 17 Citywide Training Center 750 Piedmont Road Columbus, Ohio 43224 8:30 - 11:45 a.m.

Upcoming Events

Ohio Township Administrators
 Network (OTAN) Fall Forum
 OTA Office
 October 2

Columbiana County
 October 7

Franklin County
 October 8

Huron County
 October 8
 Dinner Meeting

Scioto County
 October 8

Allen County
 October 15
 7:30 p.m.

Ashtabula County
 October 15

Clermont County
 October 15

Lorain County
 October 15

Zoning Seminar
 Role and Function of the BZA
 OTA Office
 October 16

Carroll County
 October 22
 Fall Banquet

Zoning Seminar
 Role and Function
 of the Zoning Inspector
 OTA Office
 October 23

Putnam County
 October 28

Zoning Seminar
 Role and Function
 of the Zoning Commission
 OTA Office
 October 30

"Grassroots Clippings" is published monthly by the Ohio Township Association. It is disseminated to the fiscal officers of each township, who are then responsible for copying and circulating it to township members and trustees. It can also be found on the OTA Web site at www.ohiotownships.org.

OPERS Outlines Possible Approach to Reach Funding Goal

The Ohio Public Employers Retirement System (OPERS) along with the other four public pension systems have been asked to present to the Ohio Retirement Study Council a strategy to address long-term funding of the systems, particularly in light of recent economic downturns and future anticipated strains on the systems.

At a recent work group meeting, OPERS staff shared information with stakeholders about ideas the OPERS Board has discussed, including the following possible plan design changes. The OPERS will continue to discuss and evaluate various options.

- **Age and Service Eligibility** - add two years to the current plan.
- **Benefit Formula** - maintain the current 2.2 percent x Final Average Salary (FAS) but increase the time frame that the multiplier increases to 2.5 percent from 30 years of service to 35.
- **Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)** - increase base FAS from the three highest years of earnings to the five highest years.
- **Contribution Rate** - no change in rates.

It is important to stress that the OPERS Board has not taken formal action to endorse the above items, and these options are simply the Board's preference for the time being.

In addition, OPERS staff is hopeful that the legislature will enact pension reform in 2010, as debate is expected the rest of the year. The Board anticipates a long transition period, and is considering not implementing the above changes until 2015, though new hires would come under the proposed changes as soon as the legislation is enacted. These time frames, however, are subject to legislative approval.

The OPERS Board has also been working on the following initiatives:

- **Purchase of Service Credit** - increase the cost of purchasing service credit to reflect its true cost (pending legislative action). This would impact nearly all forms of service credit purchased, except for military service. Hence, elected officials who purchase time as well as individuals who withdraw contributions from OPERS and later seek to repurchase such credit will pay more money.
- **Minimum Earnable Salary** - increase the minimum earnable salary required to earn full-time service credit from \$250 to \$1,000 a month (pending legislative action). Partial service credit, on a pro-rated basis, would be provided to individuals earning less than \$1,000 a month. This change would impact certain township and village officials who are not highly compensated, as well as many gubernatorial appointments to state boards and commissions.
- **Disability** - change aspects of the system's disability program (pending legislation).
- **Membership Determination Statute of Limitations** - establish a five-year period following employment per job in which an individual can challenge their membership in OPERS.

The OPERS Board is very interested in receiving feedback on these proposals. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Heidi M. Fought, OTA director of governmental affairs, at fought@ohiotownships.org or 614-863-0045. She will compile all comments and questions and share with OPERS staff.



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Ohio Township Association
6500 Taylor Road, Suite A
Blacklick, Ohio 43004