

# THE CORD REPORT

The Official Quarterly Newsletter of CORD



## MORE STORIES INSIDE:

- **Legislative Update - 2**
- **Artificial Intelligence in Water and Wastewater - 4**
- **Top Drawer Regional Districts - 6**
- **Member and CORD Legislative -9**
- **Bringing Clarity and Resolution to the Crystal Ball - 11**
- **Issue 2 Statewide Ballot Issue Passage Shows Support for Infrastructure - 14**
- **CORD Support for H2Ohio Water Bond Issue Proposal - 15**
- **Recognition of Platinum Member- 16**

## CORD

1086 N. 4th St., Suite 105  
Columbus, Ohio 43201

**CORDOHIO.ORG**

## Contact Our Staff

*Larry Long, Director of Membership Development:* [larrylong@cordohio.org](mailto:larrylong@cordohio.org)

*Catina Taylor, Executive Assistant:*  
[catina.taylor@alberslaw.com](mailto:catina.taylor@alberslaw.com)

# FOCUS OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY: THE STATE BIENNIAL BUDGET

*But Other Legislation Impacting Regional Districts Being Watched*

**Michael Guastella**  
**Director of Public Affairs, Governmental Policy**  
**Group, Inc.**  
[michael@gpgrhr.com](mailto:michael@gpgrhr.com)



## **General Update**

Since our last update, the 136<sup>th</sup> General Assembly has been highly active. Most significantly, they have been working steadily on the biennial operating budget, HB 96. The bill passed the Ohio House on April 9<sup>th</sup> by a vote of 60-39, and is currently pending in the Ohio Senate. We are expecting the budget to receive another substitute bill on June 3<sup>rd</sup> from the Senate, with an “omnibus” amendment to follow the week after. From there, the General Assembly will have a little over two weeks to hash out any differences in a conference committee. Please look below for more information on a specific item that will be of interest to CORD members!

In addition to the budget, we are actively monitoring two dozen moving pieces of legislation, in addition to the thousands of pages of policy moving in the operating budget for you! Here is a brief summary on the top bills that are most relevant to you!

Please contact me at [michael@gpgrhr.com](mailto:michael@gpgrhr.com) if you have any questions or would like to discuss anything further.

## **Priority Legislative Updates**

### **HB 96 – Biennial Operating Budget (Contract Retainage)**

In the as-introduced version of HB 96, the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission included a series of changes to contract retainage of public improvement contracts (FCCCD15). As part of those changes, there is an unfortunate unintended consequence with the way some of the language is currently written.

Current language in HB 96 would now require that contractors be paid-in-full after substantial completion of the work as opposed to final completion of the work. While seemingly minor, this change would inhibit a 6119 district, or any other owner of a project, from being able to wrap up the project entirely before the contractor is required to be paid.

Recently, CORD approached OFCC and the other proponents of these changes in good faith to discuss the unintended consequences of this change in HB 96, where we had the chance to express our concerns and make them aware of how the language is being interpreted by local government groups.

We quickly confirmed that it was not at all their intent to move this goalpost and got to work on a solution. In a combined effort with the Ohio Facilities Construction Commission, the Cleveland Chapter of the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA), and the Associated General Contractors of Ohio, we were able to craft language that fixes this issue and accomplishes the same goals of streamlining the payment process to contractors and had it drafted as an amendment, which we are now awaiting for inclusion in the Senate substitute bill.

### **HB 49 – Water Improvement Districts**

This bill is a re-introduction of Rep. Claggett's HB 616 from the previous General Assembly. The legislation would create a new type of District – a “water improvement district” (WID), which looks and acts very much like a 6119 district with a couple of major differences. Namely, a WID would be able to bypass the State's competitive bidding and prevailing wage laws.

A well, the bill creates a duplicative regulatory structure, with a WID having most of the same type of authority that a 6119 has.

CORD continues to remain opposed to the bill, given the additional bureaucracy and regulatory confusion that having WIDs and 6119s at the same time would create. We are committed to working with the bill sponsor to address the issues that prompted this legislation.

HB 49 has been referred to the House Natural Resources committee, where it heard sponsor testimony from Rep. Claggett on April 9, 2025. The committee has yet to have an additional hearing on the bill.

### **HB 92/SB 118 – Lien Certification**

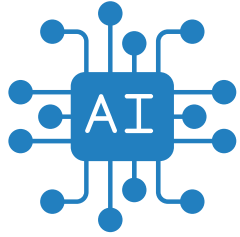
These bills are a reintroduction of HB 93 from the previous General Assembly.

HB 92 and SB 118 are legislation that, if enacted, would prohibit a municipality from having the ability to place a lien on a property that is owned by someone who is not the occupant of that property due to unpaid water bills. Today, if a renter does not pay their water bill and moves away, the property owner/ landlord is liable for the unpaid water bills. If the owner fails to pay, and that property is in the service territory of a municipality, the municipality can place a tax lien on the property until the bills are paid. This bill would remove the municipality's ability to place the lien for that reason, and the municipality would be left to find other means of finding payment for the account.

An important point to make for our purposes is that 6117 districts and 6119 districts are not currently in this bill. So, while CORD members are currently not affected by these bills, we remain on the sidelines ready to oppose the bill should we become included.

HB 92 has had three hearings so far, most recently on May 21<sup>st</sup> in the House Local Government committee. After hearing opposition testimony from over a dozen entities, the committee is attempting to convene an interested party discussion. SB 118 will have its first hearing in the Senate Local Government committee on May 28, 2025.

Finally, CORD continues to look for input on the legislative needs of Regional Districts. Earlier this year, a survey was sent to members for suggestions on needed legislative initiatives or changes to current provisions of Ohio law. CORD is in the process of adding to our current Legislative Program, which is included later in the edition of the CORD Report. Please refer to this article which shows the current Legislative Program and includes a link so that your voice can be heard. Please use this link to access the [survey](#).



# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN WATER & WASTEWATER: WHAT UTILITY MANAGERS NEED TO KNOW NOW

**BY MICHAEL GUASTELLA, GOVERNMENTAL POLICY GROUP**

As utilities across the nation face rising regulatory scrutiny, aging infrastructure, and mounting operational demands, a powerful ally is emerging to reshape water and wastewater management: artificial intelligence (AI). Once considered a niche innovation, AI and smart technologies are now proving to be strategic assets that can boost efficiency, enhance compliance, and reduce long-term costs across water and wastewater utilities.

In 2025, leading utilities are moving beyond pilot projects and into full-scale deployment of AI and Internet of Things (IoT) solutions—transforming how they monitor, maintain, and optimize systems.

## **From Reactive to Predictive: A New Maintenance Paradigm**

Many utilities still operate with reactive maintenance models, replacing pumps or clearing clogs after failure. AI enables a shift to predictive maintenance by analyzing historical and real-time data from SCADA systems, vibration sensors, flow meters, and chemical analyzers. With machine learning models trained on operational history, systems can now detect anomalies and flag early signs of failure—weeks before a breakdown occurs. For utility managers, the benefits are tangible: reduced unplanned downtime, extended equipment life, and fewer emergency repairs. This not only saves costs but also frees up operations staff to focus on higher-value work.

“Our AI-driven monitoring system helped us cut mechanical failures by 30% in the first year alone,” reports a utility director from Colorado. “That translated directly into savings on overtime, service contracts, and emergency response.”

## **Smart Process Control and Energy Optimization**

Aeration accounts for the majority of energy use at most wastewater treatment plants—often as much as 60%. AI systems can now dynamically optimize aeration intensity, chemical dosing, and sludge handling by learning from historical trends and responding in real time to inflow fluctuations.

In facilities that have deployed digital twins—virtual simulations of plant operations—operators can test new process configurations virtually before implementing them live, reducing risk and improving confidence in operational decisions.

By leveraging AI, utility managers can report measurable energy savings, improved effluent quality, and better compliance tracking—key performance indicators that increasingly influence funding and regulatory evaluations.

## Enabling Water Reuse and Resilience

Water reuse is becoming a critical component of long-term planning, especially in drought-prone and high-growth areas. Advanced treatment processes such as reverse osmosis, membrane bioreactors, and UV disinfection require consistent monitoring and fine-tuning—tasks that AI excels at.

AI systems can manage these complex processes while ensuring regulatory compliance and reporting. For utilities pursuing indirect or direct potable reuse, intelligent automation is essential to ensure reliability and public safety.



## Implementation Realities: Budget, Training, and Cybersecurity

Despite the benefits, integrating AI is not plug-and-play. Utility managers must budget not only for hardware and software but also for workforce development. AI doesn't replace operators—it augments them. Success depends on training staff to understand and act on data insights, and fostering collaboration between engineering, IT, and operations teams.

Cybersecurity is another critical factor. As utilities connect more assets to networks, the threat surface grows. Managers must prioritize cybersecurity protocols and partner with vendors who meet rigorous security standards.

## Strategic ROI and Long-Term Positioning

As highlighted in the American Society of Civil Engineers' 2025 Infrastructure Report Card, U.S. water and wastewater systems require more than \$150 billion in upgrades by 2035. AI-powered systems offer a way to maximize the return on that investment by reducing inefficiencies, minimizing unplanned costs, and extending the useful life of critical assets.

For utility leaders focused on long-term sustainability, resilience, and compliance, now is the time to treat AI not as a tech experiment—but as core infrastructure.





## TOP DRAWER REGIONAL DISTRICTS: THE TUPPERS PLAINS-CHESTER WATER DISTRICT: A TRADITION OF EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE SINCE 1967



by **Derek Baum**  
**General Manager**

### History of the Tupperts Plains-Chester Water District

The District was formed in response to the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency's (OEPA) Phase II stormwater regulations, along with the public's growing concerns about flooding in the rapidly developing Township. A three-member Board, appointed by the Deerfield Township Trustees, governs the District, with each member serving a staggered three-year term. The Board of Trustees meets monthly, providing a forum for public input and transparency.

Shortly after the formation of the District, funding for construction of the original system was secured from the Farmers Home Administration. In 1968, Nardei Contracting Company was awarded the General Contract for construction of the system. 1400 taps were installed with the original system compared to 5700 taps currently. The office for the District was constructed in 1975. Prior to the office being constructed, business for the District was conducted in a donated space at Baum Lumber in Chester. Original employees of the District were Lindsey Lyons, general manager, Albert Martin, plant operator, and Edna Wood, office administrator.



Derek Baum  
General Manager

### Geography

TPCWD currently serves a territory of approximately 400 square miles in Athens and Meigs counties. The District serves 9 Townships in Meigs County and 5 Townships in Athens County and also supplies water to the Village of Coolville in Athens County.

### **Board of Directors**

The TPCWD Board of Directors consists of five members each serving staggered a three-year terms. Two members are elected two years in a row and the other board member is elected in the third year. The board is elected through mail-in ballots of customers in good standing in December. There are three Officer positions consisting of a President, Vice-President, and Secretary-Treasurer. Board meetings are held at the main office on the second Monday of each month. The TPCWD Board strives to provide dependable, affordable, and clean water to as many residents as possible.

### **General Manager**

Derek Baum was hired in June 2018 succeeding General Manager, Don Poole, who was retiring early in 2019. Derek worked for AEP and then Lightstone Generation at Gavin Plant before coming to TPCWD. Derek graduated from The Ohio State University with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. Derek holds a Water Supply I operator's license and backflow certification as well as chemical and microbiological lab certifications for the TPCWD lab.

### **TPCWD Staff**

TPCWD has fourteen full-time employees that handle anything from billing and customer service to water line extension installation, tap installation, and water line repairs. TPCWD employees oversee all aspects of operating and managing a rural water system. There are five certified Water Supply I operators and ten certified in backflow prevention as well as eight certified on the chemical side of the lab and ten certified for microbiological testing. In addition, the district has an extensive GIS system that helps with planning for the future and increasing efficiency of system maintenance.

### **TPCWD Main Office Staff**

Tracy Calaway-GIS Coordinator  
Belinda Marcinko-Accounting Clerk/Customer Service Representative  
Miranda Moore-Backflow Coordinator/Customer Service Representative  
Kristin Buckley-Customer Service Representative

### **TPCWD Field Employees**

Casey Duvall-Treatment Plant Superintendent  
Matt Ridenour-Distribution System Superintendent  
Dennis Durst-Distribution System Technician  
Shaun Seth-Distribution System Technician  
Gary Adams-Distribution System Technician  
Zach Cunningham-Distribution System Technician  
Brad Church-Distribution System Technician  
Patrick Johnson-Distribution System Technician  
Chad Smeeks-Distribution System Technician





### **Water System**

TPCWD produces water using seven wells which are located in Long Bottom, OH near the Ohio River. The seven wells pump water into the treatment plant which has a maximum capacity of 2.4 MGD. Currently, the average supply to the system is 1.2 MGD. Treatment at the plant consists of greensand filters, ion-exchange softeners, and granular activated carbon filters. Sodium permanganate, gaseous chlorine, and fluoride are added to the water in the treatment process as well. The water is then pumped to nineteen storage tanks through ten booster stations and four flow stations. The District serves a population of 16,000 through 571 miles of water line.

### **Rates**

At the beginning of 2025, TPCWD completed the last step in a five-year rate increase with a minimum bill of \$28.30 for 0-3000 gallons. The current tap fee for a standard 5/8 x 3/4 metered service is \$1,300.00.

### **Projects**

TPCWD is currently working on a pipe replacement within the existing system which would replace a portion of the original system's concrete asbestos pipe with a 10" and 12" C900 PVC pipe. The project would also replace four critical Shade River crossings with new directional bore crossings with casing pipes.

### **Summary**

Tupper Plains-Chester Water District was formed in 1967 to provide clean, affordable water to residents and businesses in Meigs and Athens counties which did not have a good water source at that time. Through excellent leadership and willingness to expand, the system has grown from 1,300 taps in 1969 to 5,700 current taps. TPCWD will continue to provide reliable, clean, and affordable water to as many customers as possible in Meigs and Athens counties.



# CORD LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM—IT'S IMPORTANT TO HEAR FROM OUR MEMBERS

Every two years CORD attempts to update its *Legislative Program and Priorities*. Yes, CORD plays a lot of defense in the General Assembly, but the organization also plays an offensive game with legislators and the DeWine Administration. Recently, CORD asked all members, both Districts and Associate Members, to suggest issues that CORD should address and focus on in 2025 and beyond. The responses to the survey were extremely limited, so we are again urging members to share their thoughts with CORD through this [survey](#). All responses will be discussed and considered by the CORD Board of Directors for inclusion in the *CORD Legislative Program*.

Below are survey responses received from current CORD members regarding 2025 legislative priorities:

- Simplified appropriation process for easements.
- Raise minimum allowable costs without bidding for engineering services and construction.
- Eliminate the need to advertise for bids in newspapers. Electronic methods are sufficient.
- Cost benefit analysis and practical approach applied to EPA regarding PFAS, lead services, effluent limitations, etc.
- Operator shortages. More operator training opportunities are needed. Difficult to find qualified trainers and recent OEPA regulations have not helped.
- Clarification of 6119 District authority as political subdivisions. County engineers, soil, and water districts, building code departments, and county planning all tend to treat water and sewer districts like private developers.
- Creative new funding sources would be great. Revolving fund options for large projects.
- Clarification on whether or not JEDDs (Joint Economic Development Districts) can contract with municipalities for services within a township.
- Concerns about new legislative proposal to create “water improvement districts”.
- OEPA Treatment Limits are a costly moving target.
- Federal 208 Boundaries can be a major challenge. While the state may not drive this, the handling of it at the state level impacts Districts. Better management at the state level.
- Certification of delinquent bills to the county auditor creating liens appears to be under attack by the Legislature and is needed by Districts.
- More funding opportunities for Districts.
- Sanitary sewer disconnection issues for nonpayment of bills.
- Maintain basic authority for eminent domain and allow easier process for “quick-take”

Finally, for those of you not familiar with the 2024 CORD Legislative Program and Priorities, it is listed on the next page for your reference.



## 2024 CORD Legislative Priorities

### New Policy Opportunities

CORD is a membership-driven organization. We listen to our members when developing our legislative priorities for each General Assembly. These issues are derived from member input and are the focus of our advocacy at the Statehouse.

- **Support:** Legislation to require ODOT to pay for moving water and sewer lines located within the road right-of-way during road improvement projects.
- **Support:** Legislation to require notification to districts of property to be obtained by land banks and requirement that districts and land banks negotiate over payments of all or part of certified delinquent charges.
- **Support:** Requiring that County Auditor records show the existence of special assessments (even if in agriculture-deferred status)
- **Support:** Legislation permitting districts to form a group for insurance purchasing

### Clarify and Harmonize Existing Law

There are several opportunities to positively impact the regulatory environment for 6119 districts by modeling existing law in other areas.

- **Reform:** Prevent municipalities from acquiring District customers through annexation where state funding is utilized. (Similar to USDA 1926(b) protection for federal loans)
- **Reform:** Allow 6119 districts to join an association or nonprofit organization formed for the advocacy of 6119 districts. (Legislation comparable to ORC 505.241 – dues for township government association)
- **Reform:** Clarify storm water authority (ORC 6117.02 and 307.79)
- **Reform:** Remove ambiguities in ORC 6119 relating to adding territory to a District
- **Reform:** Legislation allowing for easier and more frequent certification of delinquent accounts to the County Auditor for collection by placement on the tax list and duplicate
- **Reform:** Legislation permitting simpler disconnection procedures for delinquent customers

### Opposition to Harmful Policy

Just as we are focused on bringing about positive changes for 6119 districts, we are also focused on preventing negative changes. Below is a list of policy areas that CORD actively works to prevent.

- **Oppose:** any policy that implements moratoriums on service disconnections for non-payment
- **Oppose:** legislation that prevents local governments from placing a tax lien on a property when water service charges are unpaid
- **Oppose:** Attempts to allow PUCO regulation of District rate setting

# BRINGING CLARITY AND RESOLUTION TO THE CRYSTAL BALL

**Joe Crea**  
Vice President, Cincinnati Office, Raftelis

The Licking Regional Water District (formerly the Southwest Licking Community Water & Sewer District (“District”) has provided water and sewer services to customers in Licking County for decades while effectively expanding facilities to manage the steady growth as their rural service area transitioned into a more suburban area. Late in 2021, the District engaged Raftelis to develop a comprehensive rate and capacity charge study that would support master planning recommendations for continued growth throughout the service area. As an Ohio 6119 regional water and sewer district, the District must be managed as a self-supporting entity. To support this requirement, the recommendations from the rate study included the identification of financial policies to support long-term fiscal stability (e.g., days of cash reserves, debt coverage targets, balanced capital financing, etc.). Steady, modest rate adjustments were recommended to support upcoming capital investments and a continued emphasis on excellent service delivery. The general financial plan recommendations can be seen in Figure 1.

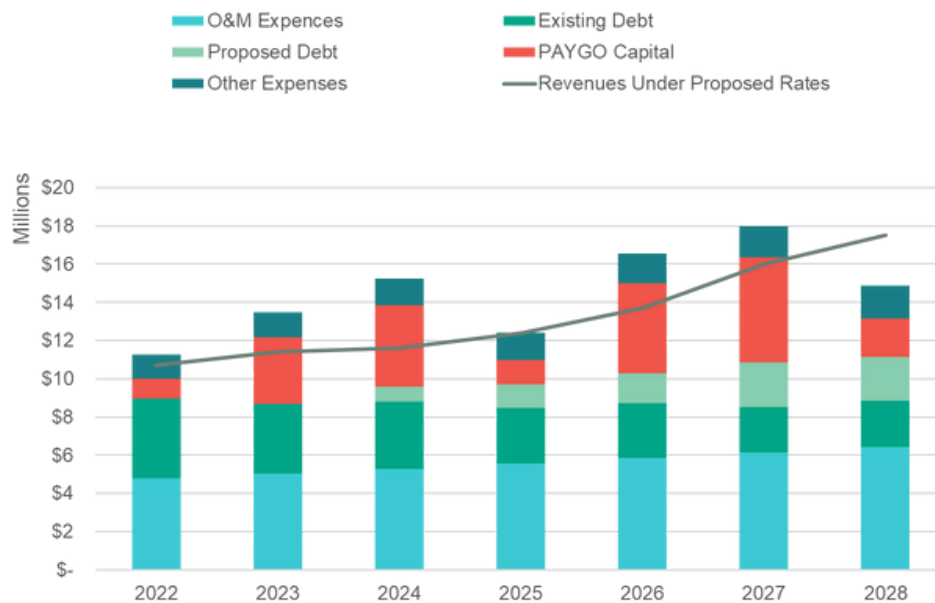


Figure 1. Original District Financial Plan

Shortly after the presentation of the rate study and master plan recommendations in 2022, an announcement was made that Intel would be building a brand-new chip fabrication facility just outside of the District’s service area. This development was expected to use up to 20 MGD of water within 20 years. While the District is not providing direct service to Intel, the growth projections that were included in the 2022 master plan were instantly inadequate to account for the expected growth that would occur around the Intel site and throughout the District’s service area. Almost overnight, the capital improvement and operational needs for the next 10 years expanded exponentially.

Dramatic changes like this could leave many utilities feeling overwhelmed and unsure of what to do next. Additionally, the District’s Board wanted to ensure that “development paid for development” to avoid placing additional burden on existing customers while recognizing the long-term benefits of more stable rates because of an increased scale of operations. Fortunately, the District’s management had tools at their disposal to help find clarity in the crystal ball. The District wasted no time in beginning the work to adapt their plans to account for this major change.

The groundwork that the District laid over the previous 18 months proved to be invaluable to quickly exploring the operational, capital, and financial implications of the Intel announcement. District staff built upon previous studies to identify the capital projects that would be needed to expand the service area and system capacity. The cost of capital investments used during the original rate study was approximately \$160 million over a ten-year period; the updated capital investment needs are estimated to cost nearly \$650 million. The new project list includes construction of new water and wastewater treatment facilities, core transmission and conveyance lines, and the pump and lift stations to move flows throughout the system. Additionally, the cost increases were driven by the substantial increases in materials and construction following the pandemic and rollout of federal funds through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The new facilities and system expansion would also have a significant impact to the cost of operations since the District would need to add staff and use more energy, chemicals, and other supplies.

The financial planning work that was essential to the original rate study provided the framework to understand how the District could possibly manage a capital plan of this magnitude and keep existing customer rates affordable. District staff worked with Raftelis to update the key inputs and assumptions in the financial planning model so that the latest estimates for capital improvements, operating costs, and customer growth forecasts reflected the best information available. Additionally, the District has been proactive to explore creative and alternative financing options for the capital investments. This includes traditional approaches like state loans and long-term borrowing, use of cash reserves, and establishing agreements with local jurisdictions for joint economic development districts (JEDD), tax increment financing (TIF), and New Community Authorities (NCA). Taking a holistic and comprehensive approach allows the District to reduce the burden being placed on existing rate payers.

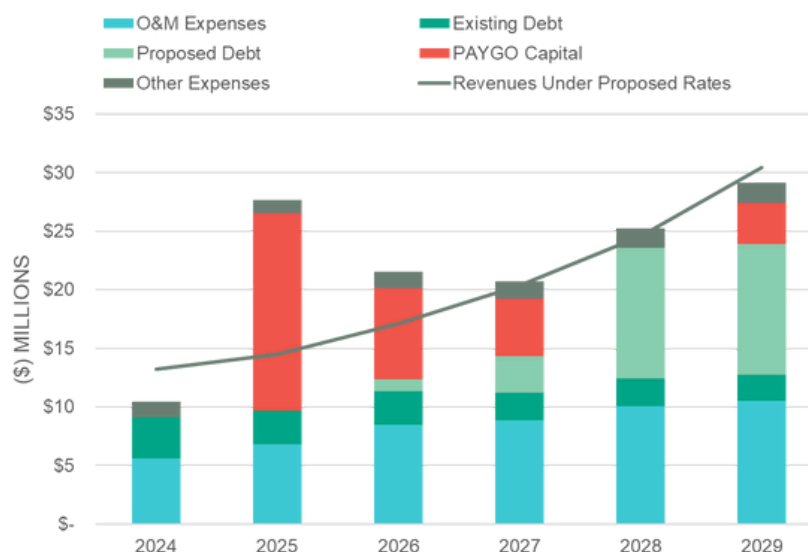


Figure 2. Revised District Financial Plan





The costs of the infrastructure are staggering. However, the potential growth within the District's service area that is anticipated by the State and other economic development organizations will provide a quickly growing customer base that will generate the revenues needed to recover these costs. Revenues from customers will be produced from two primary sources: ap and capacity fees that are paid at the time of connecting to the system which recover the investments made by existing customers that a new customer should contribute to. Monthly user rates and charge revenue that recovers the cost of annual operations and systemwide capital investments and rehabilitation.

The District reviewed its tap and capacity fees after identifying the increased capital improvement needs to promote equity between existing customers and new customers that will connect to the system in the coming years. Additionally, the District reviews and updates a comprehensive financial planning forecast each year. The financial plan is a tool that the District uses to promote informed decision making and the ability to test scenarios for the timing of capital investments and customer growth. As potential scenarios are evaluated, the financial planning model identifies the monthly rates and charges that will support the District's financial goals and policies.

There is no way to know for certain what the future will hold for the District. Through intentional and deliberate planning and preparation, staff have created an environment of data-driven decision making that adds a measure of clarity to what may be.



Joe Cera  
Vice President, Cincinnati Office, Raftelis

### About the author

Joe Cera leads Raftelis' Cincinnati Office. Joe has worked with water and wastewater agencies across the country on rate and financial planning studies, cost-of-service studies, interjurisdictional agreements, bond feasibility engagements, and customer affordability analyses. He also authored a chapter entitled, "Identification of Revenue Requirements," for the Fourth Edition of the industry guidebook, *Water and Wastewater Finance and Pricing: The Changing Landscape*. Joe graduated from Clemson University in 2005 with a Bachelor of Science in Mathematical Sciences. You can contact Joe at [jcera@raftelis.com](mailto:jcera@raftelis.com).



## ISSUE 2: INFRASTRUCTURE BOND ISSUE APPROVED BY VOTERS

### *Overwhelming Support for Strengthening Ohio's Infrastructure*

Ohio voters have historically shown their commitment to improving the state's infrastructure and fostering economic growth. Ohioans approval of Issue 2 bonds on May 6th underscores the fact that ordinary Ohioans continue to recognize the need for yet more money to address infrastructure needs. Through decisive action and overwhelming support, residents have ensured that substantial investments will flow into infrastructure projects, paving the way for better water and sewer systems, improved stormwater management, safer roads and bridges, and systems to environmentally manage solid waste.

With Issue 2's approval, Ohio will be able to issue general obligation bonds up to \$250 million annually, an increase of \$50 million from the current \$200 million per year. Ohioans first voted for the program as a lawmaker-initiated constitutional amendment in 1987 and then renewed it again in 1995, 2005, and 2014. The program is administered by the Ohio Public Works Commission through 19 local public works integrating committees that help the Commission prioritize projects at the local level.

Beyond the infrastructure improvements themselves, Issue 2's approval carries profound economic implications. Infrastructure projects supported by bond funding are expected to create thousands of jobs in construction, engineering, and related sectors. Additionally, improved infrastructure attracts businesses and industry, promotes tourism, and enhances productivity, thereby stimulating local economies and strengthening Ohio's competitive national position.

Statewide the issue passed impressively with 68% of those voting to approve the issue, while 32% voted "No". Turnout was low around Ohio with less than a million of Ohio's 8.2 million registered voters showing up at their precincts. That translates into less than 11% of Ohio's registered voters going to the polls. State Issue 2 passed in 85 of 88 counties, with only Clermont, Coshocton, and Pickaway counties defeating the issue countywide. In 60 counties the issue passed with over a 60% majority, with 14 counties approving the issue by greater than 70%. In two counties more than 75% of electors voted "Yes".



# CORD TO SUPPORT H2OHIO AND WATER BOND INITIATIVE



In early May, the CORD Board voted to support sending to Ohio's voters a proposed constitutional amendment to allow the state to issue long-term bonds to fund the H2Ohio Program. The Program would help protect ground and surface water through wetland protection and restoration, expand effective agricultural conservation practices, and improve water infrastructure. The focus of the initiative would be to ensure that all Ohio communities will realize benefits from the improvements funded under the Program, which includes lead service line replacement.

The general goal is to allocate at least 30% of the funding evenly among the three primary state agencies now responsible for the current H2Ohio Program: the Ohio EPA, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), and the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA).

The Coalition promoting the issue is led by a committee that includes the leadership of the Nature Conservancy, the Ohio Environmental Council, the Ohio Farm Bureau, and the Ohio Water Partnership. Other supporters of the initiative besides CORD include the Association of Ohio Drinking Water Agencies, the Ohio Metropolitan Wastewater Agencies, the Ohio Municipal League, and the Ohio Rural Water Association, along with over fifteen other organizations interested in water supply, stream and lake quality and the environment.

According to the Coalition critical water issues have been building in Ohio for decades and continued concerted action and funding is needed to continue the progress made under the H2Ohio Program. "Ensuring the quality of Ohio's water spanning from Lake Erie to the Ohio River, including inland lakes, rivers, and streams, and groundwater is critical to making Ohio a thriving and economically competitive state. H2Ohio enables ODA, ODNR, and OEPA to reduce phosphorus from runoff, prevent harmful algal blooms, and provide access to clean and safe drinking water on which all Ohioans depend. By building a broad coalition of voices from the business, agricultural, and environmental sectors, we can secure a multi-year investment to restore and protect Ohio's water."

At this time, the amount of the proposed bond issue and its duration are still being discussed. While it was originally thought that the issue could appear on the November 5th ballot this year, this timeline has now been postponed. As some may be aware, the current state budget bill severely cut H2Ohio funding in the House, and thus the work of the Coalition will be on the current restoration of funding for the next biennium as the bill proceeds to the Senate.

Since the General Assembly must approve the issue to appear on the statewide ballot before the traditional summer recess, and this timing coincides with the state budget, it has become more problematic to attempt to put the issue before Ohio voters on November 5th.. Watch the CORD Report and weekly legislative updates for future information.

# CORD PLATINUM MEMBER



Jones & Henry  
Engineers



**Theodore A. Bennett, PE,**  
**Vice President, Director of Infrastructure**  
**[tbennett@jheng.com](mailto:tbennett@jheng.com)**