

# January 2022 Update

By Licking County Commissioner

Tim Bubb

**Happy New Year – time to ‘ring out the old and ring in the new’.**

**We wish each and every one a prosperous, safe and healthy New Year!**

**As we enter 2022 there are new dimensions to the war on the Pandemic caused by the COVID 19 Virus and its variants. I have included the latest from the County Health Department. This first month of the New Year includes two holidays – New Year’s Day January 1<sup>st</sup> and on January 17<sup>th</sup> the day of remembrance for the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Junior. The expected surge in the COVID virus is resulting in some public events in early 2022 being scaled back or held virtually. So, as always, check local media for updates.**



**A positive note – the days are getting longer by a few minutes each day and so far it has been a mild winter. On December 21<sup>st</sup> we had only 9-hours and 5-minutes of daylight – but on January 31<sup>st</sup> we will have advanced to 10-hours of light daily!**

## **County Health Pandemic Update**

**As we transition into 2022 the worldwide Pandemic is still with us, and challenges for the community remain as we try to balance the new normal with common sense precautions to stay virus free.**

**Here is the current information from the CDC and the County Health Department...**

**Given what we currently know about COVID-19 and the Omicron variant, CDC is shortening the recommended time for isolation from 10 days for people with COVID-19 to 5 days, if asymptomatic, followed by 5 days of wearing a mask when around others. The change is motivated by science demonstrating that the majority of SARS-CoV-2 transmission occurs early in the course of illness, generally in the 1-2 days prior to onset of symptoms and the 2-3 days after. Therefore, people who test positive should isolate for 5 days and, if asymptomatic at that time, they may leave isolation if they can continue to mask for 5 days to minimize the risk of infecting others.**



**Additionally, CDC is updating the recommended quarantine period for those exposed to COVID-19. For people who are unvaccinated or are more than six months out from their second mRNA dose (or**

more than 2 months after the J & J vaccine) and not yet boosted, CDC now recommends quarantine for 5 days followed by strict mask use for an additional 5 days. Alternatively, if five-day quarantine is not feasible, it is imperative that an exposed person wear a well-fitting mask at all times when around others for 10 days after exposure. Individuals who have received their booster shot do not need to quarantine following an exposure, but should wear a mask for 10 days after the exposure. For all those exposed, best practice would also include a test for SARS-CoV-2 at day 5 after exposure. If symptoms occur, individuals should immediately quarantine until a negative test confirms symptoms are not attributable to COVID-19.

Isolation relates to behavior after a confirmed infection. Isolation for 5 days followed by wearing a well-fitting mask will minimize the risk of spreading the virus to others. Quarantine refers to the time following exposure to the virus or close contact with someone known to have COVID-19. Both updates come as the Omicron variant continues to spread throughout the U.S. and reflects the current science on when and for how long a person is maximally infectious.

A COVID-19 vaccine booster dose restores vaccine effectiveness against infection to 75%. COVID-19 vaccination decreases the risk of severe disease, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19. CDC strongly encourages COVID-19 vaccination for everyone 5 and older and boosters for everyone 16 and older. Vaccination is the best way to protect you and reduce the impact of COVID-19 on our communities.

The following is attributable to CDC Director, Dr. Rochelle Walensky:

“The Omicron variant is spreading quickly and has the potential to impact all facets of our society. CDC’s updated recommendations for isolation and quarantine balance what we know about the spread of

**the virus and the protection provided by vaccination and booster doses. These updates ensure people can safely continue their daily lives. Prevention is our best option: get vaccinated, get boosted, wear a mask in public indoor settings in areas of substantial and high community transmission, and take a test before you gather.”**

## **Year in Review 2021 – Licking County by Tim Bubb**

**The year 2021 was an interesting mixture of positive economic development, achievement by County Government, and the ups and downs of dealing with the Pandemic caused by COVID 19.**

**The Census reports showed population growth with the County at 178,000 plus, and most of our communities growing or holding steady. Growth was robust with openings and new building starts in the Etna region; initial development along the Jobs Ready Site corridor in Pataskala; development of Amazon, Google and Facebook data centers and the start of the Amgen Pharmaceutical facility in New Albany (photo); and major growth of manufacturing facilities at the Newark-Heath-Licking County Port Authority industrial park in Heath. Licking County is well positioned in Central Ohio for continued growth with**



**the major challenge of adding trained and skilled members to the workforce.**

**A major plus in 2021 was the opening of the \$32-million Alford Center for Science and Technology on the Campus of the Ohio State University and Central Ohio Technical College (COTC) in Newark, as STEM education remains a major priority. In addition, COTC completed a \$4.2-million renovation of their Pataskala Campus facility.**



**Also noted, a new nearly one million square foot Owens Corning Fiberglas logistics Center on Thornwood Drive in Heath, development of the new Seminary Ridge Industrial Park off Thornwood that straddles Heath and Hebron, an extension of Central Parkway in Heath, the extension until 2028 of the Boeing lease insuring sustained growth at the Port Authority, and a major expansion of Transcendia (former DOW Licking River Film Center), in the Newark Ohio Industrial Park, by some 52-thousand square foot and adding 36-jobs.**

**In Newark the long term EPA mandated sewer separation project continues with a \$28-million multi-phase project on Route 13 (Fourth Street) from National Drive to Granville Road, and includes development of**



**three new downtown 'round-about' intersection redevelopment projects. Newark also added a new fire station and 'round about' on Sharon Valley Road on the north side (photo).**

**Across Ohio the need for 'green energy' and alternative forms of energy has spurred the development of potentially three dozen large passive solar fields in Ohio. In Licking County two projects are before the Ohio Siting Board of approval consideration; the Union Ridge 513-acre site project in Harrison Township and the massive two-thousand acre proposed Harvey Solar Project in the Hartford/Burlington Township region.**

**The 'roller coaster ride' pandemic saw the introduction of a mass vaccination program early in the year with just over half the eligible population taking the protection. By mid-year public events were again scheduled, including the Hartford Fair, however reluctance continues as the Delta and Omicron Variants continue to cause serious virus infections.**



**Efforts continue to redevelop the Buckeye Lake Region. A new dredge has arrived and the Buckeye Lake Tomorrow group continues a three county emphasis on additional access to the Lake and eliminating surface water pollution. The Licking County Commissioners have taken the lead in a Federal BRIC (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities) grant application that could be transformative for the region.**

**The county renovated a building on North Bank and leased it to the Buckeye Lake development group as a conference center and office.**

**Also, the new “Queen of the Lake” (photo) cruised this summer and took dozens of tour groups across the Lake.**



**The Licking Park District continues to achieve with continued improvement to its 12-major park sites covering over 1,600 acres of green space, as well as maintaining some 50-miles of recreation trails. In November county voters approved a replacement levy increasing funding for the District for the next five years. The Park District, as well as the City of Newark, continued their programs of adding major wildflowers plantings along roadways and in the parks system. In addition the OSU Extension Service, in conjunction with the County, resumed their ‘Master Gardeners’ community gardening and educational programs. (photo – Master Gardener Jo Walters with garden cut flowers)**



**The Works (Center for Science and Technology) celebrated its 25th anniversary (Quarter Century of Achievement). The emphasis on STEM Education remains as Janice LoRaso takes over as Director at The Works for Marcia Downes, who retired at yearend.**



**A few other County Government highlights. The Commissioners entered into a five year Enterprise Fleet Program to maintain some 115-vehicles and using group purchasing to save some \$600-thousand in vehicle costs.**

**Chief Dog Warden Dave Shellhouse retired and was replaced by Larry Williams. The Countywide 9-1-1 Center added the technology to receive emergency requests by text message.**

**Alexis Fitzsimmons was hired by our development agency Grow Licking County as executive director replacing Nate Strum.**

**The Board of County MR-DD, after some delays, constructed a new group home on Tollgate Road using \$1.3-million in donated funds.**

**The County Engineer completed and reopened the bridge over Dutch Fork Creek on White Chapel Road at a cost of just over a half million dollars. Completion of the project was delayed by a year due to COVID and changes in the engineering and design.**



**Finally, the Commissioners demolished the deteriorated downtown Kerns Hotel to allow for improvements at the adjacent Job and Family Services (JFS) county facility.**

**Remodeled were the offices and courtroom of new Judge Deborah Lang's Juvenile/Probate Court in the 1876 Courthouse. Note, in 2022 a window replacement project at the historic downtown 1876 Courthouse will take place, with repairs to the stonework, steps and porches planned.**



## **Orange Barrel Update – Route 37/161 Almost Complete**

**According to ODOT – the State Route 37/661 Bridge over State Route 16 in Granville is functionally complete. This project reconstructs the bridge carrying SR 37/SR 661 over SR 16 in Granville.**

**The project also includes turn lane additions along the SR 37/SR 661 entrance and exit ramps. The intersection of SR 661 and River Road/Weaver Drive will be improved to include turn lanes along SR 37/SR 661, and along westbound River Road. The intersection will be signalized.**



**New impacts: Pavement markings have been placed, the traffic signals at the interchange and River Road/Weaver Drive are fully operational, and the interchange will open to traffic with no restrictions.**

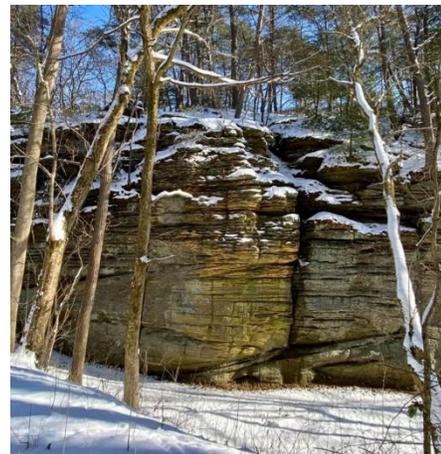
**Following the opening of the SR 37/661 interchange, the temporary signals at Columbus Road/SR 16/Cherry Street interchange will be removed and the stop signs at the top of the ramps will be uncovered. As before the project began, Columbus Road/SR16/Cherry Street traffic will be opened to through traffic and have the right-of-way. Weaver Dr. and ramp traffic will have to stop at the stop signs prior to traveling through the intersection.**

## **Blackhand Gorge Nature Preserve a Gem in Licking County**

***The Blackhand Gorge State Nature Preserve is a 4-mile-long (6.4 km) sandstone formation through which the Licking River flows in Licking County, Ohio. Located twelve miles east of Newark, near the tiny town of Toboso, it's 957 acres along the gorge were designated an Ohio Nature Preserve in 1975.***

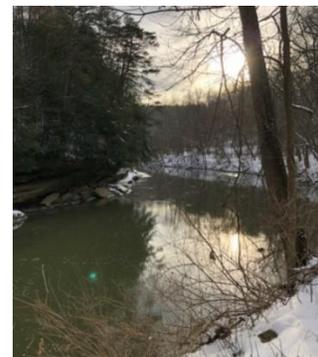


***The gorge is a capsule of Ohio transportation history, having hosted canal boats, steam railroads, electric interurban cars, and automobiles through the years.***



***It is named for the black-hand petroglyph that was found on the cliff face by the first settlers to the area. Black Hand Sandstone is a resistant rock that also forms the backbone of the Hocking Hills region.***

***Take a hike and one can learn about the Teays River which formed the gorge thousands of years ago.***



***The story from where the "black hand" sandstone name comes is connected to the nearby flint supplies, the canal-building that brought demise of the "black hand" petroglyph, the canal era, the first electric railway tunnel in the nation, and a WPA project to convert the railway to a road.***

***Also, the Dillon flood control project that changed the road back to a railway and changed the landscape forever. Wildlife is and has always been abundant from bears, elk and big cats in years gone by to now abundant white tail deer and smaller wildlife such as beaver and fox.***



***Today, you can bike or walk on the south side of the river/gorge. You can also walk on and through a canal lock, a tunnel, and a stone towpath on the north side. A feature is the tunnel that served an interurban line along the north side of the Licking River. The south side of the river was already occupied by the B&O Railroad. A sheer wall of Red Rock lay in the path of the planned route. The builders had no choice, but to dynamite a tunnel through this rock. It took 36 men, working around the clock, nearly 3½ months to complete the tunnel. Work began on June 15th, 1903 and was completed on September 23. The following January the Ohio Electric interurban line was opened for business between Newark and Zanesville.***



***The Black Hand tunnel is 327 feet long and 19½ feet high. It measures 16½ wide at the base. Interurban tunnels are uncommon and it is believed to be the only one in Ohio.***



***As the popularity of the automobile began to rise in the 1920s, interurban ridership greatly declined. The last interurban car rolled through the tunnel on February 15, 1929 – nearly a quarter of a century after it opened.***

***Today the tunnel serves as a hiking trail through Black Hand Gorge State Nature Preserve. It should be noted that the State of Ohio is working on plans to rebuild and restore the popular bike and walking path on the south side of the Licking River.***



***(Photo – Bill Weaver leads a winter tour through the Gorge)***

## ***Saluting Licking County Resident Jerry Wray***

***In November Governor Mike DeWine renamed the Ohio Department of Transportation Headquarters Building in Columbus after Licking County resident and former Licking County Engineer Jerry Wray.***

***The Governor recognized Wray as the longest tenured Director of ODOT, serving eight years under Governor Voinovich and eight year under Governor John Kasich.***

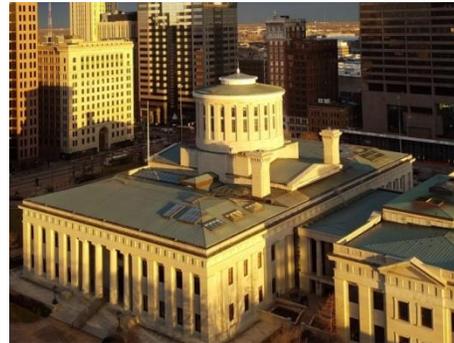


***DeWine said, innovation and operational improvements under Wray made ODOT much better for years to come. Wray was the Licking County Engineer in the 1980's.***

***(photo – second from the left Gov. DeWine, third from the left Jerry Wray and on the right current ODOT Director Jack Marchbanks)***

## ***Ohio's Counties Dedicate an Interactive Display***

***A suggestion for a field trip with children and grandchildren is the Ohio Statehouse in the Capital City.***



***The lower level of the beautifully restored 19-century Statehouse is the area of the Museum, Map Room and County Area where almost all visitors and tour groups begin their free visit. There is also a gift shop and the original Ohio Constitution is on loan and on display.***

***In December, as President of the County Commissioner's Association of Ohio (CCAO), it was my honor to unveil and lead the dedication of a new and vibrant, interactive display about counties and the vital state-county partnership to the Ohio Statehouse Map Room. Some 150 County Commissioners and Legislators joined as Lt. Gov. Jon Husted, House Speaker Robert Cupp and Senate President Pro Tempore Jay Hottinger made remarks on the significance of the state-county partnership and how they saw the display as an opportunity to educate Statehouse guests on Ohio's 88 counties.***



***(l to r – Speaker Robert Cupp, Ohio Senator Jay Hottinger, CCAO President Tim Bubb and Lt. Governor John Husted)***

***"The goal of the display is to promote the vital and unique partnership between state government and Ohio's counties," CCAO President Tim Bubb said. "Counties are the arm of the state to deliver crucial services, and this is an interactive way to educate Statehouse guests who visit the map room and help them learn about the county they're from and how Ohio's 88 counties relate to each other."***



***Twenty-five years ago, Ohio's counties through CCAO raised \$40,000 to help provide the popular county floor map in the Statehouse. This area of the statehouse, commonly referred to as the Map Room, is a central location for guests and school groups to organize and visit.***

***Now, a quarter century later, CCAO and Ohio's counties gifted the interactive display that allow visitors to learn more about counties and the vital state-county partnership.***

***Counties deliver critical services such as the justice system and law enforcement, infrastructure such as roads and bridges, social services, child and senior citizen protective services, election administration and more. By partnering with county commissioners, executives and council members, CCAO and its members work toward a shared goal of improving and advancing Ohio's 88***



**counties. Stronger counties build a stronger Ohio.**

**CFAES**

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

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5 Season's  
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**THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**  
EXTENSION



Find more detailed information at: [go.osu.edu/becomeamastergardenvolunteer](https://go.osu.edu/becomeamastergardenvolunteer)

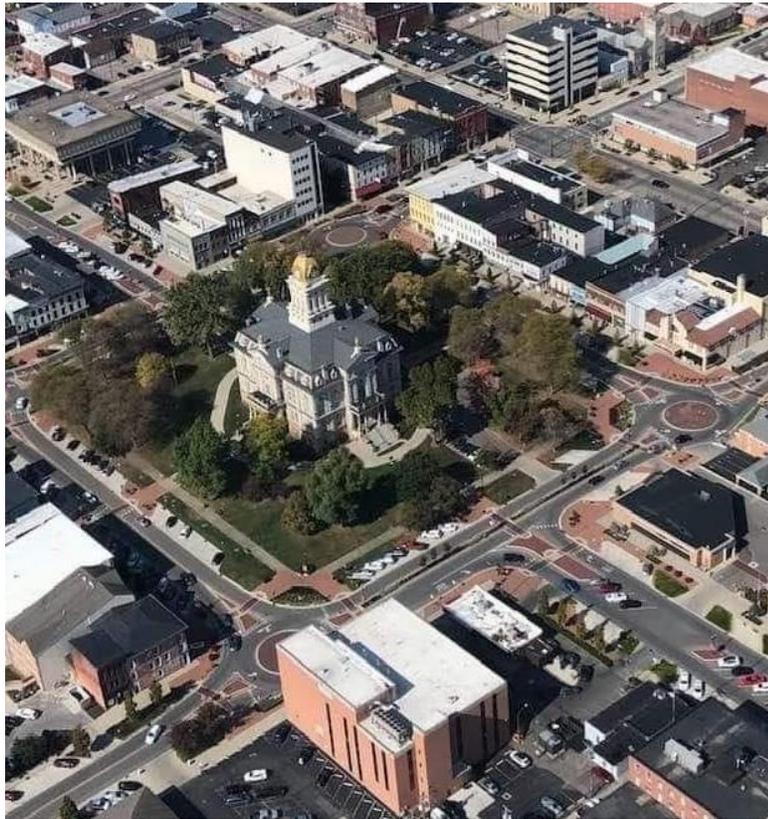
Contact Lori Swihart, Program Coordinator,  
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***Enjoy this great new aerial view of downtown Newark –Licking County’s ‘seat of government’***



***Feel free to ‘forward’ this e-mail Update and I can be e-mailed at [tbubb@lcounty.com](mailto:tbubb@lcounty.com).***

***Best Regards! Commissioner Tim Bubb***