BUDGET COMMISSION

The Geauga County Budget Commission met in regular session on Monday, March 16, 2026 at 10:03 a.m. at the Auditor's Office, 213 Main St., Chardon, Ohio.
Present: Geauga County Auditor Charles E. Walder, Geauga County Prosecutor James R. Flaiz, and Geauga County Treasurer C. P. Hitchcock.
Also Present: Deputy Chief Administrator DATA, CARE, DARC, Frank Antenucci, Deputy Auditors Tina Kloski, Kristen Sinatra, & Jennifer Hess.

Regular Meeting Advertised: Regular Business
Virtual attendance was offered for public viewing.

Prior Minutes

Presented School Budget Hearing meeting minutes for signatures with noted revision.

> Action taken at the March 2, 2026 meeting:
> Motion by Charles E. Walder, seconded by James Flaiz, to approve the minutes of the February 18, 2026 – special session, subject to any spelling corrections made by the Prosecutor.
>
> Voice vote: Three ayes. Motion carried

Presented School Budget Hearing meeting minutes for signatures with noted revision.

> Motion by James Flaiz, seconded by Christopher Hitchcock, to approve the minutes of the February 19, 2026 – special session, subject to any spelling corrections made by the Prosecutor. Minutes were not printed and will be submitted for signature to the Commission March 16, 2026.
>
> Voice vote: Three ayes. Motion carried
> Sign the School Budget meeting minutes, approved March 2, 2026 pending spelling correction submitted by James Flaiz.

Motion by Charles E. Walder, seconded by James Flaiz, to execute the minutes of the March 2, 2026 – Regular session.

Voice vote: Two ayes. One absent. Motion carried

Regular Business:

Cardinal LSD 2025/2026 – Amendment #2

Motion by James Flaiz, seconded by Charles E. Walder, to amend the Cardinal LSD Official Certificate of Estimated Resources to reflect the following changes to revenue previously certified:

Special Revenue Fund
Increase Fund 499 Safety Grant other source revenue 18,500, from 250,000 to 268,500.00
Increase Fund 516 Idea Part B other source revenue 31,025.75, from 304,443.06 to 335,468.81
Increase Fund 584 Student Support And Academic other source revenue 1,475.62, from 36,498.74 to 37,974.36
Increase Fund 590 Title IIA Teacher Quality other source revenue 71,540.73, from 160,125.87 to 231,666.60

N*et adjustment $122,542.10*

New Special Fund Total:	**$ 1,987,269.70**
New 2026 Certificate Total:	**$27,305,085.28**

**Appropriation form GCA-006 dated 03/16/2026 does not exceed estimated revenue.*

Voice vote: Two ayes. One absent. Motion carried.

Bainbridge Twp – Amendment #2 – re-sign

First approved on March 2, 2026 with Motion by Christopher P. Hitchcock, seconded by Charles E. Walder, to amend the Bainbridge Township's Official Certificate of Estimated Resources to reflect the following changes to revenue previously certified:

Capital Project Revenue Fund
Decrease Fund 4909 General Fund Capital Reserve other source revenue 500,000, from 1,000,000 to 500,000.00

N*et adjustment $500,000.00*

**Appropriation form GCA-006 dated 02/24/2026 does not exceed estimated revenue.*

Christopher P. Hitchcock entered and joined meeting at 10:05am.

Voice vote: Three ayes. Motion carried.

Geauga County – Amendment #4
Motion by Christopher P. Hitchcock, seconded by Charles E. Walder to amend the Geauga County Official Certificate of Estimated Resources to reflect the following changes to revenue previously certified:

Capital Projects Fund
Increase #4034 Federal Grants other source revenue 113,400.00, from 0.00 to 113,400.00.
Increase #4034 State Revenues other source revenue 970,000, from 0.00 to 970,000.00.

Capital Projects Fund Total:	$ 22,544,048.14
New 2026 Certificate Total:	**$241,952,044.19**

Voice vote: Three ayes. Motion carried

Geauga Trumbull Solid Waste Financials (Cash Transfer):
Motion by Charles E. Walder, seconded by James Flaiz, to acknowledge the Cash Transfer as presented:

Cash Transfer From:	**6007**	Cost Allocation	$(7,145.00)
To:	**1001**	**Cost Allocation**	**$ 7,145.00**

Voice Vote: Three ayes. Motion carried.

General Discussion:
Auditor Walder thanked attendees for participating in the previous property tax meeting and confirmed the next meeting is scheduled for April 7. Prosecutor Flaiz addressed a growing public misconception that the County Treasurer is forcibly removing seniors from their homes, explaining that sheriff sales involving current residents are extremely rare and often occur when a property owner has passed away. Treasurer Hitchcock, in conjunction with Prosecutor Flaiz, offered that they plan to gather the following data; a five-year review of tax foreclosures, including reasons, ages, and residential versus commercial status. Auditor Walder noted recent levy activity, including approximately two replacement levies and several new or increased levies. Treasurer Hitchcock reported that petition efforts lack clarity regarding contractual obligations, while Auditor Walder cautioned that bonding companies are constitutionally protected and will likely challenge such efforts. Prosecutor Flaiz referenced reports that petition organizers may not gather enough signatures by July, and Auditor Walder noted the difficulty of meeting the requirement of 5% of voters in half of Ohio's counties. Discussion followed regarding claims that schools could shift to income taxes, with clarification that only municipalities—not townships—can impose them, and uncertainty about whether rates of 2%–5% would be feasible. Signature validity and degradation over time were briefly discussed. Auditor Walder expressed concern that legislators have little interest in addressing property tax issues further, with some indicating they are ready to move on as election season approaches. He described the situation as frustrating and stated that the next meeting will be Sunshined for transparency.

Prosecutor Flaiz provided an update on the "pipeline" appeal, noting that APA Kristen Rine prepared a strong request for the Ohio Supreme Court to review the unfavorable District Court of Appeals decision, though only 7%–9% of discretionary appeals are accepted, and the likelihood of review is low, particularly given the utility-related nature of the case. To strengthen the request, he contacted school superintendents and treasurers, resulting in several districts—at least West Geauga and Berkshire—joining together through the Weston Hurd law firm to file supporting briefs. He stated that additional letters, including one from Auditor Walder, were not necessary. The brief is due March 25, with the pipeline company receiving 14 days to respond. Geauga County has filed a joint brief with Portage County, while Lake County declined to participate without explanation, though Prosecutor Flaiz confirmed Lake County would benefit if the appeal were accepted and the prior decision overturned.

Taxpayer Communication:
An email received from Alex Duncan was shared with the Budget Commission members. Prosecutor Flaiz advised the members not to respond and therefore, the members could not comment. Copy of the email retained for the record [below]:

Kloski, Tina

From:	Duncan <autisticduncan@gmail.com>
Sent:	Monday, March 9, 2026 3:28 PM
To:	Sinatra, Kristen; Kloski, Tina
Subject:	Submitting concern! Lack of public records. Fraud, negligence. etc. Abuse
Follow Up Flag:	Follow up
Flag Status:	Flagged

Attention: This is an external email and contains a link
Be cautious when clicking links in this email. They may direct you to potentially unsafe websites.
- ADP Security Team

Hello

I was informed to write to the Budget Commission about some concerns. Here they are.

1. Metzenbaum! Lack of public records from a non profit. Metz never pursued them and taken to court from their negligence. An autistic man was threatened and abused from a non profit. Metz doesn't enforce the laws nor be transparent with their records.

2. Cardinal local schools. They passed a levy for husky nation back in '17. I suggest you read the "Language" on the ballot on how much they received from the levy. Then the auditor's office told Cardinal you have too much money. Well....

Frost Charged with Passing Bad $2.5 Million Check (w/ VIDEO) | Geauga County Maple LeafGeauga County Maple Leaf

Businessman to Give Cardinal $500K | Geauga County Maple LeafGeauga County Maple Leaf

There is other proof on both topics. I am assuming you do investigations? My opinion is fraud on both. That's just me. Where is the integrity at? omg! Thanks!

Alex Duncan

Auditor Walder advised that his office was preparing for the county's levied departments annual budget review. They are scheduled to be heard on April 6, 2026. Geauga Public Health will be heard June 1, 2026.

Public Comment:
Sarah McGlone – GLWV requested copies of items presented at the meeting.

Being no further business to conduct it was moved by C.P. Hitchcock to adjourn the March 16, 2026 - regular meeting at 10:38 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles E. Walder, Auditor
Secretary/Budget Commission