

MINUTES--NEFCO GENERAL POLICY BOARD MEETING held Wednesday, October 18, 2023, at the City of Green Community Hall at Central Park.

1a. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Regula at 8:30 a.m. in the presence of a quorum.

1b. Approval of the Agenda

A motion was made by Mr. Bennett, seconded by Mr. Hofstetter, to approve the agenda. The motion carried.

1c. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Regula led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance.

1d. Audience Participation (members of the public)

Mr. Regula asked Mr. Conrad to give the Board an overview of the Appalachian Regional Clean Hydrogen Hub (ARCH2) program.

Mr. Conrad said that the Stark Area Regional Transit Authority (SARTA) is a team member of one of the seven hydrogen hub grant awardees across the country. He stated that originally there were 77 applicants and 30 were invited to apply, with only 22 applicants being interviewed. He said that SARTA is part of the Appalachian Regional Clean Hydrogen Hub (ARCH2) which includes West Virginia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. The ARCH2 will receive \$980 million for the development of hydrogen in this region. There will be eighteen projects within this grant. He said that the sponsors are required to provide a 50 percent match, which is about a \$2 billion investment. Mr. Conrad said that these projects could include generating electricity, steel production, and energy carriers within this part of the country. This will be a multi-year project. Mr. Regula asked what kind of impact will this program have on northeast Ohio? Mr. Conrad said that most of the projects are still under the contracting phase. He said that once the sponsors can get the final contracts approved, additional details will be available. Mr. Hadley congratulated Mr. Conrad on receiving the grant award. He asked if Mr. Conrad could send the Board a fact sheet about the ARCH2 program. Mr. Conrad said that he will send Mr. Hadley a fact sheet to distribute to the Board. Ms. Petsko asked if the program will start with emergency vehicles? Mr. Conrad said that there are five different categories for these projects, and it will depend on the production lines.

2. Consideration of the draft minutes of the regular meeting of the NEFCO General Policy Board on September 20, 2023

A motion was made by Mr. Vinay, seconded by Ms. Sumego, to accept the September meeting minutes. The motion carried.

3. Financial Status Report - month of September

Mr. Hadley said that \$1.78 was received as income during September, receipts to date were \$157,996.78, disbursements to date were \$130,250.82, and cash on hand at the end of September was \$237,272.28.

A motion was made by Mr. Eckenrode, seconded by Mr. Peetz, to approve the financial status report subject to audit. The motion carried.

3a. September Bank Reconciliations

Mr. Hadley asked for acceptance of the September bank reconciliations.

A motion was made by Mr. Conrad, seconded by Mr. Bennett, to accept the September bank reconciliations. The motion carried.

4. Guest: Elaine Marsh, President, Friends of the Crooked River (FOCR) regarding FOCR's partnership with NEFCO and the successful completion of the Canal Diversion Dam Removal Project

Mr. Hadley introduced Ms. Elaine Marsh to the Board. He said that he had known Ms. Marsh professionally for a very long time. He stated that Ms. Marsh had asked to be able address the Board at the October meeting. He said that Ms. Marsh is the President of the Friends of the Crooked River (FOCR) an environmental nonprofit devoted to the protection of the Cuyahoga River. He said that she is also employed by Summit Metroparks. He stated that he and Ms. Marsh were two of the appointees to the original Cuyahoga Coordinating Committee (CCC) which is now the Cuyahoga Area of Concern (AOC) Advisory Committee. Mr. Hadley said that Ms. Marsh has been very active in promoting, supporting, and arguing for the Cuyahoga River.

Ms. Marsh thanked the Board for being an important sponsor for the Canal Diversion Dam removal project. She said that dams have emerged as being a very important barrier; not just to stopping water and fish, but to overall water quality. She mentioned that the Clean Water Act mainly supports chemical issues and chemical water qualities. She said that she thought if all the discharges were cleaned up it would take care of the water quality in the rivers; but it was found out that there are biological, physical, and habitat factors involved with the water quality. This is where removing dams would help the rivers' water quality. She stated that the Friends of the Crooked River agreed to do the Canal Diversion Dam removal project because the FOCR knew about the area. She said that it is believed that if one can see an end point and the steps along the way, the project will be successful. That's a very optimistic way of looking at things and FOCR found out it was a very complicated project. She thanked NEFCO for agreeing to be the fiscal agency for the funding, because without NEFCO, the project wouldn't have been completed. She also thanked Ms. Sumego for all her expertise and help with the project. The completion of the project was delayed by COVID, high water, partnership issues, and construction issues. She thanked the Board and NEFCO staff for all of its help with the project. Mr. Hadley said that Ohio EPA has noticed that the water quality has improved after the removal of both dams. Mr. Balogh asked if the pump is working properly? Ms. Marsh said yes, the pump is finally up and running smoothly. Ms. Sumego said that there are pictures displayed at the pump site showing the construction of the project from beginning to end. Ms. Marsh mentioned that a public meeting regarding the removal of the Gorge Dam will be held at the Main Akron-Summit Library on Wednesday, October 25th at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Regula thanked Ms. Marsh for attending the Board meeting.

5. NEFCO FY2024 Work Program – status

a. Economic Development

Mr. Lautzenheiser said that there is only one current funding opportunity available: the public works economic adjustment assistance program. He said that the available funding is approximately \$5 million for projects in Ohio. This grant supports all sorts of projects: construction, non-construction, planning, technical assistance, and revolving loan funds. There is a 50 percent local match requirement and applications will be accepted until the funding is exhausted.

Mr. Lautzenheiser said that two NEFCO surveys were submitted and distributed to some vocational and high school contacts targeting workforce development strategies that had been identified in the Economic Recovery and Resiliency (ER&R) Plan. This is an attempt to gather information on what sorts of workforce development steps vocational and high schools are doing to address some workforce issues. He stated that the ER&R Implementation Committee is looking to collect information on program enrollment, job placement, and residency following graduation. He said that the links to the two surveys have been provided in the status report.

Mr. Lautzenheiser said that the EDA designated the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) as the newest economic development district (EDD) in Ohio. He said that MORPC serves 11 counties in the Columbus Metropolitan Area.

Mr. Lautzenheiser said that the Vibrant NEO Brownfields Steering Committee met on October 6th to discuss the revolving loan fund logistics, primarily the terms and conditions, and the evaluation process for ranking the proposals that have been submitted. He stated that four applications were received before the meeting. These applications were not considered because the Committee had to first set up the terms and ranking criteria. The Steering Committee recommended offering loans at zero percent for terms up to 10 years, depending on the project and desire of the Steering Committee, and the Vibrant NEO and Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) Boards. The Committee also recommended that there should be no limit on the amount of funds that can be requested; the only limit being the availability of funds. There is \$1 million available in revolving loan funds. He stated that the stipulation is that no grants or forgivable loans will be issued in the first round of funding. It is NOACA and Vibrant NEO's intention to pursue supplemental funding up to \$5 million, which would be available in February 2024. He stated that a portion of the initial \$1 million would have to be committed to a project. The committee's next meeting is October 19th in Cleveland to review the revolving loan fund applications.

Mr. Lautzenheiser said that the U.S. EPA announced the release of the FY2024 Brownfields Multipurpose, Assessment, and Cleanup Grant Guidelines. He said that these guidelines and application resources are for all five available grants: Multipurpose, Community-wide Assessment, Assessment Coalition, Community-wide Assessments for States and Tribes, and Cleanup. The submission deadline for applications is November 13, 2023.

Mr. Lautzenheiser said that the Ohio EPA has provided instructions on how to obtain the required Ohio EPA letter of support for U.S. EPA Brownfields Multipurpose, Assessment, and Cleanup Grants. He stated that any Ohio applicants looking to apply for this U.S. EPA brownfields funding must submit a letter of support from the Ohio EPA as part of the proposal. Only one letter of support needs to be requested, even if the applicant is applying for multiple types of grant program activities. The letter of support must state that the sites have been or will be assessed by June 2024.

Mr. Lautzenheiser said that round two of the Ohio Residential Broadband Expansion Grant program is set to be released on November 6, 2023. This grant is for the capital project funds which will expand internet service providers (ISPs) last mile broadband projects, particularly in rural areas. Applicants are required to participate in the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) affordable connectivity program, which is the \$30 a month subsidy for low-income families.

Mr. Lautzenheiser said that research from University of California Berkeley indicated that the Opportunity Zones (OZ) tax incentive program has been effective, but not as effective in all OZs around the country. He said that there has been a 20 percent likelihood of development in communities that have had an opportunity zone designation. The investments have been targeted mainly in about half of the opportunity zones around the country, with most of those being in urban areas.

Mr. Lautzenheiser said that the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Research Foundation has published resources on transportation and employment. He said that he provided some links to several short resource sheets related to regional transportation and other issues related to location and access. He noted that NADO's Annual Training Conference will be held on November 7-10, 2023 in Cleveland.

Mr. Lautzenheiser discussed four upcoming funding opportunities with fast approaching deadlines.

b. Environmental Planning

Mr. LaPlante said that after the Board's release of the draft FPA update at last month's Board meeting, staff published a press release in the four major newspapers in the NEFCO region. He said that the press release was also sent to all the local governments in the NEFCO region, the affected MAs, and the county and city public information departments. He stated that a legal ad was placed in the Record Courier, Canton Repository, Wooster Daily Record on September 30th, and in the Akron Beacon Journal on October 3rd. He noted that staff will accept comments on the draft update until the close of business on October 30th. He said that no comments have been received thus far.

Mr. LaPlante said that the ongoing FY2024 201/208 FPA update timetable was revised slightly. He said that the 208 FPA update may be recommended at the December Board meeting. He stated that the Ohio EPA had confirmed that the Update's submittal can wait until after the December 20th board meeting so that all six Areawide Planning Agencies, including NEFCO, can submit the draft updates for State Certification.

Mr. LaPlante said that attached is a table listing the eight amendments that were state certified and that Ohio EPA submitted to the U.S. EPA in two different rounds of submittals. He said that the U.S. EPA approved these eight amendments on September 11, 2023.

Mr. LaPlante said that he has included information on the six per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) compounds proposed by USEPA to receive maximum contaminant levels (MCL). He said that these compounds are forever chemicals which are ubiquitous in the environment, and in almost everything that is used daily and is in some foods. He stated that at the September 18th Ohio Association of Regional Councils (OARC) meeting, Ohio EPA's Division of Drinking and Groundwater Chief gave an update of what U.S. EPA's approval at the end of this year of the six MCL maximum contaminant levels for PFAS and drinking water would mean to Ohio EPA and to the public water system operators. This means that Ohio EPA would have three years to train the public water system operators and try to certify additional water labs that would test for PFAS. Currently, there are only two labs in Ohio and nine labs outside of Ohio that can test for these chemicals. Please contact staff if you would like a copy of the Ohio EPA PowerPoint presentation on this topic from the October ERTAC meeting. Mr. Conrad asked if anyone is doing anything to stop using PFAS in products? Mr. LaPlante said that since it is everywhere in the environment it will be very difficult to eliminate the use of PFAS. Mr. Peetz said that if there are four parts per trillion in everything then PFAS should be taken out of the environment not just out of the water. Mr. LaPlante said that he totally agrees with Mr. Peetz.

Mr. LaPlante said that the U.S. EPA and the Department of Justice filed a memorandum in opposition of Akron's motion regarding the City of Akron's proposed fourth amendment to the Consent Decree. He said that the City of Akron followed up with a reply to the memorandum in opposition which will be reviewed in court. He stated that there most likely will be a hearing regarding the fourth amendment to the Consent Decree. Mr. Shamas stated that the city is waiting for the Federal Court's decision.

Mr. LaPlante said that the Ohio EPA Division of Surface Water announced its Section 319 Request for Proposals. He stated that the deadline for submittal is November 9, 2023. He noted that there is \$2.7 million available statewide for section 319 project funding. He said that the funding range for each project will be between \$50,000 to \$350,000 for implementation projects that are identified

within an approved hydrologic code unit. He stated that proposals selected by the Ohio EPA will receive notification of awards from the agency in spring 2024.

Mr. Emerman said that he would discuss additional details on PFAS after the meeting.

6. Federal and State legislation or information of importance to local governments

Mr. Hadley said that the government shutdown in October was averted, and an agreement was reached to extend the deadline to November 17th. He stated that some people will wonder how this possible government shutdown occurring right before Thanksgiving will impact items needing action before the end of 2023.

Mr. Hadley congratulated the City of Akron for receiving the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) award of \$1,456,221 as part of the youth homelessness program that has been started. He stated that \$5.2 million will be going to the Ohio Department of Development for a similar program in rural areas. He said to please contact the NEFCO staff if anyone would like additional information.

Mr. Hadley said that there were two studies released regarding the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). He said that it is not unusual, for properties on the coasts, for the line to be redrawn by various scientific and nonscientific pressures. He said that it is interesting to hear that there is a lawsuit presently by the state of Louisiana as well as some others arguing that the recent changes by the NFIP are too restrictive, while a different viewpoint is held by a group of Oregon environmentalists who feel that their current restrictions are too weak. He said that it is hard to believe that some homeowners don't carry flood insurance on their property, when something could happen to the property from a flood perspective, within 10 years.

Mr. Hadley mentioned some manufacturing bills that are listed in the status report. He said to please contact the NEFCO staff if anyone would like additional information. He said that there is no new information available after October 2nd because Congress' required time to focus on keeping the doors open and on the speaker issues. He stated that the House appropriations process is on hold. The Senate, on the other hand, is continuing to move forward on some issues, including renewing the legislation that establishes the brownfields program. He said that the brownfields program has many positive benefits from an economic development, as well as environmental standpoint. The Senate is also looking at a national beverage container law for recycling of cans and plastics. Mr. Hadley noted a list of webinars listed on page 8.

7. For the Good of the Order: an opportunity for members to share news about their community/county/agency/company, or to list a prominent issue affecting them

No one at the Board meeting had anything to comment about for their community/county/agency.

8. Other Business

THERE BEING NO OTHER BUSINESS, the meeting was adjourned at 9:26 a.m.

Submitted by Rebecca L. Morgan, Administrative Assistant



Todd Peetz, Secretary
NEFCO General Policy Board
November 15, 2023

NEFCO GENERAL POLICY BOARD

2023 ATTENDANCE SHEET

Member (alternate)	1/18	2/15	3/15	4/19	5/17	6/21	7/19	8/16	9/20	10/18	11/15	12/20
PORTAGE COUNTY												
Sabrina Christian-Bennett (Mike Tinlin)			X	A	X	X	A	X	X	X		
Daniel Blakely (Tia Rutledge)	A	A	A	A		A	A	A	A	A		
Joseph Diorio	A	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			
Todd Peetz (Gail Gifford)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Susan Riehm (2-9-23)			X	X	X	X		X		X		
Amos Sarfo (Eric Long)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
CITY OF KENT												
Kathleen Petsko (Bridget Susel)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
STARK COUNTY												
Keith Bennett	X	X				X		X	X	X		
Alfredo Carranza	X	X							X			
Kirt Conrad			X	X	X			X		X		
David Maley	X	X	X		X		X		X	X		
Joe Mazzola		X		X		X	X	X	X	X		
Dan Moeglin				X	X							
Mike Naso (5-3-23)					X	X	X	X	X	X		
Bob Nau (Curtis Bungard)	X	X		X	X	X		X	X			
Richard Regula (Bill Smith)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Jim Troike (Tom Davis)	A	A		X	X		X		A	A		
Vacant (Rachel Hosler)												
Vacant												
CITY OF CANTON												
Jim Benekos (John Highman Jr. and Chris Barnes)	X	X	X	A		X	X		X	A		
COUNTY OF SUMMIT												
Jim Balogh	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		
Alan Brubaker (Joe Paradise and Larry Fulton)	A											
David Kohlmeier (Zak Kaczor)	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		
David Lukas	A	X	X	X	X							
Sam Scaffide	X	X		X		X	X		X			
Ilene Shapiro (Craig Stanley & Joe Eckenrode)		A	A	A	A	A	A	A		A		
Dianne Sumego	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Michael Vinay (Matt Calcei)	X	X			X	X	A	X	X	X		
Elizabeth Walters (Mark Potter)		A	A	A	A		A	A	A			
CITY OF AKRON												
Ginger Baylor												
Daniel Horrigan (Sam DeShazor)												
Chris Ludle (Michelle DiFiore)	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A		
Shammas Malik	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		
Linda F. R. Omobien												
Thomas A. Tatum (Jim Ashley)	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X		
Helen Tomic (Kurt Mulhauser)					X	A	A	A	A	A		
WAYNE COUNTY												
Jonathan Hofstetter (Sue Smail)	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X		
Jenn Kiper (Rob Kastner)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			
Steven Wheeler (Kevin Givins)	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A		
CITY OF WOOSTER												
Bob Breneman (Jonathan Millea, and Vince Marion)	A	A	A		A	A	A		A	A		
OHIO EPA-NEDO^a												
David Emerman (Patricia Vanah)	A		A					X		X		
CITIZENS COUNCIL												
Vacant (2)												
X = member present A = alternate present												

^aex officio

See reverse side for a list of guests who attended last month's Board meeting

Guests in Attendance at the October 18, 2023 meeting
Meghan Adair, Summit/Medina Workforce Development Area
Elaine Marsh, Friends of the Crooked River