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Lucas County Commissioners Announce Commission to Review Maumee's Unpermitted Discharge of Sanitary-Sewage Overflows into the Maumee River

TOLEDO, OH – Today, the Lucas County Commissioners held a press conference to announce the formation of a commission to examine the City of Maumee's unpermitted discharge of sanitary-sewage overflows into the Maumee River.

The Commission is charged with review of the history, nature, and extent of the City of Maumee's handling of its storm and sanitary-sewer overflows; the City's dealings with the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency for the remediation plan approved under the 1985 Ohio EPA Director's Final Findings and Orders to address the City's discharge of excess pollution and sanitary runoff into the Maumee River through the EPA Findings and Orders agreement of July 21, 2021; and the circumstances that led the City of Maumee's unpermitted charges to go undetected until July 2020, when Maumee officials reported unpermitted discharges to the Ohio EPA.

“The Commission will be reviewing the history, nature, and extent of the City of Maumee's handling of its storm and sanitary-sewer overflows and the dealings the City has had with the Ohio EPA since 1985 in the handling of its overflows,” said **Commissioner Tina Skeldon Wozniak**. “The Lucas County Commissioners have been at the forefront of heightening awareness to environmental problems that affect the health of our waterways and Lake Erie and fostering relationships with our local leaders and federal and state officials to effect change for improving water quality. We believe it is our responsibility as county commissioners to take steps on this important issue to reach collaborative solutions and create safeguards that will benefit everyone.”

“The lack of inquiry into the nearly 35-year-old unreported overflow discharges into the Maumee River deserves a much deeper investigation than what Maumee has provided,” said **Commissioner Pete Gerken**. “While other communities, such as Toledo, have stepped forward to acknowledge and correct overflow discharges with honesty and transparency, Maumee has allowed the efforts of other communities to be diluted with their unreported storm and sanitary-



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sewer overflows into the Maumee River. The Commission will make a serious attempt to provide the community with the truth.”

“Our waterways are our most prized possessions. As a community we need to ensure that they continue to be protected for future generations to use and enjoy. This can be accomplished by making sure that mistakes of the past are not repeated in the future,” said **Commissioner Gary L. Byers**.

The primary objects of the Commission’s scope is to determine the conditions that allowed the City of Maumee to make unpermitted discharges of untreated sanitary-sewage into the Maumee River without detection or knowledge by City officials or by State regulators; to determine the extent to which these unpermitted discharges and other such discharges by other entities that come to light during the Commission’s work contribute to the degradation of the Maumee River and the western basin of Lake Erie; and to make recommendations to the measures that should be taken by local governments and state regulators to prevent similar unlawful discharges.

The Commissioners have asked Attorney Fritz Byers to chair the Commission. Joining Mr. Byers on the Commission are: Michael Beazley, Oregon City Administrator; Rex Huffman, Counsel, Northwestern Water & Sewer District; Thomas Bridgeman, Director of Lake Erie Center; Bryan Latta; Susan Heywood, Attorney and Maumee Resident; Warren Henry, Retired City of Toledo Water Plant Manager; and Patekka Bannister, Member of the Toledo-Lucas County Sustainability Commission and Commissioner of Plant Operations Department of Public Utilities for the City of Toledo.

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