



Message from the President

This will be the last time I will be addressing you here in the President's Message column. Two years have come and gone by so fast. I think NOCCA has achieved a lot during these two years of my presidency. The organization has had some ups and downs but, the advent of the web site, noccassoc.org, has been one of the biggest achievements during the last two years. The web site has allowed all of you to stay current on what is going on in NOCCA. It has brought us attention from organizations such as The National League of Cities. If you haven't seen it yet, you're missing a lot. Suggestions to making it better are also always welcome.

During the last two years, NOCCA has held many very interesting and pertinent forums covering topics of interest to most of our communities. To often council members are asked to vote on funding for projects without getting the full information on projects and issues. NOCCA has tried to keep you informed of the current issues we have to face as elected officials in our respective communities. As an organization, your board and officers are constantly looking at the issues facing all of us everyday and trying to find ways to present solutions to you, our members. NOCCA holds its forums to present the problems and solutions, so that our communities do not have to waste valuable time and money on solutions that might not work. The sharing of ideas and solutions to problems is what NOCCA is all about. The Northeast Ohio City Council Association is a council members network organization. Gone are the days when our communities could afford to go it alone. Regionalization, a word most of us do not want to hear, doesn't mean our communities need to lose our identity or histories. It just means that the economics of this ever shrinking world, force us every day to find new and innovative ways to solve our Cities' problems.

I thank all of you for allowing me to serve as your president these last two years. I am confident that your new board and officers, that will be elected and sworn in at our Annual Meeting on February 8th, will continue to carry on and improve this organization. An exciting set of forums for this year is already being planned. Remember that your comments are of our utmost concern. If there are any programs you would like to see addressed at a future forum, let one of the officers or board members know. This is your organization and your voice, let's make the best of it.

Civically yours,
Donald Saunders
President, N.O.C.C.A., Inc.

NOVEMBER 2006 FORUM HIGHLIGHTS PUBLIC UTILITIES: HOW ARE THEY REGULATED?

The forum opened with greetings from NOCCA President Don Saunders who gave a brief overview of the program. Our first speaker was **Vicky Frisek**, Manager of Regulatory and Pricing from Dominion East Ohio. She stated that they have 1.2 million customers in this area. Consumers can make a choice to buy their gas from Dominion East Ohio or they can buy their gas from a retail natural gas supplier, which is their Energy Choice Program. Currently, two thirds of their customers are with an alternative supplier. Recent changes include asking for approval to enter a transition plan, which would potentially lead to Dominion East Ohio exiting the merchant function and means that they would stop selling gas to customers directly but would still deliver it to customers. This began in October. This means that they have changed the way they purchase their gas and therefore how they price gas to their customers. Dominion held an auction and selected six suppliers to buy wholesale gas from,

PLAN TO ATTEND THE ANNUAL DINNER MEETING

THURSDAY,
February 8, 2007

The City Club of Cleveland
850 Euclid Ave., 2nd Floor
Cleveland, OH 44114
216-621-0082

**“New Year, New
Mayor, New Message:
Regional Vision and
Our Place In It”**

FEATURED SPEAKER:

MAYOR FRANK G. JACKSON
CLEVELAND, OHIO

Registration, Meet & Greet	6:00 pm
Welcome & Business Meeting	6:30 pm
Installation of Officers	7:00 pm
Dinner	7:15 pm
Program (followed by Q & A)	7:45 pm

MEMBERS ARE FREE!

There is a \$30 cost for Non-Members & Guests.

Please make your reservations by
Monday, February 5, 2007
to Kathryn Gambatese
Phone: 216.481.1685
or Email: kgambatese@aol.com

Dinner Choices: (please indicate with reservation)
Baked Lemon Balsamic Vinaigrette Chicken
or Tilapia Meunier (lemon, butter and caper sauce)
or Pasta (wildfresh spinach, ricotta cheese & topped with salsa rosa)

Failure to cancel a registration 24 hours prior to the event will result in billing of members, guests and non-members. Parking is FREE but you must bring in your parking ticket to have it validated!

NOCCA 2006 FORUMS REVIEW AND ON TO 2007...

At the Annual Meeting in February 2006, NOCCA members were updated on the ODOT/I-77 Study by ODOT's Craig Hebebrand the project manager. In May, the spring Forum was geared to a panel discussion on the effects of big box retail development on both the city in which it is going to be located and on neighboring cities. In September, the focus was on the role that the arts play in our individual communities and region from theater to music to

sculpture to painting. At the Cleveland Public Theater, attendees were treated to two short song and dance performances by both an adult group and a children's group. In November, the emphasis was on utilities and how they are regulated and deregulated and how both effect consumers and local government.

For 2007, NOCCA forum topics and events are planned to range from regional cooperation, tax sharing, region wide emergency preparedness

to storm water management and environmental sustainability.

The Annual Meeting on February 8, 2007 will feature a brief talk by Cleveland's Mayor Frank Jackson followed by a Q & A session. Plan to come to the Annual Meeting, hear Mayor Jackson, and participate in the Q & A session.

*Submitted by
Steven D. Bennett
City of University Heights*

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NOVEMBER 2006 FORUM HIGHLIGHTS PUBLIC UTILITIES: HOW ARE THEY REGULATED?

and will then sell that gas to customers who still want to buy gas from East Ohio. The auction also resulted in a retail price adjustment, which is being added to the price of the gas as a retail price adjustment. The pricing of the gas, which they sell to customers, has changed from a regulator formula (GCR) to a standard service offer rate, which they believe the rate is more comparable to the energy choice supplier offers. The main reason is that the traditional gas cost recovery rate included an amount that was to make up for prior over or under recovery. This adjustment does not include the unrecovered gas cost which makes it more competitive for consumers. As a result, there is not a profit component in this portion of the gas rate, but the profit is included in their base rate. Dominion East Ohio still does all of the same things they did for their customers in the past, so the only thing that has changed is the way they buy gas and the way they price the gas. Dominion's gas prices are down from last year and they will continue to be regulated by the commission.

The next speaker, **Janine Migden-Ostrander**, from the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel spoke about the mission of the office to represent the interests of the 4.5 million residential utility households in proceedings before state and federal regulators and in the courts. The state agency also educates consumers about electric, natural gas, telephone and water issues and provides information about utility services. She stated that they are different from the public utilities commission as she looks at them as the judges who reach the decision as to what they deem to be appropriate. She stated that their website (www.pickocc.org) is a good resource for utility information and the pamphlets provide information on smart energy tips, which are helpful in reducing monthly electric, natural gas and water bills. She also stated that the agency is a very strong believer in energy efficiency, which is a way that customers can take control of their bills and reduce their usage. The office has a number of different functions: a group of lawyers that intervene the cases of the commission representing the consumers; a staff of technical people (accountants, engineers, economists) who analyze the files that the utilities make and they are the expert witnesses and will evaluate the expert testimony from the utility companies; an outreach and education group (speakers bureau) who go around the state and give speeches on any subject; and a call center, which can help you read you bill, understand what does a charge mean, answer something that you don't understand; and help if you're facing a disconnection, but not disputing the basis of the disconnection, where they can help establish payment plans and negotiations with the utility company. They work one-on-one with customers and the utility company to help resolve consumer concerns. The consumers' council is also looking at how to evaluate if the result of an auction is going to be something that benefits customers or not and will continue to evaluate to ensure that it's in the best interest of the consumer.

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*P.O. Box 241246
Lyndhurst, OH 44124*

*Submitted by
Danita Love*

NOCCA Secretary - Highland Hills