

THE PLAIN DEALER

December 28, 2013

Kasich deploys the politics of largesse, GOP-style

By Thomas Suddes

On two fronts, Gov. John Kasich and his fellow Statehouse Republicans are advancing what might be called a broad-gauge agenda in Columbus as opposed to hard-faced right-wing politicking.

Example No. 1 is the GOP-run Ohio Supreme Court's Dec. 20 decision to uphold Medicaid expansion in Ohio, a huge win for Ohio's working poor, and an expansion Kasich fought for.

Example No. 2 is the way Kasich and aides are striving to collaborate with Ohio communities and the arts crowd, rather than dictate to them, in writing a state construction budget to surface by mid-winter.

Here are examples from a list of 132 recommended economic development projects that may land in the budget (and potential state dollars for each): Cleveland lakefront access (\$7 million), plus \$6 million for the Flats east gateway; \$14 million to help replace Franklin County's Veterans Memorial; a range of Dayton projects, at \$1 million each, including help for the Comprehensive Cancer Center at Dayton Children's Hospital; and work at the Cincinnati Zoo \$2 million.

Examples from 60 recommended arts projects (and potential state dollars for each): \$1.06 million for Cleveland's Karamu House theater; \$2.5 million for the Dayton Art Institute; \$1.1 million for the Columbus Museum of Art; almost \$280,000 for Youngstown's Butler Institute of American Art; and, among Appalachian projects, \$500,000 for Nelsonville's Stuart's Opera House and \$200,000 for the Dairy Barn, in Athens.

The 132 economic development projects were, at Kasich's request, recommended by regional chambers of commerce, such as the Greater Cleveland Partnership, the Columbus Partnership and Dayton Development Coalition. The arts projects were reviewed by a similar group. For both sets of projects, legislators will have decisive input. Still, this is not the "who's on first?" way Ohio usually did business when it came to state construction dollars for local work. This is a far better way. And Kasich deserves credit for it.

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