



MEETING MINUTES

COMMUNITY INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, October 24, 2023

CALL TO ORDER

Imran Malik, Chair, called the Community Inclusion Advisory Committee (C.I.A.C.) meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.

After opening the meeting, Chair Malik led a moment of silence for peace all over the world in light of recent natural and manmade calamities, and asked for prayer for the suffering and loss of human life.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Chair Imran Malik, Vice Chair Niki Lombardo, Katawi Cato, Noor Amara, Kristine Aldemir, Isao Shoji, Michael Haynes, Vineet Goel, Ming Yu, Peggy Kilty,

Members Absent: Max Xu

Staff Present: Christine Nardecchia, Chief Justin Páez

PUBLIC COMMENTS NOT ON AGENDA

There were no public comments.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Aldemir made the motion to approve; Ms. Kilty seconded the motion. The motion passed.

GUEST PRESENTERS

Chair Malik introduced Heather Heins, Executive Director of OneDublin and Kim Emch, Executive Director of Festa.

Executive Director Heins introduced herself and thanked the Committee for inviting her to share the work of OneDublin.

She shared the purpose of One Dublin, which exists to create opportunities for the community to share hope and health with others in their time of need. She said that reasons for need vary and are generally one-time crises. OneDublin serves those within the boundaries of the Dublin City School District, as well as families, children and older adults who are quietly struggling.

Ms. Heins gave an overview of the five main program areas of OneDublin, which are the following:

1. **Emergency Household Assistance:** She explained that this program provides direct payment assistance with bills, such as utility, medical or transportation. Families may also need assistance with food or other household needs, so they refer them to places like the Dublin Food Pantry. Ms. Heins offered an example of a recent client, who owned a business in Dublin. The business went out of business; Ms. Heins described the ways OneDublin assisted her, which put a temporarily pause financial difficulties as she sought new, fulltime employment. Ms. Heins said that OneDublin is seeing more emergency financial requests, and the trend appears to be that they are helping larger families who have larger household bills. She stated that there are still two months left in their calendar fiscal year, and they have already met their budgeted outreach numbers for the year. She said they are seeing a trend in serving people who have experienced a health crisis, a job loss, are working jobs that do not have paid time off as well as new Americans in need.
2. **Free Shop.** Ms. Heins shared that in 2022, OneDublin distributed more than 14,000 items with this program. She gave an example of a client in need, which was a family from Venezuela who arrived here with only items they could carry. She said they helped them with cold weather clothing, household items and other needs. She shared that OneDublin recently moved into a centralized location that is three times larger than their previous location. The environment is inclusive and welcoming to our diverse community. She said that in order to keep up with demand, they have had to add more Free Shop days.
3. **Bed Donation Program.** Ms. Heins stated that OneDublin believes no one should be sleeping on the floor, and therefore they provide mattress sets and bedding. In 2022, they distributed 550 mattresses and bedding items. She shared a client example about a family of seven, where all five children were sleeping on the floor on broken air mattresses. OneDublin partners with the Finding Hope Center, who delivers mattresses. This family received the beds they needed. She also shared that families seem to be requesting more beds at one time, and they are unsure as to why this is occurring.

4. Back to School Outreach. Ms. Heins said that in 2023, OneDublin distributed 753 backpacks to Dublin City School students in need. She shared a client example about a single mother who is battling cancer who could not go out to shop for her children's school supplies. OneDublin was able to give her children their school supplies and backpacks. They have also expanded this program to include lunchboxes so that children do not have to come to school using plastic grocery bags for their lunches, They also provide Guidance Offices in the schools a stock of school supplies as they run out throughout the academic year.
5. Adopt A Family or Adopt a Senior Program. Ms. Heins said that OneDublin sponsored 563 children and 49 senior citizens in the previous year. She gave a client example of a single father who lost his job who lives in a very wealthy area of town and is temporarily struggling financially. All of his children are registered for the Adopt A Family program so that his children can have a great holiday. She also said that typically, senior citizens ask for very simple items such as tissues or fresh fruit. She said that language translation is always a challenge, so they work with the school translators to help gain an understanding of family needs.

Ms. Heins shared that in addition to those five programs, they also connect residents to other organizations to meet various needs.

She also said that OneDublin is fortunate to have many volunteers. They have 2 PT employees. Last year, they had 295 volunteer opportunities with 822 volunteers assisting. She gave an example of a former family who came to OneDublin for temporary assistance before getting back on their feet. She said it has now come full circle, as the head of that household is now a committee member on their Board. She said it takes a community to make a difference.

Chair Malik thanked Ms. Heins for her presentation and invited Kim Emch, Executive Director of Festa to present.

Ms. Emch opened with a statement saying that lack of English language skills can bar people from a workplace and thrust them into poverty. These families worry about food, clothing and shelter every day. She continued by saying that they end up having few relationships outside of their home which is extremely isolating. She explained that Festa feeds, educates, serves, trains and advocates through multi-generational English as a Second Language (ESL) education. She also shared that due to her life circumstances, she became a social justice entrepreneur, feeling called to serve these children and families.

She recalled that when Festa first began, on the first day of their free suburban lunch camp, she observed that many could not speak English. She said that parents understood that the only way their children could get ahead was through education, but if they could not learn English, they would fall behind. In response, Festa started an after school tutoring and a homework help program. She explained that they noticed many children translating for their parents and knew they needed to offer

ESL programming. She and her team found very few in central Ohio, which is still the case. She claimed that today, only 3% of people in Columbus looking for adult ESL programs can find them. Therefore, she said they added adult English and preschool to their after school programming in order to serve children, parents and grandparents together. She said that Festa invented the three-generation ESL program that serves the entire family from infant to grandparent. She says she and her team have observed the life-changing relationships people have built, particularly among staff and families, She gave an example of a family from Afghanistan who had to relocate to central Ohio. They spoke no English but were able to get assistance from Festa. From that point, she said, their lives fell into place. The father of the family found a job, the mother was able to enroll their children in school. The mother's new English skills have enabled her to sell her food at a local farmer's market, which is now becoming a catering business.

Ms. Emch shared that Festa expects to serve 1,000 people in 2023. On October 4, 2023, Festa opened a Dublin location in Indian Run United Methodist Church, thanks to the help of Jean Griffin, the former Director of OneDublin. Ms. Emch shared that within 20 minutes of opening registration at the Dublin location, a waitlist formed with 256 people. She called it a waiting list they will never get through in all likelihood.

Ms. Emch shared that their current need is for more volunteers, as they have a goal to operate 20 locations in central Ohio. She invited all C.I.A.C. members to tour, as they give tours daily. She also added that between their Dublin and Hilliard locations, clients represent 51 countries. The programs is very community-oriented.

Ms. Aldemir asked Ms. Emch if Festa needs more volunteer teachers. Ms. Aldemir also asked about the commitment for volunteers. Ms. Emch answered that there is a need for more volunteers, and the time commitment after training is twice per week during the school year.

Chair Malik asked Ms. Emch to share their location and the training time commitment to become an ESL volunteer teacher and also asked how closely Festa works with school PTAs and parents.

Ms. Emch responded that their Dublin location is in Indian Run United Methodist Church on Brand Road. She said that training time it is dependent on the volunteer's experience. She also added that Festa works closely with the school districts, usually going through the communications staff in our schools.

Ms. Heins said that OneDublin also works closely with all school counselors, as this is how they receive their referrals. They, too, work directly with PTOs within each of schools. As for location, Ms. Heins shared that the OneDublin is located behind Kroger on Hospital Drive.

Vice Chair Lombardo asked what we C.I.A.C. can do to make recommendations to City Council or City staff to help with inclusivity. Ms. Heins said their ask is to create awareness and getting word out to families, which is their biggest hurdle. She said that their organization believes there are many people who don't have children in school and therefore they may not know of their existence.

Ms. Nardecchia asked if Google Translate is integrated on the OneDublin website. Ms. Heins replied that OneDublin just received a grant from the Dublin Foundation to provide that service and it is forthcoming.

Ms. Emch answered Vice Chair Lombardo's question by relaying a story about a volunteer whose perspective was renewed about diversity and inclusivity based on his experience with helping at Festa. He is now multi-lingual in order to serve people and that has been transformational for him. She stated that she would welcome this perspective for everyone in Dublin.

Ms. Nardecchia pointed to the C.I.A.C. Strategic Framework and how this presentation supports it, adding that the intent is for C.I.A.C. to see this through inclusive lenses in how Dublin is being served. She added that the hope is to get the Dublin Food Pantry and Neighborhood Bridges to an upcoming meeting as well. Ms. Nardecchia congratulated OneDublin and Festa for being in Dublin and sharing their story with C.I.A.C.

Vice Chair Lombardo asked Chie Páez and Ms. Nardecchia if City staff are trained on these topics. Ms. Nardecchia responded that while there is no formalized training, but that there is a very good understanding of where people in need should go to within the city. Chief Páez said that they also have a very good general awareness of connecting services and are about to onboard a contract position in partnership with Syntero for public response needs. He also said that the intent of Safe Space is to be one of these referral resources and it will be expanding.

Ms. Kilty asked if anyone had a background in social work in either OneDublin or Festa. Ms. Heins said they did not but discuss it regularly. Ms. Emch said that many of their staff members do have a background in social work and said they have a partnership with The Ohio State University's Education and Social Work programs.

The group then discussed other ways to raise awareness and multi-lingual resources.

Ms. Aldemir asked if C.I.A.C. could host an open house to raise awareness? Ms. Nardecchia said this wasn't in C.I.A.C.'s purview to do so but any individual may do so. Ms. Nardecchia said she would share links in the minutes to www.one-dublin.org and www.wearefesta.org. Ms. Nardecchia also encouraged individual C.I.A.C. members to share this information with their respective communities.

Chair Malik thanked the guests for their work within the community and the impact they make.

OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

Ms. Nardecchia provided an update on the Speaker Series and that the City is continuing to work the plan. Two other possibilities have occurred in that the nonprofit and faith community would like to have a conversation on serving those who are underserved. The second opportunity is on Juneteenth in conjunction with the opening of the Brown-Harris cemetery. She also said the MLK Civic Service Series will continue and the December project will be announced next week.

Ms. Lombardo said that there may be the opportunity to combine those two topics since diversity, equity and inclusion is also about bringing people who are underserved to the table.

Chair Malik reported that the Dublin Arts Council will be moving forward with the Snails exhibit, which will tie in with a DEI speaker series. Ms. Nardecchia thanked Chair Malik for bringing this up because it does bring up a good point that we don't want to be redundant. Mr. Shoji asked for clarification about the Snails. Mr. Malik shared that this upcoming exhibit are large artistic snails made from recycled material made by an artist in Italy; he believes they are ten by ten feet, and they are moveable. He said that the Dublin Arts Council will tie the project with diversity and inclusion awareness and discussions.

Mr. Haynes said he understood that there is merit in ensuring that resources whether they be time, financial or otherwise are being used effectively. He stated that his reaction is that the scope is shrinking and it is disappointing. The language is clear in the strategic framework that the city produces a speaker series. Ms. Lombardo added that she had the same reaction.

Ms. Nardecchia asked if this group discussed a Speaker Series before or was it brought up the first time in the fall. Mr. Haynes said the group has been discussing this for three or four months in a row. Ms. Amara asked Mr. Haynes to elaborate.

Mr. Haynes stated that he agreed that not duplicating efforts is important, but that this seems like a more like a tactical conversation with a limited scope of leaders. Whereas, the MLK kickoff event seemed more oriented toward the general public and more educational toward the relevance of equity and inclusion.

Ms. Nardecchia pointed out the plan was a draft, and Mr. Haynes said that the change seemed like a narrowing of the scope.

Ms. Lombardo agrees we need to leverage our resources. But she stated she felt the city was responsible to provide something and that she doesn't want to transfer it over to Ohio University or another place, stating it needs to be a city-sponsored activity.

Ms. Kilty mentioned the speaker who came to the Chamber of Commerce recently, stating she was not aware about that speaker. Ms. Nardecchia said it was geared toward the business community.

Mr. Shoji said he appreciated Mr. Haynes' and Ms. Lombardo's passion. He stated that his preference is to have something that lasts perpetually and is open to the direction this may be headed.

Ms. Aldemir says the quality is important. She added that the City could partner with a lot of organizations like OSU who could provide great speakers to share cost, and she gave examples. Mr. Haynes wants to be careful we are not conflating things.

Ms. Amara asked to address the group, stating that everyone comes from many different spheres and communities what brings us together is our humanity. She said she has been suffering watching things unfold around the world, and asked to take a moment of silence for the lost lives in Palestine

and Israel. C.I.A.C. members then paused in silence. Ms. Amara continued by saying that a DEI committee's job is to address the entire community and that she has felt a void in the last 18 days that there has been no acknowledgement of any loss of life by the City of Dublin. She asked that the committee not remain silent. Next, she pointed out a surge of islamophobia and the fears it has sparked including within her own family. She asked that the City use its Safe Space services to create a safe space a place for the community including extra patrols for safety. She continued by saying that there is pain and anguish in this story and that she is confident the committee would take this back to City Council and prays that it may help this to come to an end.

Chair Malik thanked Ms. Amara and said that C.I.A.C. conducted a moment of silence at the beginning of this evening's meeting just before she arrived. Chair Malik relayed that there are many groups involved on all sides of this conflict and that people are not comfortable coming out in public due to so many threats. He continued by saying that the sensitivities are too high which is why interfaith group and leaders have not been able to come out with any statement. Ms. Amara said some acknowledgement or neutral statement would be preferable, saying we needed to call upon our humanity.

Ms. Kilty thanked Ms. Amara and stated she found the City's silence deafening and insulting.

Ms. Yu said on behalf of the Chinese community, there is concern as they try to learn more about the history of what is happening and that it is very confusing. She stated that she has done research and that there are many perspectives. Ms. Yu stated that she wants Ms. Amara to know no one should feel isolated, that people do care and do want to learn. Ms. Amara thanked Ms. Yu for the reassurance.

Ms. Aldemir reiterated Ms. Yu's topics and said she is discussing this as well to understand the conflict, and Ms. Yu replied by saying it is very important to understand both sides of the story.

Chief Páez thanked the group for sharing their open feelings. He said that sometimes the absence of a message can seem isolating, but messages that miss the mark can be damaging. He continued by saying that we need to think through in how we move forward to support each other since there is difficulty in navigating this. The Dublin Police Department wants everyone to feel welcomed, supported and safe. He thanked Ms. Amara for acknowledging Safe Space and its intent and added that there is a need to expand awareness of its support.

Ms. Amara thanked the group for allowing her to feel safe in this space.

Ms. Kilty asked if it would be possible to draft a statement from this committee to draft a statement to Council on behalf of humankind. She acknowledged that it is a sensitive topic and is not asking Council to take a side.

Ms. Nardecchia said it wasn't about Council taking sides but about thoughtfulness and pause. As citizens you are permitted to contact any elected official. But in terms of C.I.A.C. making a statement is unchartered territory. Ms. Nardecchia encouraged C.I.A.C. members to reach out as individuals to

faith communities, cultural partners and any elected or City official. She continued by adding that the lack of a statement is in no way meant to be uncaring, nor is there a lack of empathy, support or concern.

Ms. Amara responded by saying that she appreciated that but she is the only one who gets to hear it. She said that if a DEI Committee can't make this statement, then who can? She continued by saying that the committee exists to represent all different communities and ethnicities in our community.

Mr. Goel addressed Ms. Amara saying that we share in the grief and we empathize, but that the biggest issue is neutrality.

Ms. Aldemir stated that perhaps a statement from all religious leaders would be helpful.

Ms. Nardecchia asked Chair Malik if the Safe Alliance of Interfaith Leaders (S.A.I.L.) has considered making a statement.

Chair Malik said the sensitivities are too high. He continued by saying to the Committee that given that C.I.A.C. is an advisory committee, it is not in any position to have any authority to make a collective statement. He said that unfortunately, this is where we have to remember that it is hard to take sides. Right now it is overwhelming and is a difficult situation to be in. Chair Malik said to the Committee that we can have impact within its social relationships which is only going to happen when we have an understanding of each other's faith, backgrounds and culture. He stated that it is his hope that each one of the Committee members can take this back to their communities and that it needs to be a proactive, continuous journey.

Mr. Shoji said he agrees that any sort of statement coming from this Committee may be greeted negatively and can say the same about any statement coming from the City. He continued by saying that we all know this is a very sensitive issue. To the Chair, he suggested that perhaps C.I.A.C. can make a recommendation to City Council that they at least acknowledge the pain on all sides, indicating that City knows you're there and that our hearts ache along with yours. He said it could say that if there are moments when people feel unsafe, it can offer the City, Police, etc., adding that just hearing that goes a long way. Mr. Shoji recalled hateful times against the Asian community when Deputy Chief Tabernik called to check on him and offer his reassurance.

Ms. Aldemir added that there could emphasize our safe zones and resources, offering places our resources within the City.

Chair Malik said there can be a recommendation, but not a statement from C.I.A.C.

Mr. Haynes thanked Ms. Amara. He asked what is the next step was and how the group moves forward. He said that he would also like to say that every situation is different, but when George Floyd was murdered and when the situation in Ukraine started, the bridge was lit, which was making a statement. He suggested that there could be a recommendation to Council to make a statement.

Ms. Lombardo thanked Ms. Amara as well saying that they have had difficult conversations before and this is how the group comes to common ground. She said she took comfort that Ms. Amara felt safe to share, and she thanked her for being brave enough to do so. She added that she does agree that C.I.A.C. cannot make a statement but that it can make a recommendation. Ms. Lombardo made a motion to ask staff to bring back to City Council to put out a public statement about the humanity to stop violence around the world.

Ms. Kilty seconded Ms. Lombardo's motion.

Mr. Shoji stated that the statement needs to speak directly to the residents of Dublin.

Mr. Goel asked if the statement should this come from the Police.

Mr. Shoji said he believes it should come from the City.

Ms. Yu said it needs to come from the City about daily life and safety, and that there is zero tolerance.

Chair Malik said the statement should be about the safety of all the residents of Dublin, which should be embedded in the wording.

Ms. Lombardo made a motion that C.I.A.C. recommend to the City to write a statement of comfort around the issues that are happening on a global scale but that impact the residents of Dublin.

Ms. Kilty seconded the motion.

Mr. Haynes asked for clarification saying that C.I.A.C. is asking that the statement be written, but would like the motion to say that be written and published. Ms. Lombardo added that to her motion.

The motion was approved unanimously. Chair Malik thanked everyone for bringing these difficult discussions forward.

Calendar Discussion

Chair Malik reminded everyone of attendance requirements and staying committed to attendance.

Ms. Nardecchia proposed cancelling the November 2023 meeting due to staff unavailability and the cadence of November/December holidays. Mr. Haynes made two date corrections on the 2024 proposed calendar. Mr. Haynes also suggested that there needs to be a November 2023 meeting and added that he thought there also needs to be a May 2024 meeting.

Ms. Lombardo agreed saying there needed to be a May 2024 meeting especially pre-Juneteenth.

Ms. Nardecchia asked for a May date. After discussion, the group agreed on May 21, 2024.

Mr. Haynes suggested the group meet three weeks from tonight on November 14th instead of the 28th. All agreed. Ms. Nardecchia said she would follow up with room and building availability.

Ms. Kilty said that three weeks may not be enough time to accomplish follow up with the organizations in the speaker series draft.

C.A.C. REPORT

Chief Páez reported that in the C.A.C. most recent meeting, the group heard from Dr. Linda Burrs, who reviewed a recent police in-service training which was a focused module on diversity of perspective and compassion fatigue.

NEW BUSINESS

Chair Malik made the following announcements:

- United Religion Initiatives (U.R.I.) will host a regional conference on Saturday, November 4 and Sunday, November 5. The Saturday session will host about 200 people at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church. He said the conference will address multicultural issues including antisemitism, islamophobia and marginalized communities worldwide. It is open to the public. The Sunday event is at The Turkish American Society of Ohio (T.A.S.O.).
- S.A.I.L. will host its annual Thanks and Giving event at the First Community Church in Dublin on November 11. Collections will be made for the Dublin Food Pantry.
- Spectrum TV is producing "Muslim Voices of Ohio." They are interested in doing a diversity documentary about Dublin and will follow up with the City if it moves forward. Ms. Nardecchia suggested that Chair Malik should connect Spectrum with our Direction of Communications and Public Information if they are interested in doing this.
- Chair Malik also reminded everyone that F.I.A. may be hosting a Diwali dinner in December; he asked members to watch for any announcements.
- Chair Malik said that the Hanukkah celebration produced by Congregation Beth Tivkah, our closest synagogue, will not take place on the Dublin Link Bridge as it did in 2022.
- He reminded everyone that Legislative Services' Jayme Maxwell sent out the approved the Rules & Regulations document reminding people of the attendance policy.

Chair Malik stated that all should continue to pray for each other and encouraged all to be safe and then invited any roundtable thoughts. Ms. Amara asked for world peace. Ms. Kilty asked if the City did any social media post for Hispanic Awareness Month. Ms. Lombardo said she thought she did see it.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Imran Malik, Chair

Director of Outreach & Engagement