



## MEETING MINUTES

### COMMUNITY INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**Tuesday, February 25, 2025**

#### CALL TO ORDER

Imran Malik, Chair, called the February 25, 2025 Community Inclusion Advisory Committee (CIAC) meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. in Council Chamber, 5555 Perimeter Drive.

#### ROLL CALL

Members Present: Imran Malik, Ming Yu, Peggy Kilty, Niki Lombardo, Crystal Maiuri, Ingrid Fields

Members Absent: Kristine Aldemir, Katawi Cato, Isao Shoji, Max Xu

Staff Present: Christine Nardecchia

#### Public Comments

There were no public comments.

#### Approval of Minutes

Chair Malik inquired if there were any corrections to the October 29, 2024 CIAC minutes and the joint CIAC and CSAC meeting minutes of December 10, 2024. [No corrections were requested.]

Ms. Lombardo moved, Ms. Maiuri seconded approval of the meeting minutes.

Vote: Ms. Fields, yes; Ms. Maiuri, yes; Ms. Kilty, yes; Ms. Yu, yes; Mr. Malik, yes; Ms. Lombardo, yes.

[Motion approved 6-0]

Mr. Malik requested that Vice Chair Lombardo handle the next agenda item, as he excused himself to say his prayers.

#### Presentation – Coping with Social Media & Cyber Bullying

Vice Chair Lombardo introduced Melissa Rotblatt, LISW-S, school program manager from Syntero to make the presentation.

Ms. Rotblatt stated that Syntero is a community mental health provider. They have been in the Dublin area for over 45 years. They offer a wide range of services. They have four clinical sites: one in Dublin off Frantz Road, one on Mill Run, another in Lewis Center, and they just opened a site in Mt. Gilead. They offer out-patient counseling for all ages; case management services and have a

number of different treatment and support groups. She works specifically with the school programs. They have grant funding through the Franklin County Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Board to provide school-based prevention by helping students build skills in whatever area they need. They also can provide professional development for School District staff, as well as workshops for parents and the community. On Tuesday, March 18, 6:00 p.m., Syntero will be hosting a community conversation at the Golf Club of Dublin on navigating technology-related stress and building healthy social media habits.

Ms. Mauiri inquired if Syntero is a non-profit organization.

Ms. Rotblatt responded affirmatively.

Ms. Mauiri inquired if there was a fee for the services. Could parents contact Syntero directly if they have a need for their child?

Ms. Rotblatt responded that there is no fee for their services, because they are grant-funded. They work closely with the district to determine their clinician placements. This year, they are serving nearly every school at the elementary school level, with the exception of Wyandotte and Bailey. At their office and clinical site, they bill insurance for services provided and offer payment by sliding fee scale for families who are uninsured or under-insured. They want to ensure inability to pay is not a barrier to services. They can be reached at their website, Syntero.org. All their services are listed at their website as well as a referral form. Their main phone number is: 614-889-5722. Their support groups are free of charge.

Ms. Mauiri inquired if Syntero makes presentations at the schools regarding online safety. Particularly at the high school level, there are some issues, such as their recent use of poll tap, an anonymous survey app that can allow students to ask inappropriate questions. School principals have advised parents to check their students' phones and if present, request it to be removed.

Ms. Rotblatt described the availability and distribution of their services among the school locations. The district's mental health specialists provide mental health support at the middle schools and high schools. Syntero provides prevention services at the elementary level. Syntero does have the ability to provide classroom lessons and parent workshops for all grade levels.

Ms. Lombardo stated that Syntero provides counseling services. She inquired if students could reach out to Syntero directly and find it a safe environment for them. She assumes Syntero is required to follow state reporting regulations.

Ms. Rotblatt responded that as health care providers, all of the programs they provide are bound by HIPPA laws. They are also mandated reporters. They describe their school-based services as "counseling light." They focus primarily on the skill-building piece, which is short-term. They typically see students for no more than 10 sessions. If the student needs more ongoing support, they refer them to an outside provider. They provide a confidential space, but at the elementary level, there is more parent/caregiver involvement. Upfront, they inform students what information they might share with a parent/caregiver. They attempt to insure a balance where parents can support their students but students also feel safe to share whatever is going on for them.

Ms. Kilty stated that although they are in the schools, they are a separate entity. There is legislation that requires teachers and schools to report some information to parents that students may wish to remain private. She is referring to Ohio HB 8. Because Syntero is a separate entity, would they be exempt from that requirement?

Ms. Rotblatt responded that they have worked closely with their legal team. As licensed counselors, social workers and marriage and family therapists are not named in H.B. 8, but they ensure that they align with District policies and procedures. H.B. 68 does name mental health professionals. The scopes of the two laws are slightly different. There are some things that school staff may be required to disclose to a parent or guardian that Syntero would not be required to disclose under H.B. 68. They have updated their permission paperwork to the scope of what we could be discussing with a student, so that parents are making an informed decision in agreeing to their services. If there were specific topics they didn't want us to talk about that fell under H.B. 68, they would be required to abide by that. Their mission is to support all students and all families to the best of their ability.

Ms. Lombardo inquired if Syntero partners with Safe Space Dublin.

Ms. Rotblatt responded affirmatively.

Ms. Lombardo inquired how that partnership works.

Ms. Rotblatt stated that Syntero, as a business site in Dublin, is a safe space. We do everything we can to support all citizens of Dublin. They provide support regardless of their background or identity.

Ms. Mauri stated that this is a great resource of which, previously, she was not aware. It is good to know this resource is available to our community members.

Ms. Rotblatt stated that they sometimes receive requests from families for students not in the specific school locations that Syntero is serving. In that case, they make sure they are connected to the School District staff, or if they are looking for support services outside the school, they help them get connected to the right resources.

Ms. Nardecchia stated that once the flyer is available for the Community Talk at the Dublin Golf Course, they will promote that. She will also send CIAC members an invitation to RSVP to that community conversation. The Golf Club of Dublin lies within the Hilliard School District. We have Dublin residents who are located within the Hilliard School District and attend Hilliard School District schools, and there are some Dublin students who attend Tolles School or private schools.

Ms. Kilty inquired if Syntero Counseling Services also are available for Tolles students.

Ms. Rotblatt responded that they do partner with Tolles, but currently, that position is open. They are in the process of filling that. Syntero partners with Dublin, Hilliard, Upper Arlington, Grandview, and Tolles schools. They also have a partnership with Ohio Virtual Academy and TRECA, two online learning programs. Syntero in Delaware County supports their programming with Delaware City Schools, Buckeye Valley and Big Walnut. In Morrow County, they are in Mt. Gilead School District, Highland Local, Cardington, Lincoln and Northmor school districts.

Ms. Mauri inquired how this service is different than speaking with a school guidance counselor.

Ms. Rotblatt responded that in many ways, there is an overlap with what Syntero does and the school counselor. One of the differences is the shorter length of time they work with students, while the school counselor typically is within the school building 5 days/week and might have weekly check-ins with a student for the entire school year. Syntero offers more short-term counselling services; that is partially due to the parameters of their grant funding, but also because all of our clinicians are licensed counselors and social workers plus one marriage and family therapist. Sometimes the counselors will connect students with us who are presenting more significant mental health needs. Sometimes the family prefers to initially seek that mental health counseling from

Syntero, but then Syntero will help them get connected to outside services. Syntero clinicians have more specific mental health training than some school counselors.

Ms. Nardecchia stated that the president of Syntero, Sarah Harrison Mills, will be invited to present an overview of Syntero's comprehensive services at a future CIAC meeting. Not only does Syntero offer support services to the schools, but they also assist City of Dublin employees in times of need. The City contracts with them for the Forever Dublin aging in place program. Police and Fire also have a contract with Syntero for the services of a support services coordinator.

Ms. Lombardo thanked Ms. Rotblatt for her presentation.

### **MLK Sunday Supper**

Ms. Nardecchia stated that she would like to focus on the MLK Sunday Supper toolkit. She thanked Ms. Mauri and the Dublin Parents of Black Students for co-hosting the event with the City. More than 110 people attended. Traditionally, the focus of the event agenda is to bring together our community in a connected manner and discuss issues that matter. This year, the table facilitators led table discussions on 4 different questions. The 4 questions are: (1) How can we connect more with our neighbors? (2) How can we connect with our City? (3) How can we connect by serving others? (4) How do we encourage life-long learning? The diversity represented at the event was reflective of the Dublin community. She provided a summary of the suggestions received. She noted that a belonging toolkit would be dispersed to all those who attended the MLK Sunday Supper, who committed to being community members who promote belonging. The City will be providing a mechanism at its website where people will be able to share stories and photographs of how they are promoting community belonging. She asked committee members to offer any additional recommendations for the toolkit in response to the 4 questions.

#### **#1 – How to connect with neighbors?**

Ms. Nardecchia stated that the toolkit will provide directions on how to obtain a neighborhood block party packet from the City. The City permits 3 block parties per weekend. In addition to the suggestion for block parties, recommendations offered were: City and Bridge Park events, resilient neighborhoods program, dog walking, faith-based organizations, initiatives to bring diverse families together using food to connect; community garden spaces; incentivizing neighborhood gatherings. She noted that renting a block party package is free of cost the first time; the second time within the same year is \$50. The City mails New Resident Welcome packs to new residents. Another recommendation was to have some City meetings with more intentional seating to encourage people to meet someone new.

Ms. Lombardo suggested that in addition to what the City can do, we should not lose focus of what we personally can do to reach out to our neighbors.

Ms. Mauri stated that we can encourage our neighborhoods to have a welcome committee for new residents. She suggested that when houses are sold, that Council members stop by and welcome new residents. She shared her experience of meeting Councilmember Reiner, owner of Oakland Nurseries, who stopped by to check on some work that she had arranged with Oakland. He shared that he was a Council member, and in their conversation, she felt more connected to the City government. Having a Council member take time to stop by and welcome you to the community would speak volumes.

Ms. Nardecchia stated that she is not sure people are aware that our Council members are not full-time Councilmembers.

## #2 – How to connect with the City?

Ms. Nardecchia stated that there are several citizen universities; the Police and Washington Township each have one, and we have Citizens U Jumpstart for high school students. Other opportunities are community service days, the Recreation Center, summer camps, Bridge Park fitness programs, publicize volunteer opportunities, and improve communication through mail and social media to inform about cultural activities. She asked committee members their thoughts about the use of mail to inform about cultural activities.

Committee members indicated support for the use of mail. Emails often go to spam.

Ms. Kilty inquired if the mailers are ever produced in languages other than English.

Ms. Nardecchia responded that the City does not do so; however, the City website is translatable in almost every language. We would most likely put a QR code on the mailer directing people to the City website for translation, if needed.

Ms. Kilty inquired if the City had considered sending out a mailer at the beginning of the year outlining the events that have already been defined for the upcoming year.

Ms. Nardecchia responded that the City has not done that. The question is what would qualify as the event. Could it be that of a school, faith organization, rotary or City event? Consequently, the City maintains a comprehensive community calendar on its website.

Ms. Kilty recommended that the City remind residents of that calendar. The weekly Thursday email from the City could include that reminder or provide a link to the calendar.

Ms. Nardecchia noted that another recommendation was more community conversations facilitated by experts, such as the speakers series offered by New Albany. Additionally, the use of WeChat to reach the Chinese community. The City does use WeChat.

Ms. Lombardo noted that the New Albany speakers series is facilitated by a foundation, not the city. Separate funding supports that speakers series.

Mr. Shoji stated that there is lack of understanding concerning financing within the City, the most significant of which is the use of tax dollars by the City versus the schools.

Ms. Kilty responded that would be a great topic for a community conversation – understanding how City and school financing works. She inquired if there are incentives to attend events, such as an ice cream truck at an event.

Ms. Nardecchia stated that it depends on the event. There are different invitations and levels of incentives to attend. We do have food trucks on every Wednesday during the summer in Coffman Park. Are you suggesting provision of free incentives?

Ms. Kilty responded that it could be a small gesture or token that would serve as a draw for community members to attend an event.

Ms. Fields stated that the parades at St. Patrick's Day and July 4<sup>th</sup> provide a significant level of entertainment for children plus free candy. The Farmer's Market in Bridge Park is an incentive for families to venture out within the community.

Ms. Nardecchia stated that the City frequently has a presence (a tent) at the market in Bridge Park.

Ms. Kilty stated that she would encourage the use of incentives for events that are not already well known and popular.

### #3 – How to connect by serving others?

Ms. Nardecchia stated that the City offers volunteer engagement to the extent possible via different volunteer groups. There are also school student clubs, Recreation Center-sponsored kid educational programming and scouts. One recommendation was that Dublin should create a group for disabled students, and there is a need for adaptive and accessible playgrounds. The City goes above and beyond in regard to accessibility efforts with our playgrounds. The City has a full-time accessibility coordinator at the Recreation Center for adaptive recreation. Perhaps that needs more promotion. Another recommendation is that opportunities for older adults who may be isolated or have mobility issues should be promoted. She believes Dublin is a community of service and volunteer engagement. There are significant volunteer opportunities associated with the Dublin Irish Festival, as well as fundraising groups.

Ms. Fields inquired if The Connector bus is being used by the City's aging population.

Ms. Nardecchia responded that it is heavily utilized. We can schedule that topic for a future CIAC meeting, if Council decides to assign the topic.

Mr. Malik noted that his son has used it the past year for transportation to/from his work at Dublin Methodist Hospital.

Ms. Nardecchia stated that the last question to generate ideas for the connection toolkit is:

### #4 – How to encourage life-long learning?

Ms. Nardecchia stated that all four health systems in Dublin offer speaking events. Additionally, there is the Dublin library, Heritage interpreter open houses, Washington Township CPR and first aid classes, etc.

Ms. Mauri inquired if the City sponsors a local travel group that offers the opportunity for citizens to travel together to particular destinations.

Ms. Nardecchia responded that the City offers no such opportunities that she is aware of. Visit Dublin may be aware of some local groups. The senior citizens group at the Dublin Recreation Center offers travel opportunities for its group.

Ms. Fields responded that the Dublin Chamber advertises some opportunities.

Ms. Nardecchia stated most chambers of commerce offer travel group excursions.

Ms. Mauri stated that if it were City-sponsored, perhaps a grant is available that would decrease the travel costs. Perhaps a raffle could be offered to obtain a discounted travel opportunity. It would be a way for the City to encourage life-long learning and community.

Ms. Nardecchia stated that she does not envision local government would pursue that type of effort. However, the concept would be an appropriate non-profit opportunity. One idea would be a civil rights freedom tour to civil rights sites.

Ms. Kilty stated that her mother previously worked for the Lake County Visitors Bureau coordinating tours that were often frequented by seniors. They were day trips or weekend trips to different destinations within Ohio, typically using a charter bus. It would be nice to see the City of Dublin coordinate perhaps a seasonal trip to a historical site.

Ms. Nardecchia thanked the committee members for their feedback. Once they publish and disperse the connection toolkit, they will be measuring its effectiveness.

Ms. Lombardo stated that the toolkit may be something that will have to be shared more than once, perhaps on a defined cadence.

### **Community Cultural Gatherings**

Ms. Nardecchia stated that previously, she had shared the idea of holding teas within the community. The objective is to bring various cultures together to reflect that we are a global city of choice, to create community connectedness, essentially Local Government 101. She has observed that with many of the cultures represented in the City, a local government does not exist in their home country; it is typically governed by the State. The thought is that they will distribute the connection toolkit and then ask participant volunteers from the different cultures to meet with City staff for cultural learning tasks. A good example of cultural learning is the City's nature coordinator, Barbara Ray's experience. She has learned that there are some cultures who will not touch reptiles barehanded. We'd like to have a two-way conversation on ways to best serve our community. There are initial groups that we'd like to bring together, as they are interested in getting to know one another. She indicated that they have met with two different companies who are certified in international tea etiquette. Hot tea will be served at these gatherings, consistent with whatever culture we will be hosting. The teas would be on a week night. She requested committee members for their feedback on the concept.

Ms. Mauiri stated that it is good to have individual cultural gatherings to help foster understanding with the City, but it would also be good to have the different cultures come together. We are all Dublin citizens.

Ms. Kilty stated that she likes the idea of different culture groups learning more about each other and dispelling stereotypes.

Ms. Lombardo requested clarification of the objective. Is it to help the City and a particular community learn how to work together versus the dispelling of myths across different communities with the goal of building more belonging within the community? There could be value in both to the City and to the community in cross cultural gatherings.

Ms. Nardecchia stated that the objective is to build trust, to convey to our global community that the government is them. The way we conduct democracy in a local government is a new concept for many cultures. In order to dispel myths, it will be very useful for staff to have better knowledge.

Ms. Fields stated that one of the reasons she loves Dublin is its structure of government. It is different than what she experienced in Orange County, California. It is different in its interest in achieving connectedness.

Mr. Shoji stated that Ms. Mauiri has expressed the goal we want to accomplish, but in order to get to that, we first need to build trust. The Japanese culture tends to believe that the local government exists and does good work, but they aren't supposed to be a part of it. They may not have U.S. citizenship and are aware of all the conversations about immigrants. They appreciate the government and try to be good residents, but they don't feel it is their place to be a part of it. That misunderstanding needs to be broken down so that they understand that Dublin welcomes their involvement.

Ms. Nardecchia stated that perhaps the invitation will need to be tailored to the culture.

Mr. Shoji concurred. Something similar must exist with the Indian, the Muslim, Chinese, Korean and Taiwanese communities. You must start to build a relationship and trust with a community first, then you could put different groups together.

Ms. Mauiri stated that in general, people believe the government is separate from them; they do not feel connected to it and do not believe that their input would make a difference.

Ms. Nardecchia responded that everyone, however, is connected to the City's services. We can at a minimum enhance their understanding of the City's services.

Ms. Fields stated that understanding is improved by attending the State of the City event.

Ms. Yu stated that from the community's side, their motivation to connect with the local government would be based upon their needs. The citizen asks the question, what can the local government do for me or what might be available to me, if I asked? On the other side, the City wants to provide something for the community. It is important to understand both perspectives.

Committee consensus regarding the tea gatherings was supportive.

Mr. Malik stated that the social fabric around the City is changing at a rapid pace. There are definitely major segments of ethnic groups with whom the City needs to build relationships. Within those groups, there may be multiple layers of other ethnicities or diversities. Within the Muslim community, for example, there are Arabs, Africans, South Americans and a plethora of other layers. We want to be careful that we do not reach out only to select components of the community. A more universal outreach would be to have open houses within the City Council building. The open houses could be open to everyone who wants to come and meet the Council leadership or City Manager and be held quarterly or twice a year. The danger in reaching out to select groups is that you may end up isolating other major leaders or groups within the spectrum of constituencies.

Ms. Lombardo stated that we will learn as the teas occur; it would be an evolving process.

### **Updates on City Inclusion Efforts**

- Ms. Nardecchia shared that the MLK Supper was a significant success and thanked the Dublin Parents of Black Students Association for their assistance, as well as the table facilitators and attendees. There was diverse and robust discussion.
- The Lunar New Year display was on view at the Dublin Recreation Center.
- Outreach and Engagement continues the momentum of its intergenerational connections, wherein teen buddies volunteer to serve older adults. Recently, they met to make floral arrangements.
- On January 31, Outreach and Engagement hosted the faith community with a breakfast to bring people together to discuss mutual topics. Representatives from 15 churches attended. She learned that they do not typically get together in that manner. They participated in a robust discussion, including discussion about the concept of belonging. Mollie Steiner and a Code Enforcement officer attended to talk about health and property assistance needs of older adults. They also discussed disaster readiness. They expressed interest in meeting again. She agreed to facilitate a second meeting, but will be encouraging the faith community to assume responsibility for the discussions. They will be holding the second meeting in October 2025 with the non-profit community, including the Dublin Food Pantry, One Dublin and couple of other organizations.
- The MLK Civic Service series kicked-off in February. Books were collected for incarcerated youth and older adults, and the librarian from the youth juvenile corrections facility spoke on

the isolation and loss of hope experienced by those who are incarcerated and have no connection to the outside world.

- The Black History Month videos are offered on the City's website. [video shown.]

### **Updates on Community Events**

Mr. Malik stated that the month of Ramadan is coming up, beginning March 1. He asked committee members to observe a moment of silent prayer for all the wildfires that are occurring in California. [moment of silence and prayer observed.]

Mr. Malik listed Ramadan-associated events that will be occurring in the greater community during the month of March.

Ms. Nardecchia invited Committee members to attend the 2025 State of the City on Thursday, March 13, 6:00-8:00 p.m. at The Exchange at Bridge Park.

Ms. Mauiri inquired if the Presidential Executive Orders recently signed have had any effect locally. Ms. Nardecchia responded that there has not been any effect on Dublin. It is a municipality, not reliant upon federal funding. Dublin is a home rule city, so nothing within the City of Dublin has changed.

Mr. Malik stated that Dublin is next door to the City of Columbus, which is a global city. The Executive Orders have had greater impact within the jurisdiction of Columbus. Most of area new American communities are located within the City of Columbus. The attendance at church services and even food banks has diminished.

Ms. Nardecchia noted that food banks in Columbus have eliminated the usual required paperwork to make it easier for people to get the needed food. The Dublin food bank is not impacted.

### **New Business**

Ms. Kilty stated that tomorrow, February 26, is "Letter to an Elder Day". Her nephew, Jacob Kramer, who lives in the Cleveland area, started a nonprofit called Love for our Elders when he was just 13. It is now a global non-profit. His organization and website, "Love for our Elders," provides letters, postcards, video communications, etc. to elderly folks who might be isolated or have little outside contact. He also was able to get a holiday implemented, "Letter to an Elder Day," which is tomorrow.

### **Roundtable**

There was no roundtable discussion.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

  
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Imran Malik, Chair

  
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Assistant Clerk of Council