



MEETING MINUTES

COMMUNITY INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, February 24, 2026

CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chair, Ms. Fields, called the Community Inclusion Advisory Committee (CIAC) meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chamber, 5555 Perimeter Drive.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Ingrid Fields, Kristine Aldemir, Crystal Maiuri, Ming Yu

Members Absent: Imran Malik

Staff Present: Christine Nardecchia, Jeffrey Jiang

Guests: Julie Erwin Rinaldi, Executive Director, Dublin Food Pantry

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Fields inquired if there were any corrections to the December 16, 2025 CIAC minutes. [No corrections were requested.]

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

Vote: Ms. Maiuri, yes; Ms. Aldemir, yes; Ms. Yu, yes; Ms. Fields, yes.

[Motion approved 4-0]

CITIZEN COMMENTS

There were no citizen comments.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Presentation – Dublin Food Pantry, Julie Erwin Rinaldi**

Ms. Nardecchia provided context for the presentation, noting that in her extensive involvement with the committee, they had never been able to have the Dublin Food Pantry present due to scheduling conflicts with board meetings. She expressed enthusiasm about having Julie Erwin Rinaldi available for the evening's presentation.

Ms. Fields introduced Ms. Rinaldi, highlighting her previous role as CEO of Syntero and her significant contributions to mental health awareness in Dublin and the school district.

Ms. Rinaldi presented comprehensive information about the Dublin Food Pantry's (Pantry) operations, emphasizing that 2026 marks their fiftieth anniversary. She explained that the Pantry operated from the Dublin Community Church basement for 45 years before moving to their current freestanding facility on Dublin Center Drive two years ago following a capital campaign.

The Pantry serves eight zip codes corresponding to the Dublin School District service area, with 43017 being their highest volume zip code, followed by 43016 and 43235. Ms. Rinaldi noted

surprise at 43017 being the highest rather than 43016 as initially expected. She noted that the data is not mapped geographically.

Ms. Maiuri inquired whether this might be due to the rural farming areas in that zip code. Ms. Nardecchia provided clarification on the zip code boundaries, explaining that 43026 covers Hilliard, 43235 tends to be eastern areas, and 43017 encompasses much of City of Dublin proper.

Ms. Rinaldi shared significant operational statistics from 2025, including serving nearly 10,000 households and approximately 3,400 children. She emphasized that the average number of Pantry visits per household is four per year, dispelling misconceptions about Pantry misuse. She explained that clients could visit 24-26 times annually but choose to use services sparingly, often only during genuine crises, such as unexpected medical bills or car repairs. Many clients work multiple jobs and require assistance temporarily.

The Pantry operates under the Mid Ohio Food Collective umbrella, which determines service areas and grocery store partnerships for food rescue operations. Ms. Rinaldi reported over 10,000 volunteer hours annually, although she acknowledged this number likely underrepresents actual volunteer contributions as many activities go uncounted.

Ms. Rinaldi expressed gratitude to the City of Dublin for several partnerships. The Dublin Irish Festival donation drive on the final Sunday permits no fee festival entry in exchange for food or monetary donations, generating over 19,000 pounds of food and approximately \$16,000 in 2025. The community giving garden at the Coffman Historic Homesite provided eight produce deliveries during this past summer season.

She announced that a wellness navigator, hired by Syntero, will provide on-site navigation and resource assistance for Pantry customers beginning in the second quarter, with additional office hours at the Dublin Recreation Center. This initiative emerged from a City-led collaborative process involving multiple community groups.

Ms. Rinaldi highlighted various community engagement efforts, including tours and volunteer opportunities for groups such as the Dublin Chamber's Youth Leadership Program and participation in Dublin Good Neighbor Day. The City of Dublin leadership team visited the facility, with Ms. Nardecchia noting that while some newer staff members were surprised by the magnitude of need, many with children in the school district were already aware of food insecurity issues.

The presentation included discussion of new programming initiatives. Ms. Rinaldi described the Dublin Neighborhood Food Share program launched in fall 2025 with four neighborhoods conducting quarterly food drives: Belvedere, Woods at Indian Run, the Quarry, and an EPCON community in Jerome Village. The program aims to increase community awareness, engage multiple generations, and provide convenient donation opportunities for those unable to volunteer directly at the Pantry.

Ms. Nardecchia explained the City's support for expanding this program, noting Dublin has over 80 homeowner associations whose leaders meet twice yearly. The program will be featured at the April Homeowners Association (HOA) Boards meeting and will be included in City communications to HOA leaders.

Ms. Aldemir inquired about Ohio State University (OSU) Extension services, referencing a presentation by Mike Hogan about community gardens and international food production assistance. Ms. Rinaldi confirmed they receive OSU Extension program grants through the Columbus Foundation for their on-site garden, which produces approximately 1,000 pounds of produce annually with assistance from master gardeners. Ms. Nardecchia noted that all three high schools have active environmental and sustainability clubs that could provide additional connections.

Ms. Rinaldi described food-as-medicine programming partnerships with Dublin Methodist Hospital Family Medicine Residency Clinic, which provides health services to the school district. Monthly pop-up pantries target areas where there are higher percentages of families receiving free and reduced-price lunch benefits. A recent event served 74 people representing 297 household members. Additional partnerships provide healthy snacks to athletic programs at Dublin, Scioto, Davis, and Sells Middle Schools for students who lack food in the time between school dismissal and practice.

Addressing challenges, Ms. Rinaldi stated that significant budget cuts have impacted food pantries in 2025, including impacts from a government shutdown affecting Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. She noted the community responded with an unprecedented number of donations. However, she expressed concern about ongoing federal cuts to the SNAP and Medicaid programs that will affect approximately 6,400 people in Dublin zip codes currently receiving SNAP benefits.

Strategic planning efforts focus on funding diversification, including establishing a legacy society at the Columbus Foundation, their first relationship with that organization in the Pantry's history. This partnership has provided garden grants and enabled an endowment account. Increased grant writing and board engagement support continued growth and sustainability.

Ms. Maiuri asked about residency verification requirements. Ms. Rinaldi explained the Mid-Ohio Food Collective registration system requires identification or utility bills with their names; requirements are less stringent than previously. Non-service area residents receive assistance once before being referred to other appropriate pantries.

Regarding donation preferences, Ms. Rinaldi directed attention to their website's banner featuring regularly updated most-needed items. While monetary donations enable greater food purchasing power, they appreciate food donations and conduct special drives for specific needs.

Ms. Nardecchia inquired about language translation services. Ms. Rinaldi described implementing Google Translate on their website and translating materials into primary languages spoken by their clients. While they have tested various translation programs, their clients prefer using personal phones for translation. The Mid-Ohio Food Pantry intake process also offers multiple language options.

Ms. Fields asked about outreach to underrepresented groups or volunteer needs. Ms. Rinaldi emphasized growing the neighborhood food share program to increase awareness and potentially reach residents unaware of Pantry services. She encouraged social media sharing of Pantry information.

Discussion covered food variety for diverse populations, with Ms. Rinaldi noting they provide available fish options and focus on maximizing produce distribution. Partnership with Abbey Church Village targets communities with high concentrations of families qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch programs, providing food during school breaks.

Ms. Yu asked about ready-to-eat food availability. Ms. Rinaldi confirmed they stock microwaveable items like ramen, particularly during school breaks. Food sources include both donations and rescue operations from fifteen area grocery stores, with volunteers collecting items four times weekly in personal vehicles.

Ms. Nardecchia clarified that the Pantry operates as a choice model where clients select items. She noted consultation services for donation drives, such as their leadership team project creating nut-free snack bags for winter school break.

Ms. Rinaldi confirmed their major fundraiser, Dublin Bounty at Bridge Park, will occur on September 20, 2026.

OLD BUSINESS

- **2026 MLK Sunday Supper Report and Future Direction**

Ms. Nardecchia presented a comprehensive report on the 2026 MLK Sunday Supper, seeking committee feedback and suggestions for future direction. She provided historical context, explaining the event commemorates Dr. King's legacy by encouraging dialogue and connection among residents, inspired by civil rights era gatherings in homes that built this community.

The MLK Sunday Supper concept originated through the Points of Light Institute, with three high school students launching the first event in 2017. The partnership transitioned to the Dublin Parents of Black Students Association (DPBSA) following Ms. Maiuri's involvement and the organization's renewal as a nonprofit advocating for inclusion and cultural celebration.

The 2026 event theme was "Taking Care of One Another," inspired by increasing suicide rates and the need to normalize mental health discussions. A leadership panel featured Dublin City Schools Superintendent Dr. Marschhausen, Dublin Police Chief Justin Paez, Washington Township Fire Chief John Donahue, and Syntero President/CEO Sarah Harrison Mills discussing their approaches to mental health. Ms. Harrison Mills particularly emphasized helping children develop plans for managing fearful situations.

Table discussions focused on supporting one another and normalizing mental health conversations, with DPBSA providing Dr. King quotes as discussion guides. Participants explored making the quotes actionable in Dublin, normalizing mental health discussions, connecting people to resources, and providing inspiration.

Ms. Nardecchia summarized three major themes arose from the table discussions: unity and shared humanity, recognizing collective experiences while acknowledging differences in a caring community that needs greater connection; fear and injustice issues, including fresh controversial topics that emerged that evening and discussions about standing up for one another; and

community involvement and mental health, emphasizing formal and informal volunteerism, community gathering, and normalizing mental health discussions.

Action items included sharing findings with Dublin Police for their May mental health expo, Syntero hosting four mental health awareness town halls throughout the year and inviting participants to the MLK Civic Service Series.

Ms. Maiuri, representing DPBSA, described the event as insightful, noting it stirred emotions about current national issues. Attendees expressed concerns about safety, particularly regarding ICE raids, and sought assurance from police and school leadership about community safety. She noted time constraints limited discussion of MLK quotes and suggested incorporating more direct action opportunities reflecting Dr. King's emphasis on grassroots activism.

Ms. Nardecchia acknowledged the schedule pacing issue and explained action elements already included, such as commitment cards where attendees wrote how they could be Dr. King's light, which are mailed to participants throughout the year. She noted challenges with the January timing of the event in Ohio, which limits any outdoor action opportunities.

Ms. Aldemir praised the random seating arrangement requiring attendees to sit with unfamiliar people, fostering frank dialogue and learning opportunities. She appreciated the open, direct nature of conversations.

Ms. Fields suggested connecting with Dublin Arts Council community grant recipients to incorporate performances, art collections, or focused school projects into future events. Ms. Nardecchia expressed enthusiasm for this suggestion, noting proximity to Abbey Theater and various artistic opportunities.

Discussion included potential food drive incorporation and creative use of space near the Food Pantry. Ms. Nardecchia committed to scheduling a debrief with DPBSA to explore these suggestions.

Ms. Nardecchia noted that attendance at the event was approximately 86 people, lower than the previous year's 100-plus attendance. Ms. Nardecchia attributed this to difficult recruitment timing between holidays and weather concerns, noting the event has been cancelled twice due to weather in ten years.

STAFF COMMENTS

- **Inclusion Updates**

Ms. Nardecchia provided comprehensive updates on various inclusion initiatives and programs.

- The MLK Civic Service Series continued with Project Warmth in February, where participants aged 9-70 learned to knit hats for cancer patients at the Dublin Cancer Center. Upcoming projects include Project Protect in May focusing on human trafficking awareness, and Project Dress in September collecting professional clothing.
- The Lunar New Year was celebrated February 7 with Mayor Amorose Groomes, new Council Members, and organizers at the Abbey Theater, featuring well-attended, colorful, energetic programming.

- Black History Month featured exceptional storytelling through social media series on Dublin's Black History, partnering with the Columbus Metropolitan Library Dublin branch. Featured content included information about the Depp family, specifically Lucy Depp.
- Winter Storm Fern response demonstrated community support for older adults and people with disabilities. Over 50 residents volunteered for shoveling assistance, responding to 12 requests within 24 hours, typically same-day service. The response provided opportunities to inform residents about Forever Dublin and mobility services.
- On-demand video translation services at all City buildings front desks will undergo effectiveness testing, with Friday testing scheduled. The SIRACOM video translation system proves particularly effective for sign language due to visual components. Usage is highest at the Justice Center's court and police windows, followed by the Recreation Center.
- Joe Fox was selected as Dublin's 2026 St. Patrick's Day Grand Leprechaun, recognizing his leadership with the Miracle League, a partnership program enabling children with disabilities to play baseball on specially designed fields at Coffman Park. Ms. Fields noted the Dublin Rotary's involvement in launching the Miracle League and praised the recognition of this disability services advocate.

- **Upcoming Events of Note**

Ms. Nardecchia detailed the May 17 Project Protect town hall event, sponsored by the Dublin Police Department, where volunteers will hear from human trafficking survivors and label approximately 4,000 soap bars for delivery to Dublin's 20 hotels. This timing precedes the Memorial Tournament; she noted that human trafficking cases typically increase during large sporting events. The soap labels include hotline contact numbers for individuals held against their will.

Ms. Fields emphasized the educational impact of human trafficking awareness presentations, noting the staggering statistics around major sporting events like the Memorial Tournament that challenge assumptions about community safety.

Ms. Nardecchia promoted Dublin's cultural festival calendar, which includes the Lunar New Year, Dublin Irish Festival, Japan Fest, Mid-Autumn, Diwali, and Christkindl Market. She requested assistance promoting all cultural celebrations, not just the highly visible Dublin Irish Festival.

Upcoming events include the March 5 State of the City at The Exchange at Bridge Park from 5-7 PM; the Saturday, March 14 Saint Patrick's Day Parade, beginning at 11 AM; and the March 17 application deadline for Citizen U. Ms. Nardecchia described Citizen U as an eight-week Wednesday evening behind-the-scenes look at the City's programs.

Ms. Fields provided strong endorsement of Citizen U, describing it as the most delightful community activity she has participated in during her 20 years in Dublin. She praised the diverse participant connections, alumni events, staff interactions, and comprehensive education covering snow removal, parks and recreation, budget priorities, programming, and staffing of Dublin's community resources.

ROUNDTABLE

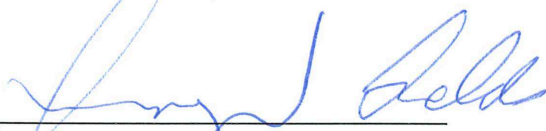
Ms. Fields opened Roundtable and inquired if there were any comments or suggestions for future meeting agendas. She noted that a future agenda item anticipated is a human trafficking awareness update.

Committee members indicated they had no other suggestions at this time.

Ms. Nardecchia confirmed the next CIAC meeting is scheduled for April 28 in the same room.

ADJOURNMENT

Acting Chair Fields adjourned the meeting at 7:35 p.m.



Ingrid Fields, Acting Chair



Assistant Clerk of Council