City of Dublin
OHIO, USA

COMMUNITY SERVICES ADVISORY COMMISSION
May 12, 2026
MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The May 12, 2026 meeting of the Community Services Advisory Committee (CSAC) was called to order by Chair Victoria Guinther at 6:30 PM on Wednesday, February 10, 2026 in the Council Chamber, 5555 Perimeter Drive.

ROLL CALL

Committee Members Present: Victoria Guinther, Robert VanVliet, Hong Qiu, Ann Bohman, Jessica Tobias, Cathy Axcell, Carol Clinton

Committee Members Absent: Rex Pryor

Staff Present: Mitchell Ament, Michael Barker, Matthew Earman, Jay Anderson, Jeff Myers

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Guinther inquired if there were any corrections to the February 10, 2026 CSAC meeting minutes. [No corrections were requested.]
Mr. VanVliet moved, Ms. Qiu seconded approval of the February 10, 2026 meeting minutes.

Vote: Ms. Tobias, yes; Ms. Bohman, yes; Mr. VanVliet, yes; Ms. Axcell, yes; Ms. Clinton, yes; Ms. Qiu, yes; Chair Guinther.
[Motion carried 7-0.]

CITIZEN COMMENT

Mr. Ament read aloud one written citizen comment submitted by Rollie Cruze.
"I live at 6316 Post Rd and there is a shared pathway directly across the street.
Several times now there have been a group of teenage boys (3-4) driving their e-bikes at high speed without regard to the pedestrians on the pathway.
About a week ago they came from behind as I was walking and without any approaching sound flew around me at a dangerous speed.
Just yesterday at between roughly 4-5 pm they were eastbound on that same pathway, again driving too fast. Then one of them went out on Post Rd (still eastbound) and sped up and pulled the e bike up, nearly vertical, and rode only on the rear wheel for about 100 yards.
These kids are out of hand."

Dr. Clinton inquired whether the comment would be referred to the police department or public service staff for follow-up. Mr. Ament clarified that the citizen had submitted the comment solely for it to be read into the record at the CSAC meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

- **HOA Woodlot Maintenance Grant Program**

Mr. Ament introduced the first item of new business, presenting a two-part discussion on Homeowners' Association (HOA) woodlot maintenance responsibilities and a proposed woodlot maintenance grant program. He noted that his goal for the evening was to provide clarity and gather committee member perspectives before staff refined the proposal for consideration by the Public Services Committee.

Mr. Ament began by explaining the context in which HOA maintenance responsibilities are established in Dublin. He noted that maintenance obligations for common areas, specifically woodlots, are not assigned using a uniform template across the City, but rather are negotiated as part of zoning approvals during the development process. This explains why two neighborhoods built in different eras may carry very different maintenance obligations. He presented maps illustrating the geographic distribution of City-maintained, HOA-maintained, and shared-maintenance areas across Dublin, emphasizing that a universal solution would be impractical and that staff must respect established agreements when considering any adjustments.

Mr. Ament noted that since at least 2002, City Council and its committees had revisited HOA maintenance responsibilities numerous times. A consistent theme has been that each neighborhood has its own maintenance expectations, priorities, and cost tolerances. City code establishes open space requirements, but the dedication of reserve areas and assignment of maintenance responsibilities are determined through development approvals. He stated that philosophically, reserve areas are seen as amenities that benefit the broader community, but most directly enhance the experience and property values of adjacent neighborhoods. Today, the general practice is that HOAs maintain frontages, landscaped entryway features, and internal reserve areas, while the City maintains areas that include public amenities or are intended for broad public use.

Mr. Ament described the factors staff considers when HOAs request relief from their maintenance obligations: financial hardship, level of maintenance required, stormwater function, comparison to City standards, and whether the original landscape design itself creates extraordinary maintenance costs. He noted that historically, relief has only been granted in limited circumstances when hardship or practical necessity can be demonstrated.

Dr. Clinton raised a question regarding how maintenance obligations for City-owned, privately maintained lots are legally established and how homeowners become aware of them. Mr. Ament deferred to Deputy City Manager Mr. Barker for further explanation.

Mr. Barker explained that maintenance obligations are most commonly memorialized through plat language generated when a subdivision is created. The plat establishes individual lots and designates specific reserve areas, along with language indicating the responsible party for ownership and maintenance. He noted that maintenance responsibility is not always consistent with property ownership, and that some reserve areas are owned by the HOA while others are owned by the City of Dublin. He acknowledged that while disclosure requirements exist, including

HOA affiliation, annual dues, and governing documents at the time of closing, homeowners do not always review title work carefully enough to be fully aware of all encumbrances.

Dr. Clinton expressed concern that individual homeowners may purchase property without fully understanding that through their HOA membership they are also assuming a share of responsibility for maintaining City-owned land. Mr. Barker confirmed that it is ultimately the HOA as a legal entity that would be held responsible for any noncompliance, and that the cost of remedying noncompliance would be borne by the HOA's collective membership. He noted that individual homeowners are not individually held to enforcement actions, but are indirectly responsible through their HOA membership.

Ms. Tobias sought clarification on whether individual homeowners could be held financially responsible if the HOA failed to maintain a property. Mr. Barker confirmed that the HOA, not individual homeowners, would be the subject of any enforcement mechanism, though the resulting costs would ultimately be distributed across the HOA's membership.

Mr. Ament then provided an overview of the City's own woodlot maintenance practices to help frame the proposed grant concept. He explained that the City's woodlot maintenance program, which began in 2023, is focused on proactive and strategic intervention rather than routine clearing. Sites are selected based on overall health and biodiversity, with the goal of preserving the strongest woodlots first. Priority work includes removing hazardous trees that pose a risk to homes, playgrounds, or paths; addressing excessive downed wood; and removing invasive species where it can be done responsibly. Mr. Ament noted that deadwood is intentionally left in many instances, as it plays a critical role in a healthy ecosystem.

He described the benefits of the program as including increased biodiversity, enhanced water quality through regulation of water flow and runoff, minimization of soil erosion, and improved carbon sequestration through healthier woodlots. He presented tables illustrating completed woodlot maintenance projects and forecasted future projects from 2026 through 2028, emphasizing that woodlot maintenance is not a one-time effort but requires an initial investment followed by periodic monitoring and follow-up work. He also described the City's broader tree maintenance program, which includes supporting newly planted trees through the establishment period, monitoring trees under stress due to drought conditions, proactive pruning for structural stability, and the gradual introduction of more climate-resilient species.

Mr. Ament explained that the topic came before CSAC following an outstanding request for financial assistance from a specific HOA regarding woodlot maintenance costs. City Council recognized the issue may extend beyond a single neighborhood and referred HOA woodlot maintenance to both the Public Services Committee (PSC) and CSAC. Prior PSC discussions led to the idea of creating a woodlot-focused grant program alongside existing neighborhood grant programs, with an emphasis on simplifying participation and reducing barriers to entry.

Mr. Ament introduced the proposed woodlot maintenance grant program, designed specifically to address challenges associated with HOA-maintained, City-owned woodlots. He noted that two ownership and maintenance models exist: publicly owned and privately maintained, in which the City owns the land, but an HOA is responsible for maintenance through enforceable agreements; and privately owned and maintained, in which the HOA or another private party owns and is fully responsible for the property. He outlined several benefits of the City-owned, privately maintained model, including the City's ability to retain long-term control of important land assets while

containing operating costs, aligning responsibility with those who most directly benefit, ensuring land continues to function as intended under approved development plans, and reducing operational ambiguity while managing risk.

The proposed grant program is modeled after the existing Beautify Your Neighborhood Matching Grant Program (BYNG) and the Stormwater Infrastructure Maintenance Grant Program. Its purpose is to provide financial assistance and technical guidance to Dublin homeowners and civic associations for the maintenance of City-owned woodlots for which they are responsible.

Mr. Ament outlined the following key program parameters.

Any project involving tree removal must include an inch-for-inch caliper replacement plan consistent with city code. Grant awards would range from $2,000 to $15,000, with a required one-to-one matching contribution from the applicant HOA. Awards would be limited to one per association per year. The cap of $15,000 reflects a realistic removal and replacement cost based on staff experience.

If demand exceeds available funding, applications would be prioritized using a 30-point scoring framework, with categories emphasizing hazard mitigation first, followed by invasive species control, disturbance management, and revegetation. The scoring system is not meant to determine eligibility but to rank applications when difficult choices must be made.

Application requirements are designed to ensure transparency and accountability and closely mirror those of existing programs. Associations would provide project details including site conditions, proposed work, quotes and cost estimates, parcel numbers, and documentation of matching funds.

Mr. Ament emphasized that City staff, particularly forestry staff, would remain actively involved throughout the process, beginning with site visits and continuing through scope refinement, application support, City Council approval, and final site evaluation. City Forester Mr. Myers and his team would help applicants identify priority risks, recommend appropriate replacement species, and advise on invasive species management. Staff would promote the program through community events, City-hosted meetings, and digital communications.

Ms. Qiu asked what happened previously, before the proposed grant program, when HOAs had woodlot maintenance needs. Mr. Ament explained that two existing programs are available to HOAs — the Stormwater Infrastructure Maintenance Grant Program and the Beautify Your Neighborhood Matching Grant Program — but that these do not specifically address woodlot maintenance costs. He confirmed that the proposed program would be in addition to, and not a replacement for, the two existing programs.

Ms. Qiu also asked for clarification on the term disturbance management as it appeared in the program's scoring criteria. Mr. Myers explained that avoiding unnecessary disturbance of the woodlot ecosystem is important for two reasons: it protects delicate spring ephemerals and other sensitive species whose presence is time-sensitive, and it prevents stimulation of the invasive seed bank. He noted that clearing activities such as honeysuckle removal can inadvertently cause faster regeneration of invasive species the following year.

Ms. Qiu asked whether the City knows how many City-owned woodlots are currently maintained by HOAs. Mr. Ament confirmed that the information is reflected in maps previously presented, but

that he did not have the exact number immediately available. He also confirmed that no annual budget allocation has yet been established, as the CSAC discussion would inform his subsequent presentation to the Public Services Committee, which would in turn recommend a budgetary number to City Council. Mr. Barker noted that the timing is advantageous, as staff is actively working to develop operating budget figures for 2027.

Ms. Qiu also asked how the City would verify that grant funds are well spent. Mr. Ament described the program as a reimbursement grant, explaining that forestry staff or another member of the public service team would evaluate the completed work to ensure it conforms to the approved project scope before reimbursement is authorized.

Dr. Clinton asked whether the City had conducted an inventory of woodlots that are not currently being maintained. Mr. Ament acknowledged that no such inventory has been conducted; the grant program arose primarily from a single HOA's request for assistance. Dr. Clinton suggested that staff consider reviewing City records to identify which neighborhoods have and have not participated in existing programs, in order to proactively target outreach to neighborhoods with potential maintenance gaps rather than waiting for HOAs to seek help independently.

Mr. VanVliet noted that he became aware of the existing beautification grant program by coincidence rather than through any direct notification, and that his HOA had since participated on at least two occasions with the City's guidance. He expressed concern that many HOA boards may still be unaware of available grant opportunities. Mr. Barker acknowledged that this has been a recognized challenge and that the City has a robust communication strategy that includes direct correspondence with all HOA boards; however, that messaging does not always reach the full membership. He noted that residents sometimes need to hear about these programs directly rather than solely through their board.

Mr. VanVliet additionally raised the challenge faced by smaller HOAs in financing the upfront cost of maintenance work before receiving grant reimbursement, noting that finding contractors willing to defer payment can be difficult. He suggested this practical financial barrier deserved further consideration.

Dr. Clinton asked whether the City had explored outside funding sources such as the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District, or Arbor Day programs to supplement the proposed grant. Mr. Ament acknowledged that this level of detail had not yet been explored, and committed to following up on the topic. Mr. Barker noted that programs through entities such as the Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District tend to be tailored toward individual residents rather than HOAs or municipalities, but agreed that all potential funding sources should be evaluated.

Ms. Tobias asked whether grant applications would need to be submitted every year or on a multi-year cycle, noting that her neighborhood currently participates in a landscaping grant on a three-year basis. Mr. Ament clarified that the only time-related restriction proposed is that an HOA may only receive one award per year.

Dr. Clinton asked whether civic associations that are not HOAs would be eligible. Mr. Ament confirmed that the program would apply to civic associations as well.

Regarding the inch-for-inch caliper replacement requirement, Ms. Qiu asked for clarification on whether an eight-inch tree would need to be replaced by a single eight-inch tree. Mr. Barker and

Mr. Myers clarified that an equivalent replacement using commercially available two-inch caliper trees would be acceptable; for example, an eight-inch tree would be replaced by four two-inch caliper trees.

Dr. Clinton expressed interest in having an opportunity to review and comment on the detailed plan as it develops, particularly with respect to species selection, climate resilience, native species preferences, full-grown tree size relative to available lot space, and non-invasive planting guidelines. Mr. Ament confirmed that staff would attempt to address all of those considerations through site visits and pre-application guidance, and invited Dr. Clinton to submit her detailed comments by email so that they could be incorporated into the program's criteria and guidance documentation.

The Chair polled the Committee on whether members supported the creation of the proposed HOA Woodlot Maintenance Grant Program. All members present expressed support. Dr. Clinton, Ms. Guinther, Ms. Qiu, and Ms. Tobias each noted their support. It was noted that programs of this nature help ensure that ambiguous or overlooked maintenance areas do not fall by the wayside as HOAs manage competing responsibilities. Appreciation was expressed specifically for the technical guidance component that would accompany the grant.

Greenway Corridor Program

Mr. Earman explained that the Avery Muirfield corridor pilot was initiated in 2020 in response to aging and dying trees within the Indian Run Meadow Subdivision, where the original screening requirements had been established in 1978 in development text that lacked clear guidance. Given the ambiguity of the original requirements, City Council challenged staff to develop a pilot program for that corridor. The City approached residential property owners along the corridor and sought maintenance easements that would allow the City to go in and maintain the trees on private property. Of the 31 affected properties, 25 opted in, with the remaining six retaining their own maintenance responsibility. Commercial properties along the corridor were excluded because their development text contained specific screening requirements applicable to their individual parcels.

The pilot program resulted in the removal of 84 dead or decaying trees and the replanting of 124 new trees and shrubs at a total program cost of approximately $92,000, which included the cost of obtaining all required easements. Mr. Earman noted that the easements were scoped solely to protect the trees and did not extend to surrounding lawn maintenance or weed control. He presented before-and-after photographs illustrating examples of screening gaps that were addressed through the program, noting that while recently planted trees are small and the visual impact is not immediately dramatic, the long-term screening benefit will be realized over the next 10 to 20 years.

Mr. Earman noted that during City Council's 2025 goal-setting retreat, Council revisited the corridor greenway program and discussed potential expansion to additional corridors, providing specific areas for staff to evaluate. Staff subsequently conducted field surveys and documented opportunities along several roadways: Dublin Road, Rings Road, Frantz Road, Emerald Parkway, Muirfield Drive, and Coffman Road. He emphasized that none of these areas have code deficiencies; any work undertaken would represent a voluntary enhancement for both the City and the participating residents. He noted that the program focuses on backyards and side yards rather

than front yards and is not targeted at businesses. He also noted that City Council expressed interest in exploring expansion to the Sells Mills to Muirfield Drive and Brand Road corridors.

Mr. Earman showed photographs of specific sites along Frantz Road at Edinburgh Road, Corbins Mill Road, Monterey Drive, Long Branch Drive, and Turkey Run, as well as Coffman Road at Rosscommon Road, as examples of areas where evergreen plantings could provide additional residential screening. He noted that the program works to the mutual benefit of residents who do not wish to look at the roadway and a general public that benefits from the enhanced greenscape.

He stated that before City Council finalizes a direction, they wish to receive community input, including from the Committee this evening. He distributed four discussion questions that had also been posed to the Public Services Committee.

Question 1: Criteria for Evaluating and Prioritizing Corridors

Dr. Clinton suggested that code compliance should be among the top criteria, but also advocated for a preventative approach by strengthening development requirements and code language to make screening a standard expectation for future developments, so that the City is not perpetually reacting to gaps after the fact. She also emphasized the importance of reviewing original property planting commitments, as many property owners may be unaware of what was originally required.

Ms. Tobias inquired whether a significant number of homeowners along Avery Muirfield had declined to participate in the pilot program and if staff knew why. Mr. Earman confirmed that six properties did not participate, and while he did not know the specific reasons for each, he noted that residents may have been reluctant to allow the City access to their property given the unknowns of a pilot program. He confirmed that the program remains open to those property owners if they wish to join in the future, and that the City will continue to hold non-participants to their existing code requirements.

Ms. Tobias also asked whether any data existed on the effect of the program on property values. Mr. Earman noted that no specific data was available, but expressed that better screening, particularly along a roadway and maintained at city expense, would logically be expected to enhance property value.

Ms. Axcell asked whether there was a process for addressing screening in new developments right from the outset, citing a recently completed development at Cosgray and Shier Rings Road as an example of an area that appeared relatively open. Mr. Earman confirmed that new development screening requirements are managed through the planning department in coordination with landscape architects and development consultants to ensure compliance before any development is turned over to the City. He added that one of the opportunities presented by this program is to ensure developers meet all corridor screening requirements as part of the development process.

Ms. Qiu raised the question of whether traffic safety and sight distance for drivers are considered when evaluating corridor screening opportunities. Mr. Barker confirmed that site distance evaluation is a standard component of every new development review to ensure that plantings do not obstruct the view of pedestrians or oncoming vehicles. Mr. Earman added that emergency

response considerations are also factored in, and that police visibility of school sites and other sensitive locations is specifically taken into account.

Mr. VanVliet asked whether the Columbus water main project, which is planned to affect several roadway corridors in Dublin, is being considered in evaluating corridor priorities. Mr. Barker confirmed that the project is a living part of his current workload and is under constant evaluation with respect to its potential impacts on Dublin's corridors. He also noted that the City is actively negotiating with Columbus to ensure that areas disturbed by the project are returned to, or improved beyond, their current condition.

Ms. Qiu raised the broader question of whether the city is in communication with neighboring municipalities about tree preservation standards in adjacent developments, citing concern over recent tree clearing adjacent to Glacier Ridge Metro Park. Mr. Earman acknowledged that while the City has very limited direct control over adjacent jurisdictions, City officials participate on joint committees and maintain ongoing communication with neighbors. He noted, however, that Dublin holds only a seat at the table rather than decision-making authority with respect to those entities.

Mr. VanVliet asked whether the West Innovation District, which is currently being developed, is incorporating corridor screening and appropriate tree species into its design. Mr. Ament confirmed that the city's Envision Dublin Community Plan includes a multimodal thoroughfare plan that specifies street typologies and the character of tree plantings between curbs and shared-use paths for all corridor types within the district.

Question 2: Additional Corridors for Staff to Explore

Dr. Clinton raised the broader issue of tree canopy equity, suggesting that staff consider evaluating locations such as schools, recreational areas, apartment complexes, and areas with potential urban heat islands, where tree canopy may be limited and where residents — particularly children — would benefit most from tree cover.

Ms. Qiu suggested the State Route 161/US33 corridor west of Avery Road as an area that appears bare, noting that additional trees in that location could reduce traffic sound and improve the overall visual character.

Ms. Axcell raised the condition of the Turkey Hill gas station site, noting that trees appear to have been planted but are not being maintained, resulting in weeds and apparent tree failure. Mr. Earman confirmed that this is a code enforcement matter and that staff from the code enforcement and zoning division have been in ongoing communication with the property owner.

Question 3: Additional Information to Further Inform the Project

Dr. Clinton noted that while proposed criteria were referenced in the presentation, detailed criteria were not included in the distributed packet. She suggested that before implementation, detailed guidance would be needed covering both the replanting of dying trees and the addition of new screening where none previously existed. She further proposed that synergies between the HOA Woodlot Maintenance Grant Program and the Greenway Corridor Program should be deliberately

explored and built upon, particularly with respect to species selection and technical guidance, so that the city's recommendations are consistent across both programs.

Mr. Ament offered to bring the Greenway Corridor Program back to the committee as a returning agenda item once City Council has given direction and suggested either a memo or presentation at that time. Mr. Earman agreed and offered to return with criteria that include specific illustrated examples, noting that terms such as old tree and adequate screening can be subjective without accompanying visual references.

Ms. Qiu expressed interest in receiving more detailed information about the types and varieties of trees being planted throughout the City, noting a perception that trees in Dublin seem to be growing shorter over time. City Forester Mr. Myers explained that changing climate conditions are having a significant impact on native tree species. He described an emerging approach focused on nativars, which involves crossbreeding native plants with their western counterparts to improve temperature tolerance while preserving their native character. He noted that many current native plants are experiencing dieback and winter injury due to increasingly unpredictable cold snaps, and that the City is actively working to adapt its planting strategies accordingly.

Question 4: Committee Preference Regarding Corridor Priorities

Dr. Clinton indicated a preference for prioritizing Frantz Road, Emerald Parkway, Dublin Road, and Coffman Road given the presence of aging trees in those corridors. She reiterated her recommendation to focus resources rather than spreading the program too thinly across multiple corridors simultaneously, and to address the screening enhancement objective through code updates for new development rather than through the corridor program initially.

Ms. Guinther noted a personal interest in Coffman Road due to the presence of aging trees visible from that corridor. Mr. Earman confirmed that Coffman Road had been specifically discussed at the Public Services Committee meeting, and that the older trees on the west side of the road near Dublin Coffman High School represented a significant opportunity.

Mr. VanVliet raised the question of the large open parking areas adjacent to Dublin Coffman High School near Emerald Parkway and the main parking lot, noting their visual openness and the apparent absence of screening. Mr. Earman noted that schools, like businesses, are subject to development text requirements and that to the best of his knowledge the school's parking areas are currently in compliance. He indicated that any further screening enhancement in those areas would require police and fire involvement given public safety considerations. Mr. Ament added that there is an existing intent by the school to replant trees in the northernmost parking area near Tara Hill Drive that had previously provided screening, and committed to reporting back if that is not confirmed.

Dr. Clinton noted that trees adjacent to school grounds serve not only aesthetic and screening purposes but also provide shade relief for students practicing outdoors during summer months and help mitigate heat island effects.

STAFF COMMENTS

Mr. Ament expressed appreciation on behalf of staff to Ms. Qiu and Ms. Tobias for their service on the Committee, noting that the feedback they had provided over the years on projects, programs, and policies had been valuable and that many of the items they had weighed in on have since been successfully implemented.

Mr. Ament also announced that the June 8 Board and Commission Appreciation Reception is scheduled and encouraged committee members to attend. He additionally invited committee members and their families to Experience Public Works Day, to be held that Saturday (5/16) at the Service Center from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

ROUNDTABLE

Mr. VanVliet expressed appreciation for the detailed background materials distributed in advance of both agenda items and for the quality of the information presented during the meeting.

Ms. Qiu reflected on her time serving on the Committee, noting that her participation had deepened her understanding of why Dublin is considered a desirable community and expressing gratitude for the opportunity to contribute.

Ms. Tobias echoed the appreciation expressed by others and noted that serving on the Committee had provided a valuable opportunity to learn more about the workings of the City. She commended Ms. Guinther for facilitating the meetings effectively.

Dr. Clinton raised a brief inquiry regarding the status of deer management in the City. Mr. Ament indicated that the topic had been addressed at a City Council meeting the prior evening and offered to follow up with Dr. Clinton offline with the relevant materials.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

C.S.A.C. Chair

Deputy Clerk of Council