



MEETING MINUTES

DUBLIN VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Thursday, July 17, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

Jeff Noble, Chair, called the Dublin Veterans Advisory Committee (DVAC) meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. in City Council Chamber, 5555 Perimeter Drive.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Jeff Noble, Sean Clifton, Tracy Owens, Roger Ansel, Mike Kehoe, Deena Ratliff, Neil Greenfield

Members Absent: Jan Rozanski, Chad Elliott, John Reiner, Bonnie Gamary

Staff Present: Kendel Blake, Christine Nardecchia, Carrie Ritzler

Guests Present: David Hibler, Gage Brunswick, Ohio State University Student Veterans Association; Buck Bramlish, Ex. Director, Franklin County Veterans Service Commission

APPROVAL MINUTES

Mr. Kehoe moved, Chair Noble seconded approval of the May 15, 2025 DVAC meeting minutes.

Vote: Mr. Greenfield, yes; Ms. Ratliff, yes; Mr. Owens, yes; Mr. Kehoe, yes; Chair Noble, yes; Mr. Clifton, yes; Mr. Ansell, yes.

[Motion carried 7-0.]

CITIZEN COMMENTS

There were no citizen comments.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Recent and Upcoming Veteran Involvement in Events**

Memorial Day Recap

Chair Noble stated that the ceremony was very good; there was not a dry eye present. He noted that the Eyes of Freedom art display at the North Market was cancelled. The art was displayed at Riverside Crossing Park only.

July 4 Parade

Chair Noble stated that there was a record turnout for the event this year.

Dublin Irish Festival (DIF) Defenders Den

Ms. Ritzler shared that the Defenders Den tent will be set up once again at the DIF. Currently, 10 organizations are signed up for displays this year. The Columbus Police and Fire Pipes and Drums will play one day this year.

- **Proposed Project: Veteran Remembrance Tours**

Ms. Nardecchia, Outreach & Engagement Director, stated she oversees several projects, the largest of which is volunteer engagement. In addition to special events, volunteers are active year round in many different ways. One of the most recent additions to her department's tasks is related to Dublin's primary historic cemetery. Every other Saturday, a dedicated crew of volunteers very carefully clean headstones. The oldest headstones in that cemetery date back to the Revolutionary War times. The volunteers also mark headstones for professional restoration. Volunteers do plantings and cleanup. The cemetery is also officially certified as an arboretum. She stated that there is now a digital directory of all the veterans interred in that cemetery. Often, she receives suggestions from community members to offer tours by veterans. The City has trained Heritage interpreters or docents, who have studied the history of a couple of City historic parks and provide informational tours. They would like to offer the same for the City's historic cemetery to honor the veterans interred there. The proposed project would create a group of docents, who are available once a month to offer veteran tours of the historic cemetery. Serving on this group would involve some study, video and in-person training. They would like to have a group of knowledgeable veterans to call upon for requested tours. Next year is the City's Sesquicentennial; it might be a good year to roll out this opportunity.

Chair Noble noted that at the various entrances to the cemetery, QR codes are posted that direct you to a database of all the veterans interred in the cemetery. For some of the veterans, family members have provided video information about their veteran family member.

Ms. Nardecchia stated that for those veterans who do not have family-provided history, basic descriptions are provided of the individual interred there, for example, Anne Simpson Davis, who is reputed to have been one of General Washington's spies during the Revolutionary War. There are stories we do not want to forget but keep telling. She would like to add the human element to that effort.

Mr. Kehoe inquired how many veterans are currently interred in that cemetery.

Ms. Nardecchia stated that there are between 500 and 600 veterans there; a total of 6,000 are buried there.

Mr. Clifton inquired what the rotational schedule would look like. Would there be a volunteer roster of veterans educated in the tour specifics, from which individuals would be picked to provide one tour a month?

Ms. Nardecchia stated that would be defined as we proceed. She believes the tours would be on demand. She does not foresee a need for more than one tour a month. The other heritage interpreters conduct tours every other weekend. The veteran-related tour could begin with an open house event around Memorial Day with monthly tours following thereafter.

Mr. Clifton stated that he is interested in the idea. He inquired if there is a way it could be integrated with the Purple Star programs. Dublin Scioto would be involved. Other schools are

struggling to become accredited. Perhaps this effort could be incorporated in some way to help them gain points toward their Purple Star accreditation.

Ms. Nardecchia stated that she could give them parameters and ask them to do the research and scripting.

Chair Noble stated that this project could be brought up at the military roundtable at the next Legion meeting. He would anticipate there would be a couple veterans interested in participating.

Mr. Kehoe inquired the time commitment for a tour.

Ms. Nardecchia stated that she does not believe it would take more than an hour. A tour would not visit 600 headstones. It would provide some highlights, such as veterans of each war and notable individuals and end by making tour participants aware of the availability of the digital database to explore and learn more.

Mr. Greenfield inquired if the tour schedule would include all the City cemeteries.

Ms. Nardecchia stated that is not determined at this point. Initially, we would focus only on the largest and most active cemetery in Dublin.

Chair Noble stated that in the Indian Run Cemetery, it is no longer possible to discern who is buried there; the headstones are so eroded.

Ms. Nardecchia stated that perhaps another project could involve headstone restorations.

Chair Noble noted that there is a small cemetery off Riverside Drive.

Ms. Nardecchia stated that there is also one on the Cardinal Health property, another on Avery Road and the Brown Harris cemetery near the OSU outpatient center. The City has a book of its cemeteries that members are welcome to check out.

Ms. Ratliff and Mr. Clifton expressed interest in serving in this volunteer capacity.

Ms. Nardecchia stated that she would follow up with them.

- **Ohio State University (OSU) Student Veterans Association Presentation and Feedback Request – Gage Brunswick, David Hibler**

Mr. Owens introduced Gage Brunswick and David Hibler, who are involved with the OSU Student Veterans Association, where he also is employed. He met them two weeks ago. They will have a table in the Defenders Den tent at the DIF. They are interested in connecting with the veteran community. His purpose in inviting them to present to this committee is to determine if the committee could provide some guidance on identifying and supporting veterans within our community. Another purpose would be to identify what the OSU Student Veterans Association could do to promote their activities. The intent is to share ideas and help each other.

Gage Brunswick, Vice President, O.S.U. Student Veterans Association, stated that he is from Dublin, Ohio. He attended Dublin Scioto High School, graduating in 2010. He joined the military in 2012 and served in the U.S. Air Force 5 years. Later, he decided to pursue an Engineering degree at O.S.U.

David Hibler stated that he grew up nearby and graduated from Worthington Christian High School. After high school, he joined the Army and served as a combat medic for nine years. Since his deployment to Iraq, he is now finishing his 4th degree from O.S.U. He is completing his undergraduate and graduate work working at The James in cancer research and at the nursing college on some of their research projects. He is involved in several veterans healthcare and engagement research efforts outside of O.S.U., which he hopes to combine once he finishes his Ph.D.

Mr. Owens stated that OSU and the OSU Hospital are separate sister organizations. There are veterans employee resource groups (ERG) within both. They are just building the one at the university. He is part of the group that has taken on the responsibility of forming this ERG for veterans.

Mr. Brunswick stated that he is hopeful that the OSU Community Connection can tap into some opportunities that so far haven't been touched. Mr. Brunswick and Mr. Hibler presented a PowerPoint presentation reviewing the purpose, structure and outreach of the ERG for veterans. Mr. Hibler stated that many times veterans at OSU have common problems; one of those is a sense of community. Veterans tend to disappear into the general population, and their needs and issues are not addressed by the university. Additionally, veterans service organizations in the surrounding area are not connecting with the younger generations of veterans. These organizations serve critical purposes. Not only do they provide a sense of community for younger veterans, but they also advocate for veteran issues at the state and federal levels. He was recently approached by the VFW of Central Ohio about potentially starting a post on the OSU campus. They talked about building a mechanism where younger veterans can become engaged earlier in their lives and careers and hopefully become more substantial members and partners with the VFW. They took that idea through the Student Veterans America Association chapter at OSU and expanded the idea.

Mr. Brunswick stated that he has been to several VFWs. Most of them are caves where veterans meet and drink. There are many younger veterans who are not interested in drinking. Their intent is to offer an opportunity for them to engage with the community.

Mr. Hibler stated that the different veteran organizations target specialized areas and needs of veterans. At OSU, it is important for them to be inclusive of anybody that might need help or access to these resources. They would like to establish a centralized community where all these different veteran service organizations (VSOs) can be represented on campus. Any veteran can come in, access a centralized hub and pull resources from wherever they are available. This will not only enable them to empower military-connected students as they try to navigate the university, but also help to give VSOs access to younger students.

Mr. Brunswick stated that we need to create a robust network and central location for accessing veteran resources. Bringing those resources to the veterans is key.

Mr. Kibler stated that they need help with disseminating some of this information to the community and potentially pulling interested veterans in to help fill leadership positions when

these different posts and chapters get established. We do want to have VFW and American Legion posts and different chapters established that OSU staff, students and local community members can join. We will have difficulty with leadership. Typically, leadership completely changes every 2-4 years and is difficult to maintain. They are looking for people from the local community and involved at OSU, whether alumni, faculty or employees, to take on some leadership positions to run things but also mentor students. We seek advice and perspective from this veterans committee regarding how to accrue membership, spread the word and advice regarding leadership or governing structures for their group. They also need assistance in identifying a location. There are options within the university, but some of those locations are difficult to access. They also are looking for locations around central Ohio for a physical location.

Mr. Kehoe suggested that they speak with Chuck Bramlish, as a starting point.

Mr. Bramlish stated that our veterans resources are a significant issue. All these veteran organizations are aware of the membership atrophy, and some of them are starting to change their membership requirements to be more inclusive. He stated that having OSU as a starting point is a good idea. Having a replicable model for engaging younger veterans is key. Young veterans are not interested in monthly meetings. He noted that, recently, OSU and Batelle completed a study regarding the potential for establishing a veterans community center. They might have some data that would be beneficial to them.

Ms. Nardecchia stated that they are describing a problem also experienced by the older adult community. Dublin encompasses parts of three counties and many service organizations. They identified a need for a concierge model that could connect senior citizens to all the resources. Dublin now has a hub, called Forever Dublin with a navigator, where senior citizens are enabled to access resources. There is also now a Dublin Wellness Alliance, which focuses on health issues. People do not know how to access whatever resources they might need. There is a concept called "No Wrong Door," so wherever that individual starts, they reach a person familiar with the answer and a resource who is able to facilitate the needed connection.

Mr. Owens stated that the students at OSU include veterans using the G.I. bill, the ROTC community and current reservists who do not want to attend a monthly meeting. He believes that annual signature events would draw interest and much greater attendance.

Mr. Kehoe stated that the current OSU president is a veteran. Hopefully, he is receptive to the need and willing to assist.

Mr. Brunswick stated that they have looked into that opportunity, but it is President Carter's first year and he is quite busy. He is on the Board for the Student Veterans of America, as well, so they are working on identifying an event that would be worth his time to attend. The intent is to pull in student veterans from across the state of Ohio for the event.

Mr. Hibler stated that President Carter has made it known that he wants OSU to be the most military and veteran-friendly university in the world.

Chair Noble inquired if they have access to all the veterans at OSU.

Mr. Hibler stated that they have partial lists, but employees and students cannot be required to self identify as a veteran. They have ways of communicating with the majority of military-

connected students; however, there is a certain subsection of the OSU population that they are not reaching.

Chair Noble stated that the Defenders Den at the Dublin Irish Festival (DIF) would be a good resource. Many different veteran associations have tables and are represented there. Ms. Ritzler stated that 10 different veteran organizations are represented there.

Mr. Bramlish stated that Ohio veteran associations need to provide substantial resources, otherwise, being a veteran-friendly state means nothing. Ohio is in the bottom 20% of states providing state veteran homes. He noted that a central Ohio Veterans Day rally would be held at the National Veterans Memorial Museum this year. He is interested in having a veteran outreach greater than Ohio State University, although it is a good place to generate interest among younger veterans.

Mr. Hibler stated that is the intent. Their effort could create a model to help revitalize veterans organizations. Not only do they want to have an outreach to OSU veterans, but they also want to extend efforts to address the problem that is growing across the country.

Ms. Ratliff inquired if they are envisioning just a resource center or if it would be a hybrid between a VFW post and a USO lounge.

Mr. Hibler responded he anticipates it would be more like the latter than the former, but a combination of both. It is easier to start out as a resource center, but they want to have active participation and engagement from members of an OSU post. Membership would give them access to an area in which they can socialize and network.

Mr. Brunswick stated that Ohio does not rank high in providing veteran resources. Their long-term goal is to have a community center for veterans.

Mr. Bramlish stated there are other states that have a military infrastructure, such as naval bases. Those states typically provide more substantial support to veterans. Other than Wright Patterson Air Force base, Ohio has only a reserve component.

Mr. Hibler stated that the Veterans Administration (VA) clinic was created to partner with OSU and use it for its outpatient and research purposes. That currently has not manifested as intended, but they are working on that, as well.

Ms. Ratliff suggested that a resource center for young veterans should offer electronic gaming opportunities, a massage chair – items that could be found at the USO.

Mr. Owens stated that he is happy to serve as a conduit between the committee and the OSU Veterans Resource effort.

- **State Veteran Homes**

Mr. Bramlish provided an overview of his efforts to acquire another state veterans home in Ohio. The state veterans home program is a federal-state partnership, where the Veterans Administration (VA) provides assistance in the form of grants to construct or rehabilitate buildings

for the purpose of providing a veterans home. They provide per diem payments to veterans for care and provide them help in retaining nursing care. Construction costs are generally split 65% federal and 35% state, but placing a home on the list for consideration requires that the state first approve 35% in its budget for that purpose. The operating costs for a state veterans home are a 40-40-20 split between federal, state and veterans. Over 90% of the veterans in the state's current two veteran homes are on some level of service-connected disability, so that is where the veteran funds come from. Ohio has only 28% of the state veteran home nursing beds that the VA estimates we should have. The Sandusky nursing home has 225 of 427 beds occupied; Georgetown has 104 out of 168 occupied. Ohio veteran homes are only 55% occupied. The detracting factor is where the nursing homes are located. There is an urgency for another state home that is centrally located. Generally, states allocate about \$107M annually for these projects. There are currently 81 projects costing \$1.3B where the states have already allocated the funds. If Ohio included a state veterans home in its budget today, it would be 8-10 years before Ohio would have a new state veterans home. There are 600,000 veterans in Ohio and there are currently only two nursing homes, which are not positioned well. He noted that veterans in central Ohio are two hours from either state veterans home. There are approximately 312,000 veterans who are age 65 and above in Ohio, 240,000 of whom are war era. In Ohio, you are required to have war service to warrant a bed in a veterans home. Not all other states have that requirement. We currently have a capacity of 595 beds. The capacity we would need if 1% of our 65 and older veterans wanted to use a state veteran home would be 2,300 beds. Senator Johnson, who represents a southern Ohio district, put forth an omnibus bill requiring the Ohio Department of Veterans Services (ODVS) to study the need for a veterans home in central Ohio. Although it passed, the Governor did not add it to the budget. ODVS has a requirement to do that by September 2026. It is a good first step. We need to extend our efforts now to disseminate information and work toward getting a veterans home within central Ohio.

Ms. Ratliff inquired if it is possible to build a veterans home at a federal installation to reduce costs.

Mr. Bramlish responded that by regulation, the home has to be on state property. The property would need to be donated to the state. He noted that Dublin also is in Union County. He is not necessarily advocating for the state home to be located within the Dublin area, but there is a need for one within central Ohio.

OLD BUSINESS

- **State and Federal Veterans Affairs**

Ms. Blake stated that an update of current legislative efforts on behalf of veterans was provided in committee members' meeting packets. State and Federal legislators have introduced multiple bills related to veteran activities. Quite a few are related to the homestead exemption, medical care and the Veterans Administration System in general. There are other bills related to veterans PTSD and mental health. We are trying to remain aware of any legislation that could affect Dublin residents.

- **Upcoming Military Round Table Events**

Chair Noble stated that he is completing agendas for upcoming Military Round Table events at the Dublin Community Recreation Center. Veterans are scheduled to talk about their service or another preferred topic. This month, Steve Dickman, a former member of the DVAC will be sharing his experience serving on the USS Toledo. Next month, the new Channel 10 anchor, Stacia Naquin, will be presenting. She is an advocate for USO and for the Honor Flight.

STAFF COMMENTS

- **DVAC Committee Members**

Ms. Blake thanked Ms. Gamary for her service on the Veterans Advisory Committee. She has been very helpfully connecting the committee with the schools' military and veteran organizations and clubs. Ms. Blake welcomed new committee members, Deena Ratliff and Neil Greenfield. She invited them to share a little about themselves and their military service.

Ms. Ratliff stated that she is an active-duty AGR for the National Guard. She has over 21 years of military service, 18 on active duty. She works at the National Guard state headquarters as a Human Resource officer for all the recruiters in the State of Ohio. She has lived in Dublin for 10 years, has a husband who is also a veteran and two daughters.

Mr. Greenfield stated that he is an army veteran and Air Force retiree. He spent 6 years in the Army and 14 years in the National Guard. He and his family are Dublin residents.

- **Proposed September Joint Advisory Committee Meeting**

Ms. Blake stated that there will be a joint advisory committee meeting on September 9. Therefore, the recommendation is for the DVAC to cancel its September 18 meeting, as they will be participating in the joint advisory committee meeting.

ROUNDTABLE

Mr. Owens requested Ms. Nardecchia to add him to the heritage interpreter exploratory discussion.

Ms. Gamary stated that one of the OSU presenters tonight, Mr. Brunswick, is a former student of hers. She had a leadership group of students called FCCLA; L stands for leadership. She is so proud of him. She stated that it has been an honor to serve on the DVAC. The military is important to her and connecting that with our community was important, as well. She has enjoyed sharing perspectives about the military with the community's young people. She appreciates the committee's contributions to that effort. She will miss this committee. She anticipates finding a way to remain involved with the military in Lexington, Kentucky.

Committee members expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve with Ms. Gamary on the committee. It has been enjoyable learning about the Purple Star efforts at the schools.

Mr. Clifton thanked Mr. Brunswick and Mr. Hibler for sharing about their project. He is interested in assisting them with their OSU veterans outreach effort.

Mr. Brunswick and Mr. Hibler thanked the committee for the opportunity to present their project.

Chair Noble reported that the Army ROTC program is cutting back. They eliminated 8 programs, including one in Ohio and merged 8 others with other campuses. The two biggest programs in the country are at OSU and in Florida.

Mr. Hibler noted that the ROTC program started at Ohio State.

Ms. Gamary noted that the student Purple Star program also started in Ohio. The program helps military-connected students be engaged.

Chair Noble noted that Dublin Schools now has a military commitment day. This year, they had 26 students who were joining the military or military-connected programs or academies.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:37 p.m.



Jeff Noble, Chair



Assistant Clerk of Council