

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Avon Landmarks Preservation Commission
Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building
On Wednesday, April 8, 2026
At 7:00 p.m.**

The Chair, Cynthia Murnyack-Czarnecki, called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

Roll Call

Members:

Present- David Morahan; Theresa Szimpl; Vice-Chair, Ralph White; Chair, Cynthia Murnyack-Czarnecki

Also in Attendance: Anne Kish, Assistant Clerk of Council

Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Avon Landmarks Preservation Commission Held Wednesday, March 11, 2026

A motion was made by Mr. White and seconded by Mr. Morahan to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Avon Landmarks Preservation Commission held Wednesday, March 11, 2026, and to approve said minutes as published, and the vote was: Mr. Morahan, "yes"; Ms. Szimpl, "yes"; Mr. White, "yes"; Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki, "yes".

The vote was 4 for and 0 against and the Chair declared the motion passed.

Landmarks Nominations

Mr. White, Ms. Szimpl, Mr. Morahan and Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki reported that there were no Landmarks Nominations.

Landmarks Letters of Recognition

Mr. White, Ms. Szimpl, Mr. Morahan and Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki reported that there were no Landmark Letters of Recognition. Ms. Szimpl noted that the Avon VFW, which had been awarded a plaque by the Commission in recent months, had received recognition from State Representative Gayle Manning and Senator Nathan Manning. Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki expressed appreciation for the two Officials recognizing the VFW Post and its historical value.

Discussion Regarding Removal of Landmark Designation at 32135 Detroit Road

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki called on Mr. White to begin the discussion, but Mr. White indicated he didn't know where to begin and asked if the applicants had anything to say regarding their plans. Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki welcomed the applicants to come to the podium.

Steven Geisler with Petros Development Group, located at 4223 Brecksville Road in Richfield, Ohio, introduced himself. He explained that they were proposing the removal of the Landmark Designation on the property shown on screen, with plans to develop a new housing community similar to what was being developed on Nagel Road. He stated that everything within the community would align with local Zoning Codes regarding home sizes and exterior finishes, and they were requesting removal of the Landmark Designation to continue with the development.

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki asked how much of the history Mr. Geisler was aware of regarding the home and the family who owned it. Mr. Geisler acknowledged he probably didn't know as much as the Commission but learned that the home was believed to have been built by Colvin Sweet's father. He mentioned valuing old homes in general and referenced the Farnam Manor in Richfield as an example of a longtime Ohio Landmark that his company had worked with. He explained that the Farnam Manor had been in well-maintained condition and required restoration rather than rebuilding, with original architectural elements intact both inside and outside.

However, Mr. Geisler stated that this particular house had obvious concerns including mold and water intrusion that had not been maintained for several years. He expressed interest in learning more about the property's history.

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki proceeded to share detailed historical information about the Colvin Sweet Home. She explained that Hope Sweet was born in New York State on June 3, 1812, the second son of Waterman and Amy Bly Sweet, and was brought to Ohio as a young boy when his parents migrated to the Western Reserve. Little was known of his early years or how he came to marry Chadwick, but Colvin and Bricene had 11 children, all but one of whom survived infancy.

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki continued that Colvin was a member of the Methodist Church in Dover Center before joining the Avon Methodist Church where he served as a steward. With two large families in one house, the need for larger living quarters was pressing, which along with Amy's passing may have prompted Waterman to retire from farming and divide his property between his two sons. Waterman built the house for Coleman in the early 1840s directly east of the George Sweet Home at the peak of the ridge, set back from the road on the eastern half of lands formerly owned by Waterman.

She described the house as designed in classic Greek revival style, almost a duplicate of Waterman's second home built for his son George. The structure had changed very little since being built over 140 years ago, with pristine architectural details serving as a daily reminder of the grand farmhouses built across the land in those days. It was one of only two houses in Avon to have remained in the same direct line of a family since first erected. At the time of a 1987 printing, the home was occupied by Colvin's great-great-granddaughter and family, assuring continued enjoyment of its grandeur for decades to come. This research had been conducted by Arnold Savage.

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki then asked what could be done about the water damage and mold issues, given that Mr. Geisler had stressed his company was into preservation.

Mr. Geisler responded that they would like to have a structural engineer come through to factually show serious issues that would constitute more of a rebuild than a preservation project. He described visible areas in the basement where water had been intruding for years, along with structural beams that were visibly bowing. While acknowledging he wasn't a structural engineer, he said his eyes worked fairly well and that there was obvious mold that could be remediated, but the extent seemed beyond typical restoration versus rebuild.

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki thanked him for the answer and called on Commission Members for questions, beginning with Mr. White.

Mr. White asked for clarification that the plan was demolition, which Mr. Geisler confirmed that was correct due largely to the condition of the house itself. Mr. Geisler explained they were trying to get the Landmark Designation removed to move forward with a demolition permit for the future community. He suggested they could incorporate history into the new community through naming it something like "Colvin Sweet Farms" and using street names after the 10 or 11 children, maintaining history for years to come tied directly to the home and property. He also indicated they would salvage anything possible from the home for use in the community or donation to a good cause.

Mr. White responded that he personally knew the family that had lived there and didn't think the house was in that bad of condition. He mentioned the pictures shown and compared it to the century farmhouse he had grown up in, which had been in worse condition. He questioned why they would want to demolish the house and provided examples of successful preservation projects.

Mr. White described the Stickney House just west of Jaycox Road, which was older than the Colvin Sweet House and had been incorporated into the Palmer Village development. The builder had kept the Stickney homestead along Detroit Road, and it had been owned by several people since. He initially thought that was the property being discussed when he received the notice, so he had driven to check and realized it wasn't that house, continuing east to find it was "Ruth's house" - Ruth Keller, who was the great-great-granddaughter of Colvin.

Mr. White emphasized that nobody had lived in the house but Sweets, mentioning that Ruth and her husband, who had passed away in 1991, had owned it. Her husband had operated an airport on the property, which explained some

things Mr. Geisler had observed in the backyard. Mr. White stated he would like to see the home preserved as part of the development, noting it was just a matter of whether they wanted to do it.

Mr. White provided another example of the Forthofer homestead and Buckingham Olmstead properties near Avenbury Lakes along Detroit Road. Both had been salvaged, with Avenbury Lakes built behind them. The builder had done a beautiful job restoring the Fort Dover house, then parceled them off and sold them separately as new houses, showing there was always a possibility to do something similar.

Mr. White acknowledged that Ruth had wanted out of the property given her advancing age and that the children likely didn't want it, but he believed the house was structurally sound. He dismissed the pictures as not telling him much, comparing ceiling damage to what had been present in the Stickney house, which would have been bulldozed based on appearance but made the current house look brand new in comparison.

Mr. White emphasized that the house was built of oak with good quality building materials that new houses didn't have. He stated definitively that he knew the new houses today wouldn't last 200 years. Mr. Geisler acknowledged he wouldn't be around long enough to argue that point. Mr. White made broader observations about how in other countries, houses and buildings lasted centuries or 500 years, while in America structures were torn down easily and replaced with "cardboard structures, press board and pine boards and sticky stone" - cheap materials meant for profit that people found beautiful but wouldn't last. Mr. White concluded by saying he would stick with his 1957 house.

Mr. Geisler responded that he wasn't trying to offend anyone and understood the history completely. He acknowledged there were certain cool features in the house, mainly the entry hall, but everything else he had seen appeared to be alterations that had happened between 10 and 70 years ago.

Mr. White explained that when Ruth's husband, Mike, was still alive, they had remodeled and updated the house. Since Mike's passing, things needed to be done again. Looking at some pictures, Mr. White noted he wouldn't have made some of the choices they had made, but accepted "it is what it is." However, he didn't think the house was far off from being saved, suggesting they could parcel an acre, build a garage behind it, and sell it, noting that century homes sold for a lot of money because people liked living in them, especially when they were nice.

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki noted there was another colleague who had accompanied Mr. Geisler and asked him to state his name, spell it, and explain his reason for being present.

Luke Petros with Petros Development Group introduced himself as an employee of the company. He agreed they loved to preserve things when possible as it was important and added charm that elevated communities, but he didn't feel this structure was one of those cases.

Mr. Petros asked if Mr. White had been in the house in the last two years, which he confirmed he had not, while Mr. Petros confirmed the house had been empty for about two years. Mr. Petros emphasized that a lot happens in two years and said if they did a tour, he would insist everyone wear masks because the mold had gotten really bad. He believed it was inside the wood and was visibly present on the outside of drywall everywhere.

Mr. Petros described the structure as not sound, acknowledging that none of them were structural engineers but feeling it didn't take one to tell. He noted the house was positioned right in the middle of the parcel where it would be difficult to run a drive past it. While they would love to preserve it to make their community look better and elevate the houses they were selling, it didn't seem feasible and appeared past its prime.

Mr. Petros stated that after walking through recently, he believed most parts weren't original, thinking that when remodeled, many original features were gone. Despite this, he emphasized they wanted to put their best foot forward to preserve and reuse what they could in community signage, donate what they could to Avon, and do what was right for the house at that point in time.

Mr. White asked if there wasn't enough room for a road between the house and restaurant with the rest of the

property they had. Mr. Petros explained that when doing land improvements, costs for sanitary sewage, storm sewage, asphalt, soft costs, and engineering were so expensive that they really needed to line up houses on roads efficiently.

Mr. White insisted there was enough room and they could figure it out, but Mr. Petros disagreed, saying while they could figure it out, he didn't think it would be a smart development of the property. He believed that once they did all that work, they would pour a lot of money into the house that they might not get back because, as Mr. Geisler had pointed out, it almost needed to be rebuilt at that point and wouldn't retain much of the architectural features, which he thought had already been lost in previous remodels.

Mr. Petros concluded that it wouldn't be economically feasible, expressing sadness about this because having a nice historic home really improved and enhanced communities. He noted their track record in Northeastern Ohio included quite a few projects where they had preserved structures, acknowledging it was always hard to make the call as no one wanted to get rid of history, but they had to look at it and make sound decisions about what would work and be feasible, leading them to request removal from the Historic Landmark Designation.

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki thanked Mr. Petros for his comments and moved to the next Commission Member, calling on Ms. Szimpl for questioning.

Ms. Szimpl clarified the difference between restoration and remodeling, emphasizing that the Landmarks Preservation Commission normally looked at the outside of buildings and did not mandate much regarding building interiors. Unlike some communities with strict requirements about windows and other features, she wanted to ensure they understood it wouldn't be a restoration but more of a remodel on the inside, so they wouldn't need to fear requirements for architecturally correct interiors with wood floors and other historical elements.

Ms. Szimpl explained they could make it new again by replacing windows, adding insulation, and taking down drywall or plaster to put up other materials. She wanted to make sure they understood it could be a remodel rather than a restoration, as that distinction could address their concerns about the house.

Regarding the property itself, Ms. Szimpl stated she personally had no objection to removing outbuildings as they held no historic significance. Not having personally walked the property because she didn't like to walk on property that didn't belong to her, she suggested it might be valuable for the Commission to take a good hard look at it, both outside and inside, especially the house rather than the two outbuildings, since she hadn't physically been there.

Mr. White agreed they were not concerned about the barn and airplane hangar sections, acknowledging those didn't belong with the house historically as they were built much later. He noted there wasn't much needed on the outside other than cleaning, though he was unsure about the roof condition.

Mr. White expressed frustration that every time someone came in wanting to demolish a house, they heard the same complaints about mold and various problems, sometimes with houses being sabotaged. He suggested these were often just reasons given when people simply didn't want to do the work, noting that mold was a legitimate concern that could be dealt with if there was commitment to do so.

Mr. Petros responded that they were talking about significant financial risk with extensive mold requiring taking everything down to the studs. Mr. White disagreed.

Mr. White asked how many houses they planned to put on the property, and Mr. Petros estimated about 22, though he didn't have exact numbers. Mr. White asked if they had a plot plan, and Mr. Petros admitted they didn't have one with them as they weren't expecting to discuss those details. Mr. White asked about sewers, and Mr. Petros confirmed there would be septic systems, acknowledging the expense but noting it was part of the lot price when sold to the homeowner.

Mr. Morahan said one of his questions concerned the plot plan. Mr. Morahan agreed with Mr. White that he would like to see the plot plan and understand what could be done to salvage and preserve the house from being destroyed.

Mr. Geisler confirmed they could certainly provide the plot plan, noting that neither he nor Mr. Petros had it personally but it was something they could provide. He acknowledged hearing what the Commission was saying about exteriors and requirements, but wanted to emphasize again that to make the house structurally, environmentally, and otherwise sound, there would be much more required that would constitute more of an interior rebuild within the walls rather than a remodel.

Mr. Geisler reiterated he would be happy to arrange for everyone to visit and walk through the property, as it would be interesting to see and they definitely loved the history behind it. This was why they were trying to find other ways outside of preserving the house to honor the Colvin Sweet name for the community, which would live on. They could bring some Greek revival style to the exteriors of homes in the community and find different ways to cater to that history beyond just naming the community.

Mr. Morahan asked if anyone in their organization was an engineer, since both had mentioned they weren't engineers. Mr. Geisler confirmed they did not have an in-house structural engineer but could bring one in to generate a report stating whether the house was truly structurally unsound and not habitable.

When Mr. Morahan asked who had determined it wasn't worth salvaging, Mr. Geisler explained that hadn't been determined yet, but he was suggesting they could bring someone in. He emphasized there was no ignoring that there were beams in the basement that were bowing, which seemed concerning to anyone, and basement walls were crumbling, which was visible to the naked eye. He suggested it might behoove everyone to visit the property to see it firsthand, noting they had probably passed it for years and it would be interesting to see inside.

Mr. White countered that century homes commonly had crumbling basement walls that were fine stone walls. He had seen the pictures and described it as dry as a bone, unless photos were taken during the recent summer when it hadn't rained for a month. He characterized it as a dry basement that wasn't bad.

Mr. White referenced the oldest house in town, also Greek revival, that in some ways wasn't as nice as this house. The City owns it as a museum, The Wilbur Cahoon House at 2940 Stoney Ridge Road, and it had the same characteristics. Previous owners had sealed the walls, which looked nice and were painted white, capturing the crumbling and preventing dust while addressing discoloration of old stone. He mentioned that house had tree roots coming through basement walls, which could simply be cut, noting it wasn't a big deal for a 200-year-old structure that would continue to exist.

Regarding bowing beams, Mr. White noted they were oak and extremely difficult to work with, joking that you couldn't even drive a nail into them. Mr. Geisler doubted such a house would pass a home inspection.

Mr. Geisler, while not claiming to be a structural engineer, maintained that his eyes worked well enough to see concerning issues. He continued to invite the Commission to visit the property, even if just to tour an old property.

Mr. White stated he was willing to look at it, and Mr. Morahan mentioned he was an engineer, though mechanical rather than structural.

Mr. White dismissed the need to hire an engineer, suggesting that anyone they hired would tell them what they wanted to hear. He preferred that the Commission simply go through the house, and if it was really as bad as claimed, they could proceed from there. He wanted to visit the property but needed to check with the Law Director about Sunshine Law requirements for whether a group of Commission Members could tour together.

Mr. White suggested tabling the discussion until next month while working out the legal requirements for a group visit.

Mr. Geisler noted that a sunny day like the current one would be good for visiting since there was no power in the house, though he had been there earlier that day and there was plenty of natural light. He confirmed the power was shut off and Mr. White asked about water, which was also confirmed to be shut off with all faucets left open,

ensuring no running water.

Mr. White asked when they had purchased the property, and Mr. Petros believed they had closed in late 2025, confirming it was very recent.

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki asked if the other Commission Members had additional questions, and there were none.

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki asked if either applicant would like to make a closing comment. Mr. Geisler expressed appreciation for their time and looked forward to hopefully providing the opportunity for Commission Members to visit and tour the home.

Mr. Petros thanked the Commission and said they were excited to give a tour, definitely recommending masks, and if there were any architectural elements the Commission would like to have or incorporate, they would be happy to discuss it.

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki thanked them both for coming and reminded them to please provide a plot plan to the Commission. Mr. Petros confirmed they would provide the plot plan and asked if there was anything else they could provide. Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki confirmed just the plot plan was needed. Mr. Petros asked if the Commission would reach out regarding scheduling a walkthrough, which was confirmed.

Avon Center Cemetery

Ohio Historical Markers Program

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki called on Ms. Szimpl to update the Commission on the Ohio Historical Markers Program application for Avon Center Cemetery.

Ms. Szimpl reported they would be submitting their application on April 25th. She and Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki had already obtained the necessary documents and wanted to share their revised Statement of Significance with the Commission so Commission Members would be aware of what was being submitted and why they were justifying that the Cemetery merited recognition with an Ohio Historical Marker.

Ms. Szimpl presented the Statement of Significance, which would be displayed on screen. She read the comprehensive statement explaining that The Avon Center Cemetery is a naturally formed dune which is a geologically unique and rare landmark. This dune is significant primarily for its geological uncommonness in that such a feature has not yet been recognized with an Ohio Historical Marker.

The Avon Center Cemetery (also known colloquially as the Mound Cemetery) is located in Avon in Lorain County. Currently, Lorain County Auditor records indicate its Permanent Parcel Number is 0400-015-110-310 with a size of 1.9100 acres.

It was once believed to be a prehistoric burial mound constructed by the Woodland Indians and later used as a cemetery by white settlers. The cemetery is not only important for its unique geologic origin, but also because Avon's pioneer heritage is embodied therein.

In 1900 the sexton of the cemetery, Alfred Walker, reported that he had recovered several Indian skulls and some beads and arrowheads from the mound. However, a noted archeologist and anthropologist, Col. Raymond C. Vietzen, with the help of Dr. Leon Kramer, LaDow Johnston, Dr. W. V. Sprague, Hubert Wachtel, and Frank Burdett, founded the Archaeological Society of Ohio (A.S.O.). The early meetings of the Archaeological Society were held at the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Museum (now the Ohio Historical Society). Col. Raymond C. Vietzen conveyed in his book, "Ancient Man in Northern Ohio" that no formal archaeological investigations have been conducted at this site to validate that the cemetery was used by aboriginal Indians.

Ms. Szimpl continued reading about Dr. Charles E. Herdendorf III, a noted geologist, oceanographer, and

emeritus professor at The Ohio State University performed extensive research on the history of the area. In that research he noted the origins of the cemetery as an ancient, natural sand dune created over 12,000 years ago. At that time, glacial Lake Warren's shoreline stood at the base of the current Avon Center Cemetery. Mr. Herdendorf examined sand samples in June 2011. The samples were primarily fine-grained quartz sand. The grains were sub-rounded with a frosted appearance. These quartz grains were most likely eroded from lake-cliff outcrops of Berea Sandstone near Avon Center, near the present intersection of SR 83 and SR 254. Wave action in glacial Lake Warren dislodged the individual sand grains from the bedrock and rounded sharp edges. Because the shoreline (now known as the North Ridge) sweeps to the north forming an apex at Avon Center, prevailing westerly winds were able to blow fine grains of sand into a dune. The sub-rounding indicated that the sand was probably transported along the shore of glacial Lake Warren (about 12,500 years ago). Such dunes are rare along the abandoned glacial lake shorelines because sandstone outcrops are also relatively rare along the former glacial Lake Warren.

Ms. Szimpl noted that Avon pioneers and those who followed have been laid to rest for over two centuries in this cemetery. The oldest gravestone in the cemetery marks the burial site of Lydia M. Williams, who passed on January 11, 1818, at age 15. One noteworthy individual buried in the cemetery was Avon's founder, Wilbur Cahoon. The gravestone of Wilbur Cahoon is near the crest of the Avon Center Cemetery, and his gravestone was carved in Berea Sandstone quarried along French Creek.

Another notable community member, Dr. Norton S. Townsend, who founded the institution of higher learning which later became The Ohio State University, is also laid to rest in the cemetery. Veterans from five wars have been laid to rest in the cemetery. Revolutionary War soldier John Prentiss Calkins (1752-1836) who served with the New Hampshire Regiment is interred in the cemetery as well as several veterans of the War of 1812 and the Civil War along with veterans of World War I and World War II.

The cemetery has historical significance in that few burial spaces remain. It is officially closed due to limited available burial spaces except for a small Potter's Field, but it is open for visitation from dawn to dusk. The City of Avon is extremely proud of this historic landmark and has established a long-term commitment to maintain the cemetery.

Ms. Szimpl concluded by noting that The City of Avon Landmarks Preservation Commission wishes to acknowledge and express appreciation to Dr. Charles E. Herdendorf III, The Ohio State University, College of Arts and Sciences, School of Earth Sciences, Professor Emeritus, for his review and approval of the initial draft of the statement of significance on September 30, 2024, as well as to Dr. Herdendorf's editor, Mrs. Ricki C. Herdendorf.

The Avon Center Cemetery should be considered and recognized by the Ohio History Connection with an Ohio Historical Marker because of its naturally formed geological feature. With the support of the City of Avon, the City of Avon Landmarks Preservation Commission, and the Avon Historical Society, we respectfully submit this application for consideration.

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki thanked Ms. Szimpl and asked for questions or comments regarding the submission of the Ohio historical marker application.

Mr. Morahan complimented the work, saying it was very nicely done.

Mr. White asked if it was ready to submit, and Ms. Szimpl confirmed it was, along with all supporting documents. She explained they had revised it from the previous year's application because some requirements had changed from the America 250 pride and unity topic, so they had incorporated some items and removed others.

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki clarified they were focusing specifically on the geological features as the primary reason for their application while including historical elements as well.

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki asked Ms. Szimpl if she had additional comments, which she did not. Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki stated she had no additional comments, and the Commission would proceed to submit the application in a timely fashion.

Reports and Comments

Members:

Mr. Morahan had no comments.

Ms. Szimpl had no comments.

Mr. White had no comments.

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki had no comments.

Audience:

There were no comments from the audience.

Adjourn: 7:39 p.m.

A motion was made by Mr. White and seconded by Ms. Szimpl to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Avon Landmarks Preservation Commission, and the vote was: Ms. Szimpl, "yes"; Mr. White, "yes"; Mr. Morahan, "yes"; Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki, "yes".

The vote was 4 for and 0 against and the Chair declared the motion passed.

The Chair announced that the next Regular Meeting of the Avon Landmarks Preservation Commission will be held on Wednesday, May 13, 2026, in the Council Chambers of Avon City Hall at 7:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by Anne Kish, Assistant Clerk of Council

PASSED: _____

SIGNED BY: _____
Cynthia Murnyack-Czarnecki, Chair

ATTEST:

Anne Kish, Assistant Clerk of Council