

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Avon Landmarks Preservation Commission
Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building
On Wednesday, June 10, 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: John Gasior, Law Director; Anne Kish, Assistant Clerk of Council

**Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Avon Landmarks Preservation Commission
Held Wednesday, May 13, 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, May 13, 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, Mr. Morahan, Ms. Szimpl, and Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki reported that there were no Landmarks Nominations.

Landmarks Letters of Recognition

Mr. White, Mr. Morahan, Ms. Szimpl, and Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki reported that there were no Landmark Letters of Recognition.

Avon Center Cemetery

Ohio Historical Markers Program

Ms. Szimpl reported that there was nothing new to report at this time. She indicated that the application is currently under review, and the Commission expects to hear back in August regarding whether a plaque has been awarded for the Avon Center Cemetery.

Restoration

Mr. White provided an update on the cemetery restoration, noting that the work is essentially complete for the spring season. He noted that Gravestone Restoration Services by Kate & Jane may return in the fall, and that the removal of several dead trees remains the next anticipated step, although this work has not yet been completed at the time of the meeting.

Historical Homes Overview, Saved and Repurposed

Mr. White presented a slide-by-slide overview of historical homes in Avon that had been saved and repurposed, framing the presentation explicitly as an effort to plant "a seed of thought" regarding alternatives for the Colvin Sweet Home. He walked the Commission through the following properties:

The Ora Butler Cahoon House (built 1845, Detroit Road): Mr. White described the original 105-acre property, which was eventually subdivided for new home construction while the historic structure itself

was sold and restored. He presented before-and-after photographs illustrating its current preserved condition surrounded by modern development.

The H.H. Williams House (built 1836, Detroit Road): Mr. White recounted how this property fell into disrepair and was zoned commercial, with the buyer initially intending to demolish it. A two-year period of litigation and back-and-forth followed. The Landmarks Commission and the Avon Historical Society organized a petition opposing demolition, which garnered over 1,000 signatures. Ultimately, the buyer chose to save and restore the structure. Mr. White noted that the restored building now hosts approximately three or four commercial businesses and is profitable.

The Ambrose Forthofer Rental Property (approximately 100 years old): Mr. White noted this home was well-kept while Ambrose Forthofer was alive, but deteriorated significantly after his death in the early 1960s as a rental property. The property was recently purchased and restored, with an asking sale price of \$700,000.

The Old Schoolhouse (near Route 83 on Detroit Road, adjacent to Avon Center Cemetery): Mr. White explained this structure served as a school until the late 1920s, was then sold as a residence, and was later zoned commercial by a 1970s owner who operated a small business inside. A developer who wished to demolish it encountered financial difficulties and eventually sold the property to another developer who developed the area into the City Centre of Avon — the developer incorporated the schoolhouse into the broader development. The building, now the David Scott Salon, was presented in before-and-after photographs alongside the surrounding modern commercial development.

The Alvin Stickney House (built 1837): Described by Mr. White as one of the oldest houses in Avon, though not considered architecturally significant — he noted some observers did not even recognize it as a house, mistaking it for a barn. The original 115-acre property was parceled off into Palmer Village (72 homes), with the historic house and approximately one and a half acres retained. White noted the house went through three owners in recent years and acknowledged the current restoration effort, adding, "I'm just glad they saved it," even as he observed that historical accuracy was not fully maintained in the renovation.

The Gerald Buckingham House (built circa 1940) and the Joseph Forthofer House: Mr. White presented these two adjacent properties, each originally having 30 acres, now bordered by Avenbury Lakes development. Both were rental properties in poor condition when a developer purchased the surrounding land, restored both homes — including the addition of a two-car garage on the Forthofer property — removed large barns that were beyond saving, and parceled and sold the houses separately. Mr. White noted both homes sell quickly whenever they come on the market.

The Colvin Sweet House (circa 1840s, Detroit Road): Mr. White concluded the presentation with photographs of the Colvin Sweet Home, describing it as a Greek Revival structure in "great shape" with a fairly new roof and appropriate period siding applied by a previous owner. He acknowledged the home needs some updating, cleaning, and painting, but stated plainly: "I think it's worth saving." He closed with a photograph of the Sweet family gravesite at Avon Center Cemetery, offering the reflection: "You think that he's been gone all these years and his house is still here."

Discussion: The Colvin Sweet Home 32135 Detroit Road

City Council Work Session June 1, 2026

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki reported that two Commission members — herself and Ms. Szippel — attended the City Council Work Session on June 1, 2026. She stated that they spoke to Council about the value of historical properties to the community, the importance of preserving them for their architectural

and historical significance, and their role in enhancing the community's character and preserving Avon's culture for future generations.

Before opening the floor to public comment, Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki instructed any individual wishing to speak to state their name, spell their last name, and provide their address for the record. All speakers were sworn in collectively by Law Director John Gasior, who administered an oath affirming that all statements made before the Commission would be true under penalty of perjury.

Matthew Nahorn (46900 Cooper Foster Park Road, Amherst, Ohio) addressed the Commission as a concerned local historian serving on several historical society boards, clarifying he was not speaking on behalf of any of those organizations. He described the Colvin Sweet House as "a superb example of the Greek Revival architectural style," noting it is the second oldest architectural style found in Lorain County and Northern Ohio, and that the structure retains many original features, including a notable interior staircase.

Mr. Nahorn drew a comparison to the Dover Farm project in Westlake (31156 Detroit Road), where local architect and historian Steve McQuillen worked with the developer to split the historic home onto its own parcel as a single-family residence while allowing the remainder of the property to be developed residentially. He described this as "a key example of what might be happening" for the Sweet property.

Mr. Nahorn then presented a series of rough measurements and site analysis slides. He noted the Colvin Sweet parcel has approximately 488.94 feet of frontage, and proposed that a road of approximately 200 feet could be allocated along the eastern portion of the frontage to serve future development, similar to the North Star Lane entrance to an adjacent development. He estimated this could allow the historic homestead to be split off onto approximately 1.3 acres — comparable to the adjacent George Sweet House lot — with the house sold separately. He was careful to note that "the information that I'm giving here, especially the measurements, are extremely rough, but they do provide a good idea of some possibilities." He concluded by noting that two opportunities exist simultaneously: "honoring the history of the community while providing new homes and new revenue for Avon," suggesting that preserving history while building for the future could itself be a compelling marketing strategy for the new development.

Dr. Charles E. Herdendorf III (4921 Detroit Road, Sheffield Village, Ohio) addressed the Commission in two capacities: as Director of the Sheffield Village Historical Society, and more centrally as a commissioner for the North Ridge Scenic Byway Commission, a body created jointly by the City of Avon, the Village of Sheffield, and Sheffield Township approximately 20 years ago. He explained that the Byway, designated in 2007, follows the 9-mile stretch of State Route 254 — the entire length of the City of Avon — and that the guidebook, *Guide to the North Ridge Scenic Byway Lorain County, Ohio*, produced for the Byway, funded by a grant, has been recognized as among the best of Ohio's 27 scenic Byways.

Dr. Herdendorf emphasized that historic homes are among the key features of the scenic byway, and that the loss of the Colvin Sweet House would "really diminish our scenic byway." He shared a personal connection, noting that his own home — pictured on the cover of the byway guidebook — was built by his great-great-grandfather, lost during the Depression, and later rescued from being converted into a car dealership through a community effort. "I know it takes a lot of effort and some intriguing ways of going about it," he said, "but it's so important to the community to try to maintain as much as you can of your historic value." He expressed support for finding a solution that provides benefit to both the developer and the community.

Nancy Haas (4272 Reserve Way, Avon, Ohio) spoke as a resident who moved to Avon from the east side of Greater Cleveland approximately ten years ago. She recalled being struck when she first drove Detroit Road by "all the old historic houses that were still standing," remarking, "I thought to myself, how

did this happen?" She described visiting the Avon Lake Public Library, where she found a book cataloguing the historic homes of Avon and Avon Lake, which she used to personally tour each property. She also recalled an earlier community vote in which residents successfully opposed widening Detroit Road in significant part to protect those historic structures. While acknowledging the necessity of new development and new housing, she urged the Commission to find a way to preserve the Sweet home, stating, "I think that we can work out a way that the house does not have to be taken down."

Council Member Mary Berges (3471 Mass Drive) spoke in support of preservation efforts, commending Mr. White's slide presentation for reminding attendees of all the homes and businesses that have been successfully saved in Avon. She cited several examples of successful adaptive reuse — Henry's Barn, the old schoolhouse, and the former village school building now serving as City Hall — as evidence that creative preservation is achievable and broadly appreciated by residents. "Once these buildings and houses are torn down, they're gone forever," she said. She expressed strong opposition to replacing the Sweet home with a water retention basin, stating, "I just think there's got to be a better way."

Written correspondence was also read into the record by Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki and Ms. Szimpl:

The first letter, from **Susan Urig**, described the Colvin Sweet Home's prominent position at Avon's eastern boundary — "where it has welcomed those arriving from the east for almost 200 years." The letter detailed the home's Greek Revival style, its construction by Waterman Sweet for his son Colvin, and its architectural near-identity to the adjacent George Sweet Home built by the same builder. The letter noted that both homes together "bookmark the entrance to Avon and set the tone for the community and its long history in the Western Reserve," and that their combined location along the North Ridge Scenic Byway means the loss of one would represent more than the loss of a single historic building.

The second letter, from **Anne Marie Shinko-Brown**, was read by Ms. Szimpl and addressed to both the Commission and the builder. The letter noted that Ms. Shinko-Brown is a former 35-year resident of the adjacent George Sweet Home. She described the Colvin Sweet Home as "one of the few remaining highly intact examples of the 1840s Greek Revival architecture in our region," noted its listing in the Library of Congress Historic American Home Survey, its appearance in multiple historic books on century homes including *Images of America* by Michelle Braunscheidel, and the fact that similar historic homes along Detroit Road have been preserved with new development constructed behind them. The letter detailed the home's architectural features — prominent symmetrical façade, bold entry, notable interior elements, and gables — calling them "irreplaceable historical assets." Ms. Shinko-Brown urged the Commission to work with the builder to save the home, writing: "The Colvin and George Sweet homes have been preserved with great care for around 200 years. These homes need to stay preserved for 200 more years."

Petros Development Group

Mr. Gregory Modic (4223 Brecksville Road, Richfield, Ohio), representing Petros Development Group, addressed the Commission at length. He opened by sharing context about his company's broader approach to historic properties, citing two examples: the Farnam Manor in Richfield, which Petros Development Group purchased and converted into its company headquarters rather than subdivide; and the Bolton Estate in the City of Mentor (Lake County), a 135-acre property where the historic primary house is being preserved as part of a larger mixed-use development. He acknowledged that his own initial instinct upon acquiring the Farnam Manor was to calculate how many residential lots could be carved out of the parcel, only to be redirected by his employer to save the structure instead.

Regarding the Colvin Sweet Home specifically, Mr. Modic was candid about the sequence of events: "Admittedly, we did not do our best effort. I was out of town on our initial submission." He noted that it was the Commission's engagement that brought the historic significance of the property to his

attention, and he expressed genuine appreciation: "I had no clue what Greek Revival was. I had no clue that those stairs had some significance." Since the Commission's site visit, he stated that his team had conducted deeper engineering studies, challenged their engineers to explore moving the road, shifting the stormwater retention pond to the rear of the property, and evaluating the feasibility of splitting the house onto its own lot.

Mr. Modic explained the core engineering constraint in detail. The property drains northward, requiring the stormwater retention pond to discharge across Detroit Road into a culvert system serving the Avon Oaks Golf Course ponds. The volume of retention required is substantially oversized to meet code given the limited capacity of that downstream culvert. He noted the parcel is "just over 40 acres, narrow and deep," and that the house is located precisely at the point where both the entrance road and the retention pond must be sited. Moving the pond further back onto the property was evaluated, but doing so resulted in a loss of at least three lots, reducing the 31-lot subdivision in a manner he described as "not financially feasible." He was direct about the result: "I'm truthfully unable to determine something in a manner in which I'm able to save this house in this location where it's at now."

An extended dialogue followed between Modic and Commission members, particularly Mr. Morahan, who pressed on several alternative approaches. Mr. Morahan questioned whether the road entrance and exit could be separated at opposite ends of the frontage to create more space between them for the house; Mr. Modic responded that while conceptually interesting, splitting a single 26–28 foot roadway into two separate lanes would likely require more total right-of-way width rather than less, when utilities, tree lawns, and emergency vehicle access widths are factored in. Mr. Morahan asked whether an 80-foot right-of-way was required; Mr. Modic confirmed the City had requested this for a potential connector road, plus additional utility corridors on each side. Mr. Morahan also noted that only approximately 60 feet is needed for a roadway and pointed out that there is substantial frontage to the east of the house, to which Modic acknowledged the constraint of achieving adequate line-of-sight distance given the road's topographic dip at the Cuyahoga/Lorain County line.

Ms. Szippel asked whether the lot sizes — identified as one-acre lots — and the 2.84-acre retention area requirement could be reconciled differently. Mr. Morahan inquired how large the retention pond was estimated to be, to which Mr. Modic estimated it sits on approximately a 2.8-acre area, sized by the volume of water that must be managed, not merely by the acreage.

Mr. Morahan suggested the possibility of moving the house onto one of the 31 residential lots — essentially relocating the structure rather than demolishing it. Mr. Modic acknowledged this had not been evaluated and said he could not provide an answer on the spot, but was open to exploring it: "I'll look into it. I'll talk to our engineering folks." He expressed willingness to ensure that any relocated house would be properly restored and that a buyer would be identified upfront, inviting the Commission to share his contact information with any interested parties. He reiterated, however, that the house's current location is at "the worst geographical spot on that land" for purposes of development.

Mr. Morahan raised the question of underground water retention as an alternative to an open pond, noting he had seen this used in commercial applications. Mr. Modic responded that underground retention requires approximately 30 percent greater volume than surface retention for the same capacity, and that on a prior 25-acre project, the cost for underground retention reached \$3,000,000 — a figure he characterized as "incredibly cost prohibitive" and noted would create a significant long-term maintenance obligation for any homeowners' association.

A notable exchange occurred when Mr. White expressed disbelief that EPA approval for a septic system had been granted. Mr. Modic took offense, emphasizing his commitment to professionalism and ethics as a licensed engineer. He clarified that studies were conducted, submissions made to both the Ohio

EPA and Lorain County Health Department, and approvals obtained before presenting to the City of Avon. Mr. White admitted his comment was inappropriate. Mr. Modic added that should a sanitary sewer extend to the area later, connections would be mandatory per EPA regulations. Petros Development Group is also ensuring there's ample right-of-way space to accommodate any future sewer installation without disturbing the new road.

Mr. Modic also raised the subject of salvage as a last resort, affirming for the record his commitment to pursuing opportunities to preserve elements of the structure within the community or within the development project itself should demolition ultimately prove unavoidable. Mr. White mentioned a contact at the Frostville Museum in North Olmsted who actively seeks materials from blighted or condemned century homes for salvage purposes.

Mr. Modic closed his remarks by stating clearly: "I don't foresee any path forward in which I just say this house is getting demolished. Nobody's getting anything out of it. I don't think that's right nor is it going to happen." He indicated his intention to contact Mayor Jensen the following day to begin scheduling a conversation with City Council, and expressed a desire to bring any resolution — whether relocation, preservation in place, or an alternative approach — forward as a single cohesive package in the final development plan.

Ward 4 Council Member Scott Radcliffe (34412 Summerhill Drive) then addressed the Commission. Speaking in his capacity as a resident, a Ward Councilman, the Council representative on the Planning Commission, and a person who values historic preservation, he encouraged the Commission and the developer to bring the matter before City Council for broader discussion. He outlined several ideas he believed would find support: keeping the house on the property as preserved, relocating the house to other historic areas of Avon or to nearby City-owned properties, and further exploring whether water retention could be sited elsewhere on the parcel. "I believe the City Administration is supportive of trying to save this house," he said, adding that he encourages everyone to meet with the Mayor and "have some conversations and just have some more open discussion about ideas and thoughts." Following Councilman Radcliffe's remarks, Mr. Modic acknowledged that he appreciated the comment and committed to reaching out to the Mayor directly.

Commission Discussion and Tabling:

Chair Murnyack-Czarnecki invited final comments from Commission Members before entertaining a motion. Law Director, Mr. Gasior noted that the Commission's Charter establishes a specific six-month window from the date of application within which action must be taken, placing the deadline at approximately September 24, 2026. He observed that the next regular meeting following that date would be October 14, 2026. He asked Mr. Modic whether he anticipated appearing before the Planning Commission with a final plan before September 24th; Mr. Modic indicated he expected to do so, tentatively in August or September, and requested that engineering work be allowed to continue uninterrupted.

Mr. Gasior noted that even after a final plan presentation to the Planning Commission — likely in September — a Council vote would still be required, potentially over three readings spanning an additional six weeks, or by emergency passage. He asked Mr. Modic whether, in the spirit of ongoing good-faith dialogue, he would be willing to commit on the record to preserving the house at least until final plan approval, even if that date fell after the six-month Charter deadline. Mr. Modic responded that rather than making a binding commitment on that point immediately, he preferred to enter productive conversations with the Mayor and Council to understand what options might be on the table, including the possibility of relocating the house. He reiterated his openness: "I will reach out to the Mayor tomorrow, try to get something set right away."

Mr. Gasior suggested that the matter be tabled to the Commission's September 9, 2026 meeting, allowing

time for the conversations with the Mayor and Council to take place, and noting that depending on the outcome of those conversations, further agreement on a date certain to preserve the house beyond the six-month period could be discussed at that time.

Motion to table the voting on the removal of the Colvin Sweet Home from the Landmarks List until at least September 9, 2026, as recommended by the Law Director, in order to provide time for the Commission, Avon City Council, and Mr. Modic to meet, review the relevant materials, and determine appropriate next steps and action items was made by Ms. Szimpl and seconded by Mr. Morahan 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.

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: 8:05 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: Mr. White, "yes"; Mr. Morahan, "yes"; Ms. Szimpl, "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, July 8, 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