

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Avon Landmarks Preservation
Commission Held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building
On Wednesday, December 11, 2024**

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

Roll Call

Members:

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

Absent: David Morahan

Also in Attendance: Rachel Markovitz, Assistant Clerk of Council

**Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Avon Landmarks Preservation Commission Held
Wednesday, November 13, 2024**

A motion was made by Mr. White and seconded by Ms. Szimpl to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the Avon Landmarks Preservation Commission held Wednesday, November 13, 2024, and to approve said minutes as published, and the vote was: Ms. Szimpl, "yes"; Mr. White, "yes"; Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki, "yes".

The vote was 3 for and 0 against and the Chair declared the motion passed.

Landmarks Nominations

Mr. White

There were no landmarks nominations to consider at this time.

Landmarks Letters of Recognition

Mr. White

There were no landmarks letters of recognition to consider at this time.

Wreaths Across America

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki stated the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), is a non-political women's service organization dedicated to promoting patriotism, preserving historic relics and locations, preserving the records of the men and women who achieved American independence and secure America's future through better education of our nation's youth as well as honoring those who serve or have served our nation. Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki introduced Ms. Robbie Brown, Chapter Regent for the DAR Nathan Perry Chapter. Ms. Brown has been invited and has graciously accepted the invitation to share with the Commission information about the Nathan Perry's Chapter's involvement in Wreaths Across America.

Robbie Brown, 615 Main Street, Vermilion, Ohio, advised she is the Regent of Nathan Perry Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Ms. Brown wished to thank the Commission for the opportunity to share the impact near and dear to their hearts, "Wreaths Across America. "

Ms. Brown advised the Nathan Perry Chapter has been serving Lorain County for over 100 years, they were founded in 1918, and their mission has always been to promote historic preservation, education, patriotism, and honor the patriots who have shaped our country. Today, that mission extends to honoring all Veterans who have made the ultimate sacrifice to secure our freedoms. She advised six years ago, their Chapter began participating in Wreaths Across America with just two members and today this program has grown to include not only their

90 Chapter members, but also community organizations such as Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Police Departments, local Veterans posts, and residents of all ages. Together, they aim to remember the fallen, honor those who served, and teach the next generation the value of freedom.

Ms. Brown asked what makes Wreaths Across America unique? She advised Wreaths Across America, is a national initiative with a profound legacy. Ms. Brown stated it began in 1992 when Morrill Worcester, owner of the Worcester Wreath Company, who found himself with a surplus of wreaths during the holiday season and instead of letting them go unused he worked with Maine Senator, Olympia Snowe, to place them at Arlington National Cemetery, a powerful remembrance that inspired a national movement.

Ms. Brown stated today wreath laying ceremonies take place at over 4,600 locations across the country. She noted all are synchronized with the ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. Each wreath represents a pledge to remember our Veterans, honor their service, and ensure their sacrifices are never forgotten. She added yesterday, 12/10/24, they received their wreaths at two locations, Resthaven Memory Gardens located here in Avon, and they send them to Lorain High School, where the wreaths are stored for Elmwood Cemetery and Calvary Cemetery. Ms. Brown stated it was at the same time that Arlington Cemetery received their wreaths, so they felt extra special yesterday. She noted that their local impact on Avon and Lorain County since starting the program at Resthaven Memory Gardens four years ago that they have placed 3,624 wreaths on the graves of Veterans. This effort has been expanded now to include Elmwood Cemetery in Lorain and Nesbett Cemetery in Grafton Township. She added with our support they hope they can possibly reach all seven of cemeteries in Lorain. Ms. Brown advised their work is entirely volunteer driven by local Veterans, the Avon Police Department, American Legion Post 211, community members and organizations like the 211 Legion Riders who have all contributed to making this program a success. Each December, volunteers of all ages join them to carefully unload the wreaths, participate in the ceremony and lay the wreaths with reverence. As each wreath is laid, the name of the Veteran is spoken aloud symbolizing a powerful gesture ensuring that the Veteran's memory lives on.

Ms. Brown advised when you sponsor a wreath, you will know exactly where those dollars are going. She added she has a brochure that she will be sending that shows where all of their funds go. Ms. Brown noted that a U.S. Service Member laid to rest will be honored and remembered. She will also include a packet where the funds are distributed. She stated they have supported the local Veterans organizations including American Legion Post 211 who generously donated this year \$2,400 to purchase wreaths. The 211 Post Riders has been involved with Resthaven Memory Gardens every year at the cemetery. The 211 Post Riders with the Avon Police Department escort the Wreaths Across America truck and many Avon residents come to help unload the wreaths then come back on Saturday, December 14, 2024, to lay the wreaths. At Resthaven Memory Gardens, their ceremony also includes a special recognition of Elyria's fallen hero, Patrolman James A. Kerstetter, who made the ultimate sacrifice serving and protecting his community. His service reminds us that honoring those who served extends to all who have dedicated their lives to safeguarding our freedom in safety.

Ms. Brown asked why Wreaths Across America and stated what sets Wreaths Across America apart is its national reach and its community driven mission. When you sponsor a wreath, you are not only supporting a Veteran at your local cemetery but also are helping with the costs of helping to place wreaths at Arlington National Cemetery. She added this connects them to the tradition nationwide. The Nathan Perry Chapter is, as is the DAR itself, a nonprofit organization, a 501(c)(3), and reinvests their funds back into our communities. Since 2007, Wreaths Across America has redistributed 25 million dollars to local non-profits and civic organizations through its group sponsorship program.

Ms. Brown advised in 2023, over 3 million wreaths were placed nationwide with countless volunteers contributed their time and resources. It is a program built on values, remembrance, unity and service. Values that resonate deeply within the people of Avon. It is a tradition that is worth continuing. Ms. Brown shared a

few words of one of her fellow members aunt's, who is a 93-year-old woman who is the last of 11 siblings, 7 of whom were in the military, she stated, "It is our duty to continuously honor those who have served by laying a wreath where they are laid to rest. The wreath is a reminder that we have never forgotten their sacrifice, not only here in Avon but also at Arlington and across the country. The sentiment goes with the hearts of Wreaths Across America to never forget."

Ms. Brown stated by choosing Wreaths Across America, you are not only supporting a program with rich national legacy but also directly impacting your local community. Together, we can ensure that Avon's Veterans are remembered, honored and celebrated for generations to come. She thanked the Commission for letting her speak today and for their consideration.

Mr. White asked if the wreaths are laid on the ground at the cemetery or do they have a stand?

Ms. Brown advised they do not have stands for everything. They are doing a wreath laying at the Vietnam Memorial where they are putting 98 wreaths down and they will be on stands but it is hard to get the stands. She noted they have asked cemeteries to save them, but it does not always happen. Ms. Brown stated the wreaths tend to be sort of propped up, but it depends on the grave because a lot of the graves are flat. She added what they do is ask people to take the wreath, read the name of the Veteran, and then lay the wreath down. By saying the Veteran's name aloud, that Veteran is being remembered, and is not forgotten.

Mr. White inquired if all military are recognized at Resthaven Memory Gardens or just certain ones.

Ms. Brown stated they try to recognize as many as possible but they do not have enough wreaths. She noted they would love to give everyone a wreath, but all these cemeteries have so many graves. She added they do as many wreaths as they receive (500 approximately) which will be laid noting not every Veteran gets one and they wish they could, and they try.

Ms. Szimpl asked what it costs per wreath.

Ms. Brown advised the wreaths are \$17 each and they get \$5 back that goes back into the community. She noted if they have ever looked at their treasury they would think that they do not have any money and that is because they make sure it goes through to Veterans. Ms. Brown noted a project that they are doing, at the historic Grafton School, in Grafton, Ohio. One of their members bought that building so they are helping with the restoration of that, and they will finally have offices as they have never had anywhere to put all of their things in all of their 106 years, so they will finally have a place. She is on the board for the Vietnam Memorial and Lorain's Veterans Council, and added what is important is they found out that a lot of their wonderful, meaningful things of their services and there is no place to put them. She added at the library and the building of the school they are going to be putting in a soldier's museum and Nathan Perry is accepting a lot of the Vietnam items and WWII as well as WWI and the Civil War, they will be displaying them. She noted they would not be solely there, that is where their offices will be as they are throughout the County.

Ms. Szimpl said Ms. Brown mentioned they were going to Resthaven Memory Gardens this Saturday, December 14, 2024, and asked how many wreaths would they lay there?

Ms. Brown responded there are approximately 500- 700 wreaths.

Ms. Szimpl inquired if there are more Veterans at Resthaven Memory Gardens than 500-700 and Ms. Brown confirmed there were and recommended taking a walk-through Calvary Cemetery and Elmwood Cemetery, noting they would be shocked, and it is just amazing. Ms. Brown stated that sadly Arlington National Cemetery this year also does not have enough wreaths for all of those graves which is why it is disappointing when other

people say it is \$17, but they forget they are getting a wreath here and a wreath at Arlington National Cemetery. She commented that to her, Arlington is the focus.

Ms. Sizppl asked if they get most of their financial backing from Legion Post 211?

Ms. Brown advised a lot of the Posts are their biggest financial supporters. They also have individuals who support the local Wreaths Across America initiative. Those individual contributors can request their wreath be grave specific - meaning you can buy a wreath and state where you want it to be laid if you are unable to attend. She added they have fundraisers as well, starting this year and that funding goes back into buying wreaths. Ms. Brown relayed it is important to them to show the Veterans that they care, and they do appreciate what they have given.

Ms. Brown stated with the Wreaths Across America program, their sponsors are the American Gold Star Mothers, the United Air Force Auxiliary Civil Air Patrol, the Young Marines, Gold Star Wives of America, Daughters of American Revolution (that is the only organization that DAR supports), Patriot Guard Riders, and United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration of which Nathan Perry is a partner with the Department of Defense, and the Military Order of the World Wars. She added it is a strong group, and it says a lot about this country and they want to make sure everyone appreciates everything that they have done.

Ms. Szippel asked of the approximate 700 wreaths at Resthaven Memory Gardens this upcoming Saturday, December 14, 2024, how will those get laid? Do family members come, do high school students come or how does that all happen?

Ms. Brown advised that all the cemeteries wreaths will be laid and everyone from the community are invited to attend such as young marines (Greater Cleveland Young Marines), Junior Reserves Officers' Training Corps (J.R.O.T.C), cadet programs as well as members of the public that walk in, and they will have anywhere from 500-800 people in attendance.

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki asked on which day is this held annually.

Ms. Brown stated it is every year on either the 2nd or 3rd Saturday of December; however, it is mainly the second week. She added next year it will be December 13th.

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki asked if Ms. Brown could share what the ceremony consists of? For example, at Resthaven Memory Gardens, other than laying the wreaths are there additional components to their ceremony?

Ms. Brown advised it is about a 20 minute ceremony. The ceremony begins by showing respect for our country and our flag by stating the Pledge of Allegiance, and singing the National Anthem. An honor guard is present in recognition of all 8 service branches that are represented by a Veteran or active military member. For example, for the Army they would have the Boy Scouts give a Veteran a wreath to put on a stand honoring the Army Service. Also, there will be a recognition of James A. Kerstetter. Ms. Brown also noted there will be a 21-gun salute and that a bag piper has been added this year.

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki asked if there are any other organizations that are also honoring Veterans in a similar fashion.

Ms. Brown advised there are other chapters that are part of Wreaths Across America such as in Vermilion where there is a Firelands Chapter. She added there is also a Boy Scout group that assists with the cemeteries. She noted there is another organization out there, but it is not Wreaths Across America, and they already did their ceremony and have mimicked some things. She noted that is a newer organization of the past two years.

Leonard Czarencki, 2828 Shakespeare Lane, Avon, stated he was a member of the Civil Air Patrol of Lorain County, Group 003 from 2012-2018 and he participated in the Elyria memorial in 2016. He advised it was led by the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Civil Air Patrol and they had members of the community attend and Mayor Jensen also spoke. Mr. Czarencki stated they had service flags of the Navy, Marines, Army, Air Force, and Coast Guard, including a flag for Missing in Action (M.I.A) and Merchant Marine, and at that time Space Force was not fully in existence yet. He stated the ceremony was quite memorable, Mayor Jensen said a few words, they had a 21-gun salute and certain veterans came forward and they would place the wreaths then either a Boy Scout or a Girl Scout or similar person would place the wreath by the flag. Mr. Czarencki noted then they went out to the cemetery and because of the Wreaths Across America movement, Elyria discovered that the whole back of the cemetery was forgotten so when the caretakers cut the grass in the summertime to get ready for this ceremony, they discovered a section of WWI Veterans that they were never properly marked in the paperwork and essentially forgotten. He added because of the Wreaths Across America program that entire section can now be formally honored. It was because of Wreaths Across America that the entire cemetery can now formally honor the Veterans.

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki thanked Mr. Czarencki and Ms. Brown for presenting to the Commission and they appreciate the information she provided about the Nathan Perry Chapter of the D.A.R. and their involvement in the Wreaths Across America program.

Ms. Brown was appreciative and noted the other thing about this program is that it brings people together and they have made so many more friends over this cause. She added that she understands and appreciates the Commission's work.

Mr. White inquired as to what time the ceremony starts at Resthaven Memory Gardens.

Ms. Brown advised it starts at noon and that is the exact time that it starts at Arlington National Cemetery. She noted they follow Arlington and is similar in ceremony as well.

Ms. Murnyack-Czarencki advised the Commission Members have been given a postcard with the information about Nathan Perry Chapter of the D.A.R., their involvement this Saturday, December 14, 2024, at 12:00 p.m., and the postcards indicated Veterans at Belden Cemetery, Calvary Cemetery, Elmwood Cemetery, Nesbett Cemetery, and Resthaven Memory Gardens will be honored in this year's National Wreath Across America.

Ms. Brown stated Laurie Stanley, present member of the D.A.R. could talk about the first year at the Nesbett Cemetery as she has been the one who has taken charge of that, as well as Beverly Hatcher, present member, who is in charge at the Resthaven Memory Gardens.

Beverly Hatcher-Vera, 512 Eagle Circle, Elyria, Ohio, stated when the Commission was asking about how they determine who gets a wreath, Resthaven Memory Gardens has a section called "For Champlain's" that is all Veterans and there are over 2,000 graves in that section. She added they have boxes staged throughout so they try to make sure the wreaths are distributed throughout the cemetery, but the wreaths are not going to be on every grave. She stated they start there, but people can also take them and put them where they want to. Ms. Hatcher-Vera noted they have the grave specifics as Ms. Brown mentioned previously where people can buy a wreath and those are already marked for their volunteers or the family member who bought them can take the wreaths and lay them on those graves so that is always an option. She added if you cannot attend you can buy one and have it placed on a specific grave, but their hope is to cover all the graves yet noted they never can.

Avon Cemetery- Ohio Historical Marker Application

Ms. Szimpl advised she is going to provide an update both on the Avon Cemetery and the Ohio Historical Marker Application for which the Commission is presently in the process of applying.

Ms. Szimpl advised that the Ohio Historical Marker application process is well underway. The Statement of Significance has been completed with the assistance of Dr. Eddie Herdendorf and his editorial assistant, Ricki Herdendorf of the Ohio State University.

Ms. Szimpl advised that Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki recently reached out via email to Rose Seighman, Administrative Assistant to Mayor Jensen, requesting a meeting with Mayor Jensen, herself and Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki to discuss the Ohio Historical Marker Criteria of Significance, the application process, and the annual Deadline Summary to commemorate the Avon Cemetery.

Ms. Szimpl stated Rose Seighman shared their meeting request with Mayor Jensen and in place of an actual meeting at this time, The Mayor made the following commitment:

1. Mayor Jensen is in support of the Avon Landmarks Preservation Commission submitting the application for the Avon Cemetery on behalf of the City of Avon.
 - a. Application Deadline of May 1, 2025.
2. Committed that the City of Avon would cover the cost.
 - a. As a point of reference, to date, according to the Ohio History Connection website the approximate cost is between \$4,100 and \$4,500.
3. In the event their application is accepted by the Ohio History Connection as one of the 20 new markers into the program for 2025; Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki and Ms. Szimpl on behalf of the Avon Landmarks Preservation Commission, can request a meeting with Mayor Jensen to review the suggested verbiage for the marker and determine any further requirements/actions needed of the City of Avon.
 - a. Estimated timeframe of notification of acceptance or rejection of their application would be early July 2025.

Ms. Szimpl commented this is a long process that is not completed overnight.

Ms. Szimpl stated prior to the submission of the application, the Landmarks Preservation Commission will need to secure from the City of Avon/Mayor Jensen, the following documents as part of the application process:

1. Property Owner Permission for Proposed Ohio Historical Marker
2. Maintenance Commitment for Proposed Ohio Historical Marker

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki emailed the templates of these documents to Ms. Seighman on December 11, 2024, for the Mayor's signature. She requested to have executed documents returned by January 8, 2025, so that they can include them with their application, which is about 15 pages and consists of many pieces that would need to be compiled before they submit it on May 1, 2025.

Member Comments

Mr. White stated that since last month's meeting, they ordered the new Landmark Historical plaques, so they have 15 new plaques. He added these are a little different from the old ones, same shape, but the letters are bolder, a little lighter and thicker and you can see them better. Mr. White noted he likes this style much better and they are the same size as the old ones. He added they ordered 15 new plaques, and the plaques should last them awhile.

Audience Comments

Nancy Haas, 4272 Reserve Way, Avon, stated she and Mr. White met this past summer to discuss that there is a Revolutionary War veteran buried in the Avon Cemetery. She stated Mr. White took her to where the grave is located and she was very appreciative of that. Ms. Haas stated what she noticed as she started doing some history investigating that kind of grave to try to find out more about this Veteran, John Prentiss Calkins, 1752 to 1836, she is not quite sure how he ended up here. Ms. Haas stated at one time, when they looked at www.findagrave.com, there was a marker from the Elyria D.A.R. but it is now gone whether through damaged from a lawnmower or if it was taken years ago, but in approximately 2016 there was a picture on www.findagrave.com, that showed the marker located there. She is wondering and knows there can be replacement markers placed, with one saying he is a Revolutionary War soldier she believes is important and just wondered if there is some way one of our D.A.R. Chapters could take this project on. She noted she did not say anything to her Chapter because she did not want to step on anyone's toes but is happy to discuss it. Ms. Haas inquired if that was something that could be researched outside to see what the cost would be. She added she did look up the cost online on the D.A.R. site and there is an application process. Ms. Haas thanked the Commission for their time in allowing her to speak.

Mr. White stated he researched it a little bit, but he does not recall the name of the group or the person he spoke with. He added he wants to say the group may possibly be out of New York. He noted this group had no record of it and he checked with the City Service Department, and they had no record or memory of it being removed or stored anywhere. Mr. White advised from that picture you can see where the grave was partially sunken, and it is now raised up. He added they raised the grave a little higher than what is shown in the photo. He noted it was more of a flat stone so now weeds are growing around it, and now it sticks up pretty high. Mr. White commented he does not know what happened to the marker, but he looked into the cost of replacing it and it could possibly be as much as \$1,000. He advised that is why he proceeded to order the generic version of a nice bronze marker which was \$125.

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki stated shown on the monitors are the markers displayed (see attached) for the Commission members and the audience to see. She added in lieu of the marker, and while this process is ongoing to see if a D.A.R. marker can be placed there; the Historical Society has purchased a marker that is specific for Revolutionary War Veterans. Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki stated it shows in the second row in the second position and reads, "Revolutionary War Veteran U.S." and there is a star in the center. She noted to honor this Veteran in Avon's cemetery, in the meantime, this marker has been placed at this Veteran's grave.

Mr. White confirmed the marker will be placed at his grave, but it is not there yet nor are the other ones that are for the other Veterans of WWI and WWII. He noted this Revolutionary War Veteran is the only one and buried in the cemetery is also a War of 1812 Veteran who already has a star of which they installed last year. He added all of the Civil War soldiers are covered with the GAR stars/markers, so these are the last ones. Mr. White advised they would like to make better posts as these posts are not the securest, because the medallion itself is very heavy, and the post goes into the ground maybe a couple feet and they lean so they are looking at making longer ones that go deeper with teeth so they will not spin once they are in the ground. Mr. White also noted they would be harder to pull out if anyone should try to steal them. He does not believe there to be any problem with that, but you never know. He added they are working on that throughout the winter and then by spring they will place those markers. He added even if they were able to get a D.A.R. marker, they both can be there.

Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki stated it is important to the Commission and to the Historical Society that all of their veterans are recognized and honored in their cemeteries. She added they feel that it is better to have something to start with while they go through the process of trying to apply for a D.A.R. replacement marker than nothing at all.

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: Mr. White, "yes"; Ms. Szimpl, "yes"; Ms. Murnyack-Czarnecki, "yes".

The vote was 3 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, January 8, 2025, at 7:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by Rachel Markovitz, Assistant Clerk of Council