

Here are the notes for **Ontario CIC 9.15.25**.

Present: Adam Gongwer, Amy Hiner, Beth Delaney, Josh Bradley, Kris Knapp, Rick Pauley, Jennifer Meisse, Nick Turnbaugh, Paul Boggs, Casey Bly

Jessica Gribben

Andy Medwid

Absent:

Action Items

Jess Gribben **Create agenda item for CIC budget proposal discussion**

Add an agenda item for the next meeting to discuss and determine the CIC's budget request to city council, including estimated costs for signage, potential property purchases, and other projects.

Paul Boggs **Create signage design mock-ups**

Create visual mock-ups showing what Ontario signage might look like, incorporating either the clock tower or alternative design elements discussed in the meeting.

Adam Gongwer **Add board member application form and deadline to CIC website**

Add an application form to the CIC website for community members interested in joining the board, with a deadline before the next October meeting, and set up applications to be sent to info@ontarioohio.org.

Jen Meisse **Contact Rob about Morning Show appearance**

Reach out to Rob to arrange for a CIC board member to appear on the Morning Show to discuss the CIC and its mission with the community.

Josh Bradley **Start budget conversation with city council**

Initiate discussion with city council members at the Wednesday meeting about continuing to fund Jessica's chamber contract and CIC operations for 2026.

Nick Turnbaugh **Schedule meeting with Don Van Fleets about fitness center building**

Contact Don Van Fleets to schedule a meeting to discuss the Fleets Fitness Center building, including potential sale and allowing board members to tour the facility.

Overview

- CIC explored **\$28,000** wayfinding signage project using Richland County branding templates, with **\$4,000** per sign for **7** entrance locations
- Mayor Knapp confirmed ongoing negotiations with corner property owner, but CIC needs funding established before proceeding with acquisition
- Council likely to approve **\$30,000** chamber contract renewal for **2026**, with Josh indicating council support
- CIC must finalize budget request by next meeting for temporary budget inclusion, as permanent budgets get approved in **March**
- Legal filing correction needed due to "investment" vs "improvement" error, requiring resubmission to Ohio Secretary of State and Attorney General
- **\$25,000** in seed money waiting to be deposited once bank account established with corrected legal documents

Wayfinding signage project planning

- Rick, Beth, and Amy met with Destination Mansfield and the Chamber to review Richland County branding program
- Mansfield's signs cost **\$4,000** each for weather-resistant versions, **\$25,000-\$50,000** for premium sandstone versions
- Ontario identified **7** entrance locations for signage, with **314** by Brown Derby Roadhouse being challenging due to space constraints
- Destination Mansfield offered approximately **\$5,000** contribution if Ontario incorporates county branding elements
- Paul offered to create mock-ups using donated sheet metal and laser cutting capabilities
- Discussion about incorporating Ontario-specific elements like clock tower vs. using standardized county branding
- Signs take approximately **2** months to manufacture and install

Corner property acquisition update

- Mayor Knapp had positive conversation with property owner who remains interested in working with CIC
- Owner wants to maintain some control over future use and avoid eminent domain by ODOT
- CIC cannot proceed with serious negotiations until funding account is established and available
- Property owner expressed willingness to move building back on lot to accommodate road widening
- Building foundation needs replacement and may not be salvageable for relocation
- Owner prefers CIC over other potential buyers and wants planned development rather than demolition

Chamber contract renewal for 2026

- Current contract with The Chamber expires in **December 2025**
- Josh indicated council members he's spoken with support continuing **\$30,000** annual contract
- Mayor Knapp will include chamber contract in temporary budget for first quarter **2026**
- Contract provides access to full chamber services beyond just Jessica's work
- New administration after January will finalize permanent budget decisions

Budget planning and appropriations

- City's **2025** economic development budget was **\$200,000** including chamber payments, regional planning, transportation, and zoning review
- CIC needs to submit budget request by next meeting for inclusion in temporary budget
- Temporary budgets easier to approve than adding large amounts during permanent budget process in **March**

- Adam emphasized importance of getting capital items into temporary budget for **January** purchases
- **\$25,000** in seed money available once legal documents corrected and bank account established

Website updates and improvements

- Adam updated CIC website with **4** sets of meeting minutes and **3** commercial property links (Loopnet, Crecy, Commercial Cafe)
- Board agreed to add member photos and names with email addresses
- Amy proposed adding board application with deadline before **October** meeting for new member recruitment
- Applications will go to generic city email address for consistent processing
- Discussion about adding mission statement and contact information for economic developers

Community outreach and awareness

- Board discussed need to inform residents about CIC existence and purpose
- Jen offered to arrange radio interview on morning show for community outreach
- Suggestion for ribbon cutting ceremony when first signage installed to launch CIC publicly
- Amy proposed CIC note cards to thank community members and business owners for positive contributions
- Social media identified as primary outreach tool despite potential for negative comments

Community hub building exploration

- Nick investigating Fleets Fitness Center building as potential community hub location
- Building owner Don Van Fleets looking to sell, requiring significant funding
- Discussion about using building rental income to offset mortgage payments
- Board interested in touring facility once meeting arranged with owner

- Concept would provide anchor for community development activities

Governance and legal filing corrections

- Andy discovered error in legal filing - used "investment" instead of "improvement" in documents
- Resolution going back to council **Wednesday** for correction
- Must resubmit to Ohio Secretary of State and Attorney General for approval
- Process different from typical nonprofits due to quasi-governmental entity status
- Bank account setup delayed until corrected legal documents approved

Mission statement development

- Board reviewed **3** draft mission statements from strategic planning session
- Consensus emerged around third option with modifications: changing "nurture local enterprises" to "support local businesses"
- Final version combines elements emphasizing transparency, integrity, community commitment, and inclusive future
- Amy requested time to refine language between meetings before final approval
- Mission statement will be added to website once finalized

Here is the most current iteration.

”The Ontario Community Improvement Corporation’s (CIC) mission is to strengthen the heart of our community by supporting local growth, creating opportunity, and helping neighborhoods thrive. As trusted partners to local governments, businesses, and residents, we work to revitalize properties, support local businesses, and bring meaningful investment to the places we call home. Guided by transparency, integrity, and a deep commitment to community, we strive to build a brighter, more inclusive future for all. We aim to strengthen local identity, enhance quality of life, and create lasting connections among residents, businesses, and visitors.”