

Oneida Afterburner Committee (OAC)

Report to the Oneida Common Council

May 5, 2026

The OAC has met several times since our inception. Our inaugural meeting was September 3, 2025, where we established our committee organization, ground rules, and purpose.

**Members of the OAC are as follows:**

Chair: Helen Acker

Vice Chair: Jim Coulthart

Secretary: Andrea Hitchings

Members:

Pete Hedglon

Nick Fedchenko

Joe Maglioca

Mike Kaiser

Kyle Lovell – Ex Officio (Non-Voting) City Manager

Rick Rossi – Ex Officio (Non-Voting) Mayor

**Purpose of the OAC:**

Bring in a F16 Fighter Jet Static Display to be displayed at Veterans Field. A static display honors our military heritage, inspires future generations and serves as a tangible landmark to our community, showing our community pride. We will do the fundraising, provide transportation, demilitarization, installation and community engagement.

Note: we are hoping to partner with the DRI project for the Veterans Memorial at the same location. This may help to defray the cost if the building is done at the same time. ALL money for the Static Display itself including installation will be done through donations.

**Letters of Support:**

We asked for and received letters of support from elected officials, local, state and federal along with local groups dealing with Veterans.

**National Museum of the United States Air Force (NMUSAF):**

An application was submitted to NMUSAF including the letters of support.

We are currently on their waiting list. We are waiting to see where we sit at this point. City Manager Kyle Lovell has been emailing and calling to get that information.

**Community Outreach:**

Members of our committee were at the Oneida Fall Fest and handed out flyers and received a great reception.

Three members will be at the County Building to hand out flyers at the Veterans Suicide Awareness Run, Walk, Bike held on May 9, 2026.

Vice Chair Jim Coulthart has reached out to the 174<sup>th</sup> Alumni for support and they have been receptive.

There are many community events in discussion that we are looking at. We are still in the beginning stage of this project and look forward to the future in Oneida.

**Minutes:**

I have included our minutes of the meetings we've had so far. There is much information to peruse.

We have met on the following dates:

September 3, 2025

November 5, 2025

January 8, 2026

March 4, 2026

Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions. Always happy to discuss this exciting program.

Respectively submitted,

Helen Acker



Chairwoman

# Oneida Afterburner Committee (OAC)

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## Inaugural Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, September 3, 2025

Time: 1:30 PM

Location: City of Oneida, Office of the City Manager

## Attendance

Chair: Helen Acker

Ex-Officio (non-voting): City Manager Kyle Lovell

Members Present: Peter Hedglon, Nick Fedchenko, Jim Coulthart, Mike Kaiser, Andrea Hitchings

Ex-Officio (non-voting) Absent: Mayor Rick Rossi

Members Absent: Joe Magliocca

## 1. Call to Order

Chair Acker called the meeting to order at 1:40 PM.

Notes: None.

## 2. Roll Call & Introductions

Roll call was taken. Members and ex-officio official had already introduced themselves prior to the start of the official meeting.

Notes: None.

## 3. Purpose of Committee & Project Overview

Chair Acker and City Manager Lovell outlined the mission of the Committee: fundraising, transportation, demilitarization, installation, and community engagement.

Notes: The committee envisions a horseshoe display and concrete foundation. Chair Acker stated she is hopeful to partner with the group doing the DRI project at Vets Field to defray costs. She will reach out on this. Peter will investigate and confirm any site restrictions at Vets. The committee hopes to emphasize community pride and visibility, and tie projects to veterans and local heritage. There was also a suggestion to hold a parade when the aircraft arrives.

Aircraft interest focused on an F-16 (tail flash), though the A-10 was also noted.

Transportation may involve a flatbed with wing removal. Vendor option: Worldwide Aircraft Recovery. Peter reiterated this was the first meeting and Council has only permitted formation of the committee; additional Council approvals will be needed before taking further action on anything for the project scope (including but not limited to insurance, fundraising, and advertising).

#### **4. Adoption of Agenda & Meeting Ground Rules**

The agenda was adopted. Chair Acker reviewed meeting ground rules, including Open Meetings compliance, public notice, accurate minutes, and records.

Notes: Kyle Lovell will hold the records for the Committee. Peter to confirm if public notice of meetings and open attendance is required.

#### **5. NMUSAF Static Display Loan – Application Handout Review**

City Manager Lovell presented the NMUSAF (National Museum of the United States Air Force) Community Static Display Program handout, explaining responsibilities such as transportation, demilitarization, hazardous material removal, insurance, and ongoing maintenance.

Notes: Discussion centered around insurance and maintenance. Peter emphasized the need to determine financial obligations before requesting Council approval. Kyle will work on specifics. Once details are known, a maintenance plan must be developed as the City may be responsible for costs after completion. Kyle noted paint life is ~20 years, requiring corrosion control and annual cleaning.

#### **6. Organization of the Committee**

Chair confirmed: Helen Acker.

Vice Chair designated: Jim Coulthart.

Secretary designated: Andrea Hitchings.

Notes: Discussion included establishing a Treasurer-like role for finance tracking. As this committee is affiliated with the City, treasurer functions will be performed by the City Comptroller's office.

#### **7. Subcommittee Formation (Discussion & Appointments)**

The following subcommittees were discussed, but no action will occur until more details are determined and Council approvals are obtained:

- Fundraising & Sponsorships – to be formed later
- Logistics/Transport & Demilitarization – to be formed later
- Site Design, Pedestal & Installation (horseshoe concept, pad, capstone, lighting, video, security) – to be formed later
- Community Outreach/Communications/Marketing – to be formed later, but Andrea volunteered for social media/marketing; Mike Kaiser offered general help; Nick Fedchenko volunteered for outreach/communications
- Finance/Grants – Discussion held on handling raised funds. The American Legion offered

its 501(c)(3), but concerns were raised. Chair Acker noted the City can now accept donations directly. Peter will review legality of routing donations through the City, OIC, or American Legion 501(c)(3). Kyle will consult Planning Director Steve Vonderweidt for grant writing. Nick mentioned his wife, Amy, may also assist.

Notes: None beyond discussion summary above.

## **8. Immediate Deliverables & Assignments**

The Committee identified the following deliverables:

- Letters of support: Kyle to continue outreach (responses already received).
- Draft project timeline with milestones – to be completed later once Council approves.
- Shared repository for documents and contact list – Kyle to maintain at City Hall.
- Outreach: Jim to contact FLC/Union High School and Alumni Association from the 174th.

Notes: Action steps are listed above.

## **9. Budget/Fundraising Targets (Initial Discussion)**

Preliminary discussion covered transportation, installation, demilitarization, and upkeep.

Notes: Estimated fundraising cap target ~\$120k (to be validated). Possible workforce support from the 174th. Potential DRI project assistance for the site plan/development.

## **10. Next Steps & Deadlines**

Various committee members have action steps to complete before the next meeting in November.

## **11. Public Comment**

No public comments were received.

## **12. Next Meeting Date/Time**

The next meeting will be held Wednesday, November 5, 2025, from 1:30 to 2:30 PM.

## **13. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:50 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Andrea Hitchings

Secretary

# ONEIDA AFTERBURNER COMMITTEE

## MEETING MINUTES

**Date:** November 5, 2025

**Time:** Meeting called to order at 1:30 PM

**Location:** City Manager Conference Room

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## ATTENDANCE

Present- Chairwoman- Helen Acker

Ex-officio- City Manager Kyle Lovell

Members- Joe Magliocca, Jim Coulthart, Mike Kaiser, Nick Fedchenko, Andrea Hitchings

Guest- Director of Planning and Development, Steve Vonderweidt

Absent- Mayor Rick Rossi, Peter Hedglon

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## CALL TO ORDER & APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Meeting was called to order at 1:34 PM by Chairwoman Helen Acker.
  - Minutes from the September meeting were approved unanimously.
    - Motion: Jim Coulthart
    - Second: Nick Fedchenko
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## **FUNDRAISING & ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES- Helen Acker**

- She has been communicating with Clear Path for Veterans and will provide an update after reconnecting with them.
  - She has several fundraising ideas and will talk about these at a later date.
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## **PROJECT UPDATE- Kyle Lovell**

### **A. Letters of Support**

- All letters of support have been received except:
  - Clear Path – Helen will assist in securing this.
  - American Legion – supportive but has not yet submitted a letter. Kyle will reach out to obtain a formal letter.

### **B. Insurance**

- An estimate was requested for a \$1 million insurance policy, but research shows this is unnecessary.
- Kyle clarified that the likely required coverage is \$500,000–\$600,000.
- He is awaiting the official quote.
- The policy must be standalone for the City of Oneida, not an umbrella extension.

### **C. Project Design & Engineering**

- Kyle presented the 3D rendering prepared by CNS, showing the aircraft area layout and landscaping.
- CNS is involved through the DRI initiative, but this project is not funded by DRI; it is separately funded.

- Kyle confirmed with Worldwide Aircraft Recovery (WWAR) that the design is completely feasible and within their capabilities.

#### D. Armature Placement

- The rendering currently shows a center-mounted armature.
- Helen questioned this, as a tail-mounted option was previously discussed.
- Jim advised he has further information on this topic based on his contacts in Ohio and will talk about this during his discussion.

#### E. Safety & Accessibility

- General discussion occurred on stone, brick, and greenspace elements.
- Concern was raised about protecting the monument from vehicle impact.
  - Decision: Bollards will be added as a safety barrier.
- Kyle emphasized the rendering is preliminary and does not yet include lighting, cameras, and detailed monument features.

#### F. Foundation & Construction

- CNS and WWAR will handle foundation engineering, soil evaluation, and structural requirements.
- Joe noted that site soil is primarily sand, meaning a deep, reinforced concrete pour will be required.

#### G. Project Cost

- Based on current information, Kyle estimates the total project will not exceed \$150,000.
  - More accurate numbers will be provided after the Air Force application is submitted and CNS finalizes engineering details.
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## **FINANCIAL LOGISTICS & FUNDING**

- The American Legion indicated they are willing to allow the project to use an account under their organization for dedicated funds.
  - Joe noted that the City could alternatively use OIC if needed but there are fees incurred which will deduct from donation proceeds. The American Legion is the better option because they do not charge fees.
  - Helen will discuss logistics with Penny.
  - Funding possibilities include:
    - DRI support- Our state DRI representative is very enthusiastic and believes more funding may be available from the state. She stated that as the project progresses, she will be able to better ascertain what help the state may be able to provide.
    - Affordable Housing Corporation funding (available in March) and other grant funding opportunities
  - Once firm numbers are available, Helen confirmed the committee will launch:
    - Business outreach
    - Public fundraising efforts
    - Donor communication campaigns
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## **FALL FEST COMMUNITY RESPONSE (Nick Fedchenko)**

- Nick reported a highly positive response from the community during Fall Fest.
  - The informational flyer was useful in addressing questions.
  - A few negative comments were addressed directly and resolved successfully.
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## **OHIO PROJECT REVIEW & KEY LESSONS LEARNED (Jim Coulthart)**

### **A. Background**

- Jim provided two handouts summarizing the F-16 static display project in Union Local School District (Ohio).
- Their project began in 2018 and is expected to be completed in 2026.
- Delays were primarily attributed to:
  - The war in Ukraine
  - Reduced availability of retired F-16 aircraft

## B. Aircraft Options

- The Air Force may offer alternatives beyond the F-16, such as the A-10.

## C. Importance of Connections

- Personal and professional connections significantly influenced the Ohio project's success.
- Jim is attempting to contact General Dan Caine, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who previously flew F-16s for the 174th.
- Ohio organizers are seeking participation from Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth for their ceremony.

## D. Air Force Application Requirements

- Ohio emphasized the need to complete the Air Force application exactly as instructed.
- The committee must establish a 501(c)(3), create a dedicated fundraising account, and demonstrate active financial progress.

## E. Mounting Options & Costs

- Center-mounted armature: Approx. \$40,000; more stable and balanced.
- Tail-mounted armature: Approx. \$70,000; significantly more costly.
- Ohio's steel was fully donated—partnership opportunities may exist locally.

## F. Pillar Angle & Visibility

- The steel pillar should be mounted at a 15-degree upward angle for optimal public visibility.
- The Air Force strongly favors displays that are:
  - Accessible
  - Highly visible
  - Freely viewable by the public and road traffic

## G. Concrete & Materials

- The project will require substantial reinforced concrete.
- Potential partnership opportunity with Oneida Concrete (Heidelberg).

## H. Additional Research

- Jim mentioned a relevant aircraft display in the Town of Brasher, St. Lawrence County, worth visiting.

## I. 174th Alumni Support

- The 174th alumni community may be willing to support the project if the aircraft's livery reflects the historic 174th markings.
- Jim strongly recommends pursuing this to increase local engagement.
- Helen and Jim plan to visit Lt. Col. Mark Browning at his Manlius bookstore, "Of Moose and Mind," to seek additional contacts and possibly obtain General Caine's information.

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## PILOT OUTREACH

- Joe noted that Oneida resident Scott Potter, now an F-35 pilot, may be able to participate in the dedication ceremony or assist with fundraising.
- Joe knows him personally and can assist with any outreach and communication.

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## **LEGAL & DONATION STRUCTURE**

- Helen stated that Peter was unable to attend but is researching:
    - Laws governing donations made directly to the City
    - Required language for public communications
  - Peter will report back at a later next meeting
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## **AIR FORCE APPLICATION**

- Kyle asked for direction on timing of the Air Force application submission.
  - The committee agreed to submit the application now once Kyle checks with Nadine on Council approval
  - Kyle will:
    - Distribute the application packet to the committee for review
    - Confirm with Nadine whether Council approval is required prior to submission
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## **NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday, December 3, 2025 1:30 PM  
City Manager Conference Room

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## **ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 2:23 PM.

# ONEIDA AFTERBURNER COMMITTEE (OAC)

## MEETING MINUTES

**Date:** January 8, 2026

**Time:** 1:30 PM

**Location:** City Manager Conference Room

### Members Present:

- Chairwoman Helen Acker
- Mayor Rick Rossi
- City Manager Kyle Lovell
- Peter Hedglon
- Joe Magliocca
- Mike Kaiser
- Nick Fedchenko
- Andrea Hitchings

### Guest Present:

- American Legion Representative Marty Winchell

### Member Absent:

- Jim Coulthart

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## 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Helen Acker at 1:30 PM.

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## 2. Approval of Prior Minutes

Chair Acker stated that the prior meeting minutes would not be approved at this time as not everyone had a chance to review prior to this meeting. Approval was deferred to the next meeting in February.

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## 3. American Legion 501(c)(3) & Financial Structure

Marty Winchell was welcomed to the meeting and addressed the Committee regarding the American Legion's 501(c)(3) status and potential use as a fiscal conduit for the Afterburner Project.

### **Key points:**

- The American Legion maintains an established 501(c)(3) organization.
  - Administrative fees are waived for veteran-related projects such as this project.
  - A dedicated income and expense line can be created within QuickBooks for the Oneida Afterburner Committee.
  - All donations would be recorded as income, with expenditures to offset against the same line item.
  - Monthly financial statements can be prepared for Committee review.
  - A designated Committee representative would coordinate with the American Legion to maintain appropriate checks and balances.
  - A written agreement or memorandum of understanding (MOU) would be required if this structure is utilized.
  - Marty confirmed documentation of the Legion's 501(c)(3) status is available if needed.
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## **4. Donation Handling & Tax Deductibility**

Peter Hedglon provided guidance regarding donation deductibility and funding compliance.

### **Key points:**

- IRS publications related to charitable deductions were distributed by Peter Hedglon for Committee reference. Members were reminded that deductibility varies based on donor circumstances and applicable IRS limitations.
  - Donations made directly to the city for a recognized public purpose are tax deductible, subject to individual donor circumstances.
  - Donations made to a 501(c)(3) organization (such as the American Legion) are also deductible, subject to IRS rules.
  - Some philanthropic foundations prefer donating to a 501(c)(3) rather than a municipality.
  - Any fundraising structure must be consistent with federal requirements associated with the aircraft transfer.
  - The Committee agreed that no final fundraising structure should be publicly represented until contract requirements are fully reviewed.
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## **5. Federal Aircraft Application Status**

The Committee discussed the status of the initial aircraft application.

- The application functions as a placeholder and does not oblige the city financially or contractually.
  - Council approval to form the Committee is sufficient to submit the application.
  - Submission places the city on the federal waiting list, which can span several years.
  - The Committee reached consensus to submit the application as currently drafted.
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## 6. Funding Models & Peer Examples

The Committee discussed potential funding models for the Afterburner Project and reviewed examples from prior municipal projects and comparable aircraft display initiatives in other communities.

### Discussion included:

- Past City projects where a 501(c)(3) organization collected donations and reimbursed the City as a vendor for eligible project expenses.
- Examples of municipalities in Ohio that have successfully completed similar aircraft display projects and navigated federal requirements.
- Consideration of how funds may flow depending on whether donations are made directly to the City or through 501(c)(3), and how those structures impact donor preferences, grant eligibility, and federal compliance.
- Recognition that different funding sources (individual donors, corporate donors, foundations) may have different requirements or preferences regarding donation recipients.
- The Committee emphasized the importance of:
  - Ensuring any funding structure complies with federal aircraft transfer requirements.
  - Avoiding premature commitments until federal contract terms are reviewed.
  - Gathering information from peer communities to inform a compliant and flexible fundraising approach.

### Action Items:

- Contact representatives from Ohio municipalities that have completed similar projects to confirm:
    - How fundraising was structured
    - Whether funds flowed through a municipality or a 501(c)(3)
    - Any federal compliance considerations encountered
  - Request and review sample federal contracts or guidance, if available, to better understand funding and reporting expectations.
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## 7. Engineering & Steel Fabrication Considerations

Nick Fedchenko reported on preliminary outreach regarding steel fabrication.

### Key points:

- Engineers must determine what is required:
    - Steel grade
    - Tensile strength
    - Wind load specifications
    - Foundation and base requirements
  - Visual design decisions (e.g., aircraft “takeoff” pose vs. flat display) significantly affect engineering and cost.
  - Once specifications are finalized, competitive pricing can be obtained from manufacturers in multiple states.
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## 8. Community Outreach & Letters of Support

Chair Acker reported on outreach efforts related to letters of support and military community engagement.

- Prior to the meeting Kyle Lovell provided Chairwoman Acker with information about the Committee for her use in fundraising efforts
  - The Committee is specifically pursuing a letter of support from Clear Path for Veterans- follow-up efforts are ongoing to secure the letter. Once received, the letter will be included as part of the project documentation and future submissions.
  - The Committee discussed continued outreach and relationship-building with the following military-related entities:
    - Air Force Research Laboratory in Rome
    - Northeast Air Defense Sector at Hancock
    - United States Air Force Recruiting Service, including participation at City and Rec Center events
  - Potential use of City facilities to support Air Force recruitment activities was discussed as a relationship-building opportunity.
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## 9. Next Meeting

**Date:** Wednesday, February 4, 2026

**Time:** 1:30 PM

**Location:** City Manager Conference Room

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## 11. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Mike Kaiser and seconded by Rick Rossi.

The meeting adjourned at 2:09 pm.

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**Respectfully submitted,**

Andrea Hitchings

OAC Secretary

Post 169 Inc.  
Account Listing  
January 8, 2026

Account	Type	Balance Total	Description	Tax Line
Post 169 INC				
Opening Balance Equity	Bank			B/S-Assets: Cash
Retained Earnings	Equity			<Unassigned>
Donation	Equity			<Unassigned>
Donation:Afterburner Committee	Income			<Unassigned>
contribution	Expense			<Unassigned>
contribution:Afterburner Commi...	Expense			<Unassigned>
			Opening balances during setup post to this account...	
			Undistributed earnings of the corporation	

# ONEIDA AFTERBURNER COMMITTEE (OAC)

## MEETING MINUTES

**Date:** March 4, 2026

**Time:** 1:30 PM

**Location:** City Manager Conference Room

### **Members Present:**

- Chairwoman Helen Acker
- Jim Coulthart
- Mike Kaiser
- Joe Magliocca
- Mayor Rick Rossi
- City Manager Kyle Lovell

### **Members Absent:**

- Andrea Hitchings
- Pete Hedglon
- Nick Fedchenko

### **1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Helen Acker at 1:30 PM.

### **2. Approval of Prior Minutes**

A motion to approve the minutes from the January 8, 2026 meeting was made by Jim Coulthart and seconded by Kyle Lovell. No corrections were noted. All in favor. Motion carried.

### **3. City Manager Update / Aircraft Application Status**

Kyle provided an update on recent outreach and the status of the static display application. He reported that he spoke with Steve Mallory, a former F-16 fighter pilot connected to the 174th and still tied to the local area. Kyle stated that Steve was helpful and, while he may not be able to directly influence the process, he is willing to assist by making connections.

Kyle explained that Steve has reached out to a retired one-star general from the New York Air National Guard who may be able to provide introductions or support. Kyle had not yet connected directly with that individual but intended to do so once contact information is received.

Kyle also reported that he followed up on the federal application by contacting Mark Wurthiemer, identified during the meeting as the Static Display Program Manager. Kyle noted that he intentionally bypassed a prior contact and reached out directly to Mr. Wurthiemer because he believed that would be

the most productive point of contact. According to Kyle, Mr. Wurthiemer previously acknowledged receipt of the City's formal application and indicated that they looked forward to working with the City.

Kyle stated that he sent a follow-up email earlier in the week requesting a status update and asking where the City stands in the process. If no response is received, he plans to send another follow-up in approximately 10 days.

Kyle emphasized that the application was completed carefully and thoroughly. In addition to the base application, he included letters of support, renderings, drawings, and additional supporting materials. These materials were organized in a Google Drive link and transmitted with a formal cover message on City letterhead in order to demonstrate that the City is serious, organized, and prepared.

**Key Points:**

- Steve Mallory may be able to assist with higher-level introductions through a retired one-star general.
- Mark Wurthiemer has acknowledged receipt of the application and is now the primary federal point of contact.
- The application package was intentionally submitted in a way that conveyed seriousness, preparedness, and community backing.

**Action Items:**

- Kyle to follow up with Mark Wurthiemer again if no response is received within approximately 10 days.
- Kyle to continue working available contacts that may help move the application forward or clarify the City's place in the queue.

#### **4. Public Perception / DRI Funding Narrative**

Kyle reported that in recent weeks he has had multiple conversations with members of the Common Council regarding concerns and misconceptions about how the project would be funded. He stated that he has repeatedly explained that Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) funds are not being improperly redirected to pay for the aircraft, yet there continues to be a public narrative suggesting that DRI money or local taxpayer dollars are being reallocated for that purpose.

Committee members discussed the broader issue of misinformation and the need to get ahead of it with clearer public communication. Members noted that the long timeline of the DRI projects and the lack of current, detailed public updates have created confusion in the community.

The committee discussed the importance of providing updated information on the City website and through local media so that residents can better understand the various DRI projects, the status of each, what funding applies to which project components, and what remains conceptual versus finalized. Members emphasized that incomplete information creates space for speculation and misunderstandings.

Kyle indicated that the City is planning to provide additional public explanation regarding DRI projects and their status. Helen stated that she would like to appear before the Common Council at the first meeting in April to provide a quarterly update and specifically address the memorial component, the project history, and what was originally contemplated under the DRI.

**Key Points:**

- The committee agreed that the funding narrative needs to be addressed proactively rather than reactively.
- A clearer distinction is needed between memorial improvements supported within the broader DRI project and the separate fundraising needed for the aircraft and pedestal.
- Public-facing communication should explain project status, funding categories, and phased implementation in plain terms.

**Action Items:**

- City staff to continue preparing updated DRI project communication for the website and other public outlets.
- Helen to provide a quarterly update to the Common Council and address memorial history, project scope, and funding misconceptions at the first meeting in April.

## 5. Clarification of Memorial Scope Within the DRI Project

The committee spent significant time clarifying what is and is not part of the DRI-funded Veterans' Field memorial project. It was discussed that the memorial concept includes a broader set of site improvements, including commemorative elements, flags, monuments, lighting, benches, brick work, and related memorial features.

Committee members stated that the aircraft itself and the pad/pedestal required to support the aircraft are separate from the memorial elements and would require separate fundraising and implementation. At the same time, members also discussed that the memorial design work has been developed in coordination with the aircraft concept and that the current renderings show the aircraft within the overall memorial layout.

The committee clarified that the memorial concept discussed as part of the DRI included service branch recognition monuments and other improvements intended to honor veterans broadly. It was noted that the committee does not intend to engrave individual names at this stage because records still need to be reviewed for accuracy and completeness; members expressed concern about either including names that should not appear or omitting individuals who should be recognized.

There was discussion about whether future public-facing renderings should remove the aircraft and pedestal temporarily in order to better illustrate the DRI memorial scope and reduce confusion. Suggestions included showing grass, a perennial garden, or another placeholder treatment in the center area for communication purposes until the aircraft component is funded.

**Key Points:**

- The memorial concept is broader than the aircraft display and can move forward in phases.
- Individual veteran names are not planned for inclusion at this stage due to record-verification concerns.
- Renderings currently contribute to confusion because they visually combine DRI memorial elements with the separately funded aircraft concept.

**Action Items:**

- Future communication materials and renderings should better separate the memorial scope from the aircraft scope.

- The committee will continue evaluating appropriate recognition methods for veterans that are respectful and administratively manageable.

## **6. DRI Project Estimates, Background, and Design Questions**

The committee discussed the original DRI project listing and how project numbers were established. Kyle explained that the State ultimately approved broader project categories and funding amounts, but the committee does not have full clarity on how certain original estimates were calculated. Members discussed that costs have risen significantly since the original DRI planning period and that many of the original estimates no longer reflect current project realities.

The group discussed how the Veterans' Field projects, including the splash pad, pickleball courts, bathhouse improvements, and memorial enhancements, were originally bundled within broader project concepts. It was noted that because of inflation, changed market conditions, and the passage of time, original allocations are no longer an accurate reflection of actual construction costs.

Members also discussed the 60 percent design milestone and the idea of temporarily removing the aircraft, pedestal, and related structural elements from certain presentation drawings so that the memorial improvements can be understood separately. Kyle noted that the design team has been asked to remove those aircraft-specific placeholder items from the next milestone rendering for clarity.

The committee discussed the challenge of balancing project design, communication, and fundraising when some aspects of the memorial and aircraft concept overlap visually, but not financially.

### **Key Points:**

- Original DRI-era figures are now outdated and should not be presented as current project costs.
- Bundled project categories have made it harder for the public to understand how individual components relate to one another.
- Separating aircraft-related elements from design presentations is expected to improve public understanding.

### **Action Items:**

- Design team to continue revising upcoming presentation materials so memorial improvements can be shown more clearly without aircraft-specific placeholder elements.

## **7. City Support / Use of City Resources**

The committee discussed whether City departments may appropriately support project implementation where warranted, particularly for site work or other improvements related to the memorial area.

Members referenced prior City projects as examples where donations funded the project itself but City labor, equipment, or departmental assistance helped complete infrastructure and installation work.

Examples discussed included the dog park and rail trail, where donations or grant funds paid for certain materials or project elements while City departments assisted with water lines, site work, or related labor. Members stated that the use of City support on public improvement projects is not unusual and should not be characterized as inappropriate simply because outside donations are also being used.

The committee generally agreed that if memorial improvements are part of an approved public project, there is no reason City resources cannot assist with appropriate components of the work. Members

expressed that the narrative suggesting the City cannot put any effort whatsoever into the site is inaccurate and should be addressed directly with factual examples.

**Key Points:**

- City assistance on public improvement projects is consistent with prior practice and is not, by itself, improper.
- The committee wants factual examples used publicly to rebut the claim that no City support can be involved.

**Action Items:**

- Examples of prior projects supported by City labor or equipment should be incorporated into future public messaging when funding questions arise.

## **8. Funding Strategy / Major Sponsor Outreach**

Helen reported that she is actively pursuing a large corporate sponsor and is asking that organization to fund the project in full. She stated that the request is moving up through the corporate chain and that her local contact has indicated there has been a positive response so far.

Helen noted that if one major sponsor can be secured, it would place the committee in a strong position by allowing the City to demonstrate that substantial funding is already available. She expressed the view that being able to show real dollars in hand would help strengthen the project application and underscore the seriousness of the effort.

Helen also indicated that she has identified at least one additional organization that may be willing to assist if the first corporate sponsorship does not materialize. She emphasized that she is currently pursuing the larger funding opportunity first.

The committee discussed the benefits and risks of raising funds before final federal approval. Members agreed that having money available strengthens the project's credibility, but they also discussed concern about collecting small-dollar community donations too early if there is any risk of later needing to refund those contributions.

**Key Points:**

- A single major sponsor would significantly strengthen both the committee's financial position and the overall presentation of project readiness.
- The committee remains cautious about large-scale local fundraising before federal approval is more certain.

**Action Items:**

- Helen to continue pursuing the primary corporate sponsor and keep the committee advised of any movement.
- The committee will continue balancing the value of showing money in hand against the practical risks of collecting funds too early.

## **9. Military Contacts / Aircraft Preferences / Related Outreach**

Jim reported that while he had been absent from prior activity for a time, he has resumed making contacts and believes he has developed useful connections at the 174th Attack Wing. He referenced

Colonel O'Connor, now reportedly a brigadier general, as one possible avenue of contact, and also noted that he had met the new colonel in charge of the wing.

Jim further stated that he intends to continue trying to reach General Dan Kane, described during the meeting as a former 174th pilot from the 1990s. Committee members discussed whether a future aircraft could potentially carry markings tied to the 174th or to a notable pilot connection if such an opportunity arose.

There was also discussion of aircraft terminology, with members noting that the F-16 was originally designated the Fighting Falcon and that Viper later became the commonly used and eventually adopted nickname.

Kyle reminded the committee that the City's application identified the F-16 as the primary aircraft request, followed by the A-10, followed by older aircraft historically associated with the installation. He explained that alternate aircraft were included to provide flexibility and improve the chances of obtaining an appropriate display even if a modern F-16 is not available.

**Key Points:**

- The committee continues to pursue military contacts who may help advocate for the application or elevate awareness of the project.
- Aircraft preference remains the F-16, but alternate aircraft were intentionally included to increase the likelihood of success.
- The idea of local or historically meaningful markings remains of interest if an aircraft is ultimately secured.

**Action Items:**

- Jim to continue outreach to General Dan Kane and other 174th-related contacts.
- Committee members to remain open to alternate aircraft options if that improves the chances of obtaining a display.

## **10. Demonstrating Financial Readiness**

The committee discussed examples from other communities that reportedly strengthened their applications by showing that local funds had already been raised. Members noted that this type of financial readiness may be viewed favorably because it demonstrates community commitment and the practical ability to carry a project through.

At the same time, members discussed concern about how to handle donated funds if the aircraft were not ultimately approved. This led to a discussion of focusing initial fundraising on memorial and site features that would still go forward regardless of the aircraft outcome.

The committee identified engraved bricks, benches, monument sponsorships, and other memorial features as practical items to begin fundraising around because those elements can support the site and its recognition purpose whether or not the aircraft arrives on the same timeline.

**Key Points:**

- Readiness is not just about the total amount raised; it is also about showing realistic, community-supported implementation planning.
- Permanent site elements provide a safer early fundraising focus because they still add value even if aircraft timing changes.

**Action Items:**

- Fundraising planning should continue to prioritize bricks, benches, sponsorships, and other memorial elements that can stand on their own.

**11. Fundraising Ideas and Event Concepts**

The committee reviewed fundraising ideas previously shared, including a commemorative holiday ornament, a possible Oneida-themed Monopoly-style game, and a broader fundraising calendar to organize efforts over the course of the year.

Helen discussed purse bingo as a proven fundraiser and shared that such events can generate meaningful net revenue if planned well. She stated that while there is some upfront cost for prizes, the return can be strong and the event concept is popular.

Members also discussed the possibility of speaker events, especially aviation- or military-themed programs featuring current or former pilots. The potential for a paid admission model was discussed as one more way to raise funds while also educating and engaging the public.

Additional merchandise ideas discussed during the meeting included 'Remove Before Flight' keychains, challenge coins, shirts, mugs, shot glasses, and other souvenir-type items that could be sold at events or through local outreach. The committee generally agreed that merchandising could be an effective part of the overall fundraising strategy if approached thoughtfully.

The group also discussed sponsored benches, engraved bricks, and the possibility of obtaining sponsors for the granite monuments or other memorial elements. Members noted that these items offer a practical way for local businesses and families to participate while also helping fund permanent site improvements.

**Key Points:**

- The committee favors a mix of events, merchandise, and permanent sponsorship opportunities rather than relying on a single fundraising method.
- Purse bingo and aviation-themed speaker events were viewed as especially promising because they offer both revenue potential and public engagement.
- Merchandise ideas should remain practical, recognizable, and easy to sell at events or through community outreach.

**Action Items:**

- Fundraising concepts previously shared should continue to be used as a working list for future planning.
- The committee should continue refining sponsorship opportunities tied to benches, bricks, monuments, and other permanent memorial components.

**12. Chamber of Commerce / Mayor's Gala Concept**

Kyle reported that the Chamber of Commerce expressed interest in co-sponsoring a Mayor's Gala. The concept discussed was a more formal event with ticket tiers and sponsorship levels, intended to raise funds while also elevating the public profile of the project.

Members discussed the possibility of different contribution levels, premium seating, and broader community sponsorships. It was noted that similar events in other municipalities have successfully raised funds through tiered giving structures.

The committee agreed that the gala concept has potential and could be developed further as both a fundraiser and a public relations opportunity.

**Key Points:**

- A gala could serve both fundraising and awareness-building purposes if structured well.
- Tiered sponsorship and ticket levels may create an opportunity for broader community and business participation.

**Action Items:**

- Chamber and committee representatives to continue exploring event structure, sponsorship levels, and feasibility for a Mayor's Gala.

### **13. Parade / 250th Celebration / Community Visibility**

Helen provided an update on the City's 250th celebration planning and noted that the July 4 activities are expected to include a parade, car show, food vendors, crafters, music, and related community programming. She indicated that the Afterburner Committee could participate in the parade or event with a float, trailer display, banner, or another visual presence tied to the project.

The committee discussed various display possibilities, including a banner featuring an aircraft image and memorial concept, a trailer setup, or some other mobile visual exhibit to raise awareness. Members also discussed whether military or aviation contacts might be able to provide support, materials, or possibly future flyover opportunities for a later event year.

Although a flyover was acknowledged as unlikely for the current year due to timing and scheduling, members discussed the possibility of exploring such an idea for a future Memorial Day or July 4 event by reaching out to Air National Guard public affairs offices.

**Key Points:**

- The 250th celebration presents a strong public-visibility opportunity for the committee.
- The focus for the current year is likely to be a visual presence rather than a flyover or other large military component.

**Action Items:**

- The committee should continue evaluating a parade/banner/trailer presence for July 4 activities.
- Future outreach may be considered for a later-year flyover or military-related appearance once more lead time is available.

### **14. Marketing, Banners, and Public Materials**

The committee discussed the need for banners and visual materials that can be used at parades, festivals, and other community events. Members discussed working with local vendors if possible, both to support local business and to create a reusable banner or display piece that can be used across multiple events.

There was also discussion of obtaining pricing for banners and possibly seeking in-kind support or donation of those materials. Members agreed that a strong visual presence will be important for community awareness and fundraising.

The committee further discussed how merchandise and branded items could complement those event materials and provide additional visibility for the project.

**Key Points:**

- Reusable banners and display materials are a practical early marketing priority.
- Local vendor support may reduce cost while also strengthening local ownership of the project.

**Action Items:**

- Pricing should be obtained for banners and other display materials.
- In-kind or donated support for marketing materials should be explored where feasible.

## **15. Additional Grant and Government Outreach**

The committee discussed additional possible funding and support opportunities, including congressional discretionary funding and outreach to elected officials. John Mannion, Senator Schumer, Assemblyman Miller, and Senator Griffo were referenced during the conversation as potential contacts or supporters.

Members noted that letters of support have already been obtained from some elected officials and discussed the value of continuing to build that support. The committee expressed interest in exploring whether federal discretionary funds or other available sources could assist with costs such as the aircraft pad or related infrastructure.

**Key Points:**

- Political and governmental support remains important both for advocacy and for identifying additional funding pathways.
- Support letters already obtained may help establish credibility as the committee seeks broader assistance.

**Action Items:**

- The committee will continue identifying outside funding opportunities and cultivating support from elected officials where appropriate.

## **16. Next Meeting**

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, April 8, 2026 at 1:30 PM in the City Manager's Conference Room.

## **17. Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was made by Mike Kaiser and seconded by Jim Coulthart. All in favor. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 2:51 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Andrea Hitchings  
OAC Secretary