



# City of Gahanna

200 South Hamilton Road  
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

## Meeting Minutes Committee of the Whole

*Trenton I. Weaver, Chair*

*Merisa K. Bowers*

*Jamille Jones*

*Nancy R. McGregor*

*Kaylee Padova*

*Stephen A. Renner*

*Michael Schnetzer*

*Jeremy A. VanMeter, Clerk of Council*

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Monday, September 23, 2024

7:00 PM

City Hall, Council Chambers

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### A. CALL TO ORDER:

*Vice President of Council Trenton I. Weaver, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. The agenda was published on September 20, 2024. All members were present for the meeting. There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.*

### B. ITEMS FROM THE SENIOR DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES:

**Returning for further discussion (Held in Committee from August 26, 2024)**

#### [RES-0032-2024](#)

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2024 STAFFING PLAN FOR THE CITY OF GAHANNA

Vice President Weaver suggested that the Council proceed by reviewing matters department by department, following the order of the PowerPoint presentation provided. Weaver expressed the hope that this approach would help expedite the meeting. He then opened the floor for any questions or comments related to Economic Development.

Councilmember Jones asked if she could raise a couple of questions before delving into the department-specific discussions. She inquired about the frequency of staffing studies and requested some historical context.

Senior Director Vollmer responded, explaining that each year, in preparation for the budget and mid-summer planning, a questionnaire is sent to departments. This questionnaire asks for a list of positions needed for the upcoming year, along with justifications. Staffing meetings are held before the budget is finalized. Vollmer noted that while the Police Department had conducted a staffing study in 2018, this comprehensive study was the first one completed across all City departments during her six-year tenure. She also mentioned that in recent budget cycles, the City had requested five-year staffing projections, which provided useful information.

Councilmember Jones then asked whether employee surveys were conducted outside of the staffing study. She was particularly interested in how often employees were surveyed on similar issues.

Senior Director Vollmer replied that the City was conducting a full employee engagement survey, a new initiative developed over the past few years, with the assistance of an outside consultant.

Councilmember Jones asked how the staffing study informed the budget process. She wanted to understand the steps taken from the study's recommendations to the final budget decisions.

Senior Director Vollmer explained that the information gathered from the staffing study would inform the staffing recommendations presented to the Council in October for the 2025 budget. She added that adjustments might be made to accommodate new initiatives or unforeseen circumstances.

President Bowers expressed her gratitude for the work done on the staffing study, noting that it would serve as a useful tool for both the Administration and the Council. She raised a question about the implications of adopting the staffing study through a resolution. Specifically, she referred to the executive summary on page four, which stated that if the recommendations were accepted, they would be passed by the Gahanna City Council through a resolution. Bowers asked if adopting the resolution meant that the Council would be tacitly approving all the recommendations contained within the study.

Senior Director Vollmer explained that the process is similar to how the Council adopts other plans, such as the Capital Improvement Plan, the Strategic Plan, or the Comprehensive Transportation and Mobility Plan. She also mentioned the Parks Master Plan as an example. Vollmer acknowledged that not every councilmember may agree with every aspect of these plans, but they are adopted in full. She described these plans as "living, breathing documents" that are regularly updated to reflect new circumstances, whether due to unexpected challenges or new opportunities such as a large endowment. She emphasized that, like the Land Use Plan and Capital Improvement Plan, the staffing study would be used to inform future decisions.

President Bowers agreed with the comparison but pointed out that the plans Vollmer referenced, such as the Capital Improvement Plan, involved substantial Council participation and a formal review process. Bowers highlighted that the referenced process ensured thorough Council involvement in updates. She expressed her appreciation for Vollmer's response and comments.

### **Economic Development**

Vice President Weaver asked about a section of the plan that mentioned adding an intern to assist with policy trend analysis and research concerning Statehouse activities. Weaver asked more broadly if there was a point person

responsible for tracking such activities across the city or if each department had someone monitoring trends in municipal government.

Senior Director Vollmer responded that it was a collective effort involving directors and other City officials. She mentioned that various members of the administration were engaged in professional groups, such as the Human Resources and Labor group, and the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), where they receive and share information citywide. Vollmer emphasized that it is part of the directors' responsibility to stay informed about national and regional developments.

Vice President Weaver asked if the City had ever considered contracting services for this purpose. He noted that while the City receives updates from organizations like the Ohio Municipal League (OML), some municipalities hire consultants for lobbying efforts or tracking policy decisions. He inquired if this was something the City had ever considered or should consider.

Mayor Jadwin responded that the City had used consultants in isolated cases, such as when applying for a grant related to the state capital budget. However, there had not been discussions about engaging consultants on a broader basis. She reiterated that directors are typically well-connected to their respective sectors and receive policy updates through organizations like the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC). She suggested that if a critical issue arose, such as a significant grant application or policy matter, the City might consider engaging a consultant on a one-off basis.

President Bowers shifted the discussion, asking about the process for updating the document in light of the staffing study's interview of a former director. She inquired if there would be an annual update to the document or how staffing needs would be addressed with someone new in the director role, given the potential for fresh perspectives.

Senior Director Vollmer replied that the plan was to review the document annually, though not necessarily with a consultant each year. She noted that the review process would be similar to what is done each budget cycle, where updates are made as necessary based on any changes or unexpected events that could alter the city's trajectory. She also emphasized that while staffing forecasts aim to anticipate needs over the next five years, unforeseen circumstances could lead to adjustments.

President Bowers expressed concern that the goals and future needs outlined in the document appeared to be heavily influenced by the former director's specific perspectives.

Senior Director Vollmer acknowledged that turnover in staff, particularly at the director level, often results in adjustments based on new ideas and prior experiences. She noted that this is a normal occurrence when leadership changes, as fresh perspectives are introduced. Vollmer also mentioned that the document included comparisons with other cities of similar size to Gahanna, specifically regarding economic development staffing levels.

Heidi Miller, the Clemans, Nelson and Associates consultant on the Staffing Plan, confirmed that the staffing comparisons were indeed based on similar-sized cities around Columbus. She added that many of the questions asked during the meetings were specific to the former director, which contributed to the document having that particular angle.

### **Engineering**

President Bowers noted that the staffing chart presented showed significant variation in staffing sizes between different communities. She expressed a desire to better understand whether some of these roles were subsumed within other departments, asking if this was an accurate reflection of the data.

Ms. Miller confirmed that such differences were indeed common, particularly with departments like Engineering and Public Service. She explained that these departments often vary from city to city, with some municipalities combining Engineering with Public Service, while others keep them separate. The structure depends on what works for each city and how many employees they have, resulting in differences from one community to the next.

President Bowers asked if it was possible to aggregate information, such as for the City of Hilliard, to combine data from their Public Service and Engineering departments for a more comprehensive comparison.

Senior Director Vollmer responded that it would be difficult and costly for the City to have the consultant call each city to gather detailed information about their organizational structures. She explained that a job description or organizational chart only provides limited insight. For example, in Hilliard and some other municipalities, responsibilities such as street trees fall under the Public Works Department, whereas in Gahanna, this falls under the Parks and Recreation Department. The variety in organizational charts makes comparisons challenging. Vollmer pointed out that the chart includes a department label to provide some clarity.

Ms. Miller added that the chart indicates where certain functions are located within each municipality's structure, whether they are within a separate department or part of another.

President Bowers clarified her understanding, asking if, in Canal Winchester, the column showing engineering subsumed within Construction Services referred to the entire Construction Services Department.

Ms. Miller confirmed that the information provided was specific to the engineering positions similar to those in Gahanna.

President Bowers then inquired about how the information for other municipalities was obtained if phone calls were not made to each one.

Ms. Miller explained that the research process included both initial research and phone calls when necessary. Depending on what was available online, her team would either gather the information directly or reach out to

municipalities via phone or email to request additional details.

President Bowers followed up by asking if the City knew the full scope of roles in Pickerington's department or if it was only based on what was provided.

Ms. Miller confirmed that in Pickerington, the Engineering Department consists solely of a city engineer. However, she noted that this does not mean other positions outside of the department are not providing support.

President Bowers raised concerns about the survey responses from the Engineering Department. She expressed interest in better understanding the responses and asked for additional context.

Ms. Miller explained that, at the time of the survey, the department was in the process of filling some vacant positions. While the positions existed, there were vacancies when the survey began. By the time the survey was completed, approximately a month ago, most vacancies had been filled. She noted that when asking staff if their department is appropriately staffed while they are dealing with vacancies, the responses reflected the current situation, which was expected.

President Bowers acknowledged the explanation and clarified that the survey results represented a snapshot in time, asking if it captured a specific moment during the survey process.

Ms. Miller confirmed that the survey was conducted over the course of a few weeks, and the results reflected the conditions during that period.

President Bowers then inquired about the response rate from the Engineering Department, asking if there was a general sense of how many staff members participated in the survey.

Ms. Miller responded that she did not have the specific response rate with her at the meeting but could provide it later. However, there was significant participation in the survey overall.

Senior Director Vollmer added that the Engineering Department was nearly fully staffed, with the exception of one vacancy-the Senior Engineer for Utilities. She noted that this position is difficult to fill, not just in Gahanna, but in many surrounding communities as well. She explained that it is challenging to find a qualified candidate who is willing to accept a public sector position, as they can typically earn more working for a private engineering firm.

Councilmember Padova asked Senior Director Vollmer to confirm the position currently open in the City.

Senior Director Vollmer responded that the open position is the Senior Engineer for Utilities.

Councilmember Jones inquired about the timeline for the survey, asking how long the survey period was and when it took place this year. She also asked if

the timing of the survey varied by department.

Ms. Miller explained that the survey period did not vary by department, except for the Council employees. After the last meeting, the survey was resent to Council employees because their responses had not been received during the initial survey period. Once the survey was reopened, responses from Council employees were collected. The general window for staff to complete the survey was sometime in July, possibly extending into early August, while the Council employees completed their responses within the last month.

Senior Director Vollmer added that the survey email was sent to City staff on Wednesday, May 22, and responses were due by Friday, June 7.

Councilmember Jones then referred back to the survey and noted that the filling of staff vacancies likely impacted the responses. She asked whether the future staffing surveys, which are planned to be conducted annually, would ask similar questions to allow for comparison between different time periods.

Senior Director Vollmer confirmed that the upcoming employee engagement survey, which will be conducted later this year, will include questions that will allow for the tracking of progress. Once the consultant reviews the results, they will provide action steps to address any areas needing improvement or increased efficiency. The plan is to resurvey staff a year later, and this will also be incorporated into the Strategic Plan and staff engagement requirements for that process.

Vice President Weaver raised a question regarding the mix between the Engineering and Public Service departments. He expressed his appreciation for the narrative portions of the study, noting how the current state, issues, and future outlook were well addressed. Weaver also mentioned that there had initially been some uncertainty about which department handled specific responsibilities, but after the departments met, it became clear that everyone had a good understanding of their roles. He found this clarity reassuring, particularly since the split into two departments was relatively recent. Weaver then asked Ms. Miller if the study had examined whether Engineering and Public Service should continue to operate as separate departments or if that consideration was outside the scope of the study.

Ms. Miller responded that the study did not specifically evaluate whether the two departments should remain separate. While the study provided comparisons with how other cities were structured, the question of whether to merge or keep the departments separate was not part of the evaluation.

### **Finance**

No questions.

### **Human Resources**

Councilmember Jones referenced reading about the difficulty in hiring Human

Resources (HR) talent within the public sector, noting that the current HR team primarily consists of individuals from the private sector. She expressed uncertainty about whether this trend was acceptable for the City and asked for clarification on whether the City was comfortable continuing to hire from the private sector, given the available talent.

Ms. Miller responded by explaining that this was a common trend across the public sector. She noted that many public sector organizations are now looking outside their typical pools to find qualified talent, which often means hiring from the private sector.

Senior Director Vollmer, whose background is in HR, added that while it is not problematic to hire from the private sector, there are significant differences between public and private sector Human Resources. She explained that the City's two HR Administrators and HR Representative all came from the private sector, and while they have the necessary skills, it takes additional time to train them in the processes unique to public sector work, such as the Civil Service process. She also mentioned that working in a union environment requires a specialized skill set, which further adds to the training time.

Councilmember Jones then clarified her understanding, stating that the main issue is the additional time and resources required to get private sector hires accustomed to the differences in the public sector, while their skills and qualifications remain satisfactory. Senior Director Vollmer confirmed that this was correct.

Vice President Weaver raised a question about the delineation of responsibilities between the Senior Director of Administrative Services and the HR Manager, referencing pages 39 and 40 of the report. He appreciated Senior Director Vollmer's efforts, given her HR background, but wondered if more of the HR responsibilities should be shifted to the HR Manager to allow Vollmer to focus on other internal-facing areas.

Ms. Miller responded by noting that this was one of the goals mentioned in the report. She explained that the intent was to gradually shift responsibilities, starting with labor relations, to the HR Manager. This would allow tasks to be reassigned incrementally, as capacity allows.

Vice President Weaver then suggested that if more responsibilities were to shift, it might make sense for the HR Manager role to evolve into an HR Director position.

Ms. Miller acknowledged the possibility but stated that it was not yet necessary. She added that a job audit could be conducted in the future to determine if the role should be reclassified as a director position when appropriate.

Councilmember Jones asked about the training program mentioned in the report and whether it would be overseen by the training coordinator referenced in another section.

Ms. Miller clarified that the recommendation was to create a training coordinator position, initially to be split between the Police Department and Administration, though the exact split might not be 50/50. Additionally, the Risk and Safety Administrator role would be reclassified to a manager position to oversee the Training Coordinator.

Councilmember Jones asked if an increase in training responsibilities would require additional support for the learning management system (LMS) from a technical perspective and whether the two roles mentioned would handle the technical aspects of the LMS.

Senior Director Vollmer confirmed that the LMS is user-friendly and integrated with the City's applicant tracking system, making it familiar and easy to use for staff.

Councilmember Jones asked if the increase in training would result in any additional IT (information technology) needs.

Senior Director Vollmer offered assurances that there would be no additional IT requirements. She explained that the system had been fully implemented and that the HR team and the Risk and Safety Administrator were well-versed in uploading and managing content within the system. These tasks would be transferred to the training coordinator, who would handle tracking training, uploading records, and managing follow-up for staff who had not completed required training—a time-consuming responsibility that often goes unnoticed.

### **Information Technology (IT)**

President Bowers asked Ms. Miller to walk through the IT recommendations in the report, specifically noting the addition of five new positions. Bowers referred to this as one of the most substantial recommendations and requested further explanation.

Ms. Miller began by addressing the IT Security Network Analyst position. She explained that, with the growing concerns over cybersecurity, the goal of this position was to shift from a reactive approach to a proactive one. She highlighted that many organizations, both in the public and private sectors, were adding similar positions, which supported the need for this role in the City moving forward. Ms. Miller then discussed the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Analyst position. She noted that there is currently a position in the Engineering Department that handles GIS functions, but the workload did not justify a full-time position within Engineering. Additionally, the City already has a GIS Administrator in the IT Department. To ensure consistency and avoid duplication of functions across departments, she recommended creating a GIS Analyst position within the IT Department and moving the engineering GIS functions to this new position. Next, Ms. Miller addressed the Systems Analyst position, which would support the Systems Administrator. She explained that the Systems Administrator is currently overworked and overloaded, and the Systems Analyst would help manage the workload by assisting with modernizing and improving the City's technology infrastructure.



Ms. Miller also mentioned that a job audit process was conducted for the IT Manager position. Based on this audit, a reclassification to an IT Director was recommended, which was the final piece of the proposed changes.

### **Mayor's Office**

Councilmember Schnetzer began by asking for clarification between two positions, the Digital Media Coordinator and the Marketing and Communication Specialist, as described in the report. He requested an explanation in layman's terms to better understand the differences.

Ms. Miller explained that the Digital Media Coordinator would focus specifically on social media, website content, and the use of electronic resources to deliver information. While there could be some overlap between the two roles, particularly given the nature of today's communication needs, the primary distinction is that the Digital Media Coordinator would handle digital platforms, whereas the Marketing and Communication Specialist would have a broader range of responsibilities.

Councilmember Schnetzer then questioned whether the workload was substantial enough to justify a full-time Digital Media Coordinator position or if some of those duties could be consolidated under the Marketing and Communication Specialist. He also asked whether IT staff, particularly with the addition of new positions, could handle website updates.

Senior Director Vollmer clarified that IT would only manage the back-end technical aspects of the website, such as system maintenance, but not the content creation or publication. Writing and publishing content in a way that is clear and accessible to residents is not something typically handled by IT staff. Vollmer explained that the responsibilities of the Digital Media Coordinator go beyond just social media, including content development, video production, monitoring social media, and ensuring that the latest updates are shared with the public. This is a full-time job, and the position is commonly found in other cities, as demonstrated by the comparisons in Ms. Miller's report. Vollmer also highlighted the Parks and Recreation Department's extensive programming, which demands at least one full-time Marketing and Communication Specialist.

Councilmember Schnetzer then asked about the proposed Sustainability Coordinator position, seeking clarification on the role's day-to-day responsibilities.

Ms. Miller explained that this position would primarily support the City's participation in the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) initiatives. The Sustainability Coordinator would track and monitor sustainability programs, handle reporting, and ensure that the City meets the requirements of these initiatives.

Councilmember Schnetzer expressed concerns about whether the City truly needed a full-time Sustainability Coordinator. He suggested that these responsibilities might be better assigned to specific departments, such as

Parks or Engineering, given that many sustainability programs are department-specific. He also raised the issue of financial sustainability, questioning the necessity of adding a full-time staff member in this area.

President Bowers joined the discussion, referencing the organizational chart on page 66 and asking if it was exhaustive. She mentioned that she believed there was a grant specialist or additional management analysts who supported the Senior Deputy Director.

Ms. Miller directed attention to the following page (67), where those management analysts are listed, breaking out the roles under the Mayor's Office and Administrative Services.

President Bowers acknowledged the clarification but also echoed Councilmember Schnetzer's concerns. She noted that while Council fully supports the sustainability initiatives, these programs seem to be housed within specific departments, such as Parks or Engineering, and questioned whether the Sustainability Coordinator position might be more of a reporting role.

Ms. Miller agreed that the role would primarily involve supporting and ensuring that sustainability initiatives are met.

President Bowers suggested that there might be a way to split the responsibilities of the role across departments.

Senior Director Vollmer emphasized that the five-year staffing study did not suggest that all positions would be implemented immediately. It was a long-term projection, with positions like the Sustainability Coordinator potentially being needed in the future. She pointed out that currently, high-level staff, such as Senior Director Schultz and Senior Deputy Director Wybensing, were responsible for sustainability efforts, which was not sustainable long-term. Having a dedicated staff member to push initiatives forward is essential, as many plans sit on shelves without someone actively managing them. Vollmer also noted that centralizing these efforts could help prevent the duplication of work across departments, ensuring greater efficiency and effectiveness.

President Bowers suggested that if the City were looking to develop a more comprehensive sustainability plan, a dedicated staff member might be needed.

Mayor Jadwin agreed, adding that the City had been trying to create a citywide sustainability plan for the past two years but struggled due to the lack of a staff member to lead the initiative. She reiterated that the positions outlined in the staffing study were not current requests but rather recommendations for the future. If the City wanted to expand its sustainability efforts and develop a robust program, a dedicated staff member would likely be necessary.

President Bowers expressed appreciation for the value of receiving the staffing document outside of the budget season. She noted that it allowed the

council to have important discussions in a more relaxed timeframe, without the pressure of a budget cycle. Bowers thanked Mayor Jadwin for the approach.

Councilmember Jones inquired about the recommendation to shift the Communications Manager to a Director role. She asked for more details on how this shift would impact capacity and whether it would alleviate some of the workload currently overseen by the mayor.

Ms. Miller confirmed that the primary goal of the shift was to alleviate the mayor's workload by creating a position that could make director-level decisions and oversee the department. This would give the Communications Department its own leadership, reducing the need for the Mayor to manage day-to-day decisions within that department.

Councilmember Jones asked what additional opportunities this change could open up for the City. She noted that with the expansion of the digital media position, the City could increase its digital footprint but sought clarification on what else might be possible with a director in place.

Ms. Miller responded that the shift would primarily provide oversight and relieve the Mayor from direct involvement in communication tasks. It would allow for more focused management of the department and enhance its ability to operate efficiently.

Councilmember Padova raised a question regarding the separate social media presences for the City and the Parks and Recreation Department. She asked if these platforms were managed by the same person or if Parks and Recreation had its own social media manager.

Senior Director Vollmer explained that one of the Marketing and Communication Specialists primarily works on Parks and Recreation marketing and communications.

Ms. Miller added that having a Communications Director would provide additional support for these functions, particularly given the significant workload associated with the Parks and Recreation Department. This change would help distribute the workload more evenly across the department and alleviate some of the burden currently carried by the Mayor and other staff.

President Bowers noted that she was surprised to see in the organizational chart that the Public Information Officer (PIO) appeared to be lower in the hierarchy than she had seen in other organizations. She asked for clarification on this.

Senior Director Vollmer referred to the organizational chart on page 66, explaining that the chart was not meant to imply a hierarchical ranking. Instead, it simply showed which positions report to the Communications Manager. The chart is intended to illustrate the Department's structure, not the rank or status of the roles.

President Bowers asked if the PIO currently reports to the Communications Manager and would continue to report to the Director of Marketing if the position were reclassified.

Senior Director Vollmer confirmed that this was correct.

President Bowers then asked Ms. Miller if this structure was consistent with what is typically seen in other communities.

Ms. Miller affirmed that it was consistent, explaining that in most cases, all related positions, including the PIO, fall under the same department and report to the same director.

Councilmember McGregor inquired about how many platforms the Digital Media Specialist manages.

Mayor Jadwin responded by explaining that the City currently manages 12 social media platforms, in addition to the City's website, YouTube channel, and three monthly newsletters. The Digital Media Specialist also handles Uniquely Gahanna, media relations, resident communications, and a wide range of materials including those for programs such as the sidewalk program, street program, and aggregation flyers. Additionally, the specialist manages event promotions for Parks and Recreation, including banners, signage, program materials, and the Explore Guide. The workload for this role is extensive.

Councilmember McGregor mentioned that she has seen posts on community pages like "Take Back Gahanna" and "Gahanna In The Know," where the City of Gahanna is tagged, and someone from the City responds to the inquiries. She noted that it requires someone to monitor those platforms in order to provide correct information.

Mayor Jadwin confirmed that responses are made when City staff catch these tags but emphasized that it is more efficient for residents to reach out to the City directly for timely and accurate responses.

Vice President Weaver highlighted that meeting residents where they are-specifically on social media-is essential. He mentioned that he, Mayor Jadwin, Councilmember Padova, and Councilmember Jones have all participated in the Voinovich School program, where one of the key lessons is the importance of engaging with residents in the spaces they use. He acknowledged that, while some people may not prefer to call or send letters, social media has become a vital platform for communication. Weaver suggested that the City might need additional Digital Media Specialists in the future, given the growing demand for social media engagement. He stressed that social media engagement is not something that can be done halfway; communities either fully commit to it or they forgo it altogether.

Mayor Jadwin agreed, noting that while social media is where residents want to get their information, it is impossible to monitor all platforms constantly while managing all the other responsibilities the position entails.

Vice President Weaver added that handling this effectively requires sufficient staff support.

**Department of Administrative Services**

No questions.

**Department of Planning**

No questions.

**Department of Law**

No questions.

**Council Office**

President Bowers raised a question about the amendment, specifically regarding the inclusion of the survey and thanked the staff for following up with the Council Office on that matter. She then asked for confirmation on whether the number of positions identified had been corrected.

Ms. Miller confirmed that she had corrected the numbers and sent the updated version back to the Council.

President Bowers, noting that she was logged out of her computer, asked if the amended version had been sent.

Senior Director Vollmer stated that the corrected version had been sent to Clerk VanMeter.

President Bowers thanked her and then addressed Ms. Miller, noting that some of the staffing numbers in the report seemed outdated, particularly in relation to Reynoldsburg and Upper Arlington. She asked how recent the outreach had been to gather these staffing numbers.

Ms. Miller responded that the data collection took place in late spring to early summer. She believed the information was confirmed through phone calls or possibly emails but would need to verify how the communication took place.

President Bowers acknowledged the response but noted that the information seemed inconsistent with her understanding of how those departments were currently staffed. She also pointed out that the City of Fairborn, near Dayton, was included as a comparable in the report, and asked why that city was chosen.

Ms. Miller explained that Fairborn was likely included to gather additional information for comparison purposes.

**Mayor's Court**

No questions.

### **Parks and Recreation**

President Bowers addressed Senior Director Vollmer, observing that none of the positions identified in the report seemed to be related to event management, but rather appeared to be facilities-focused positions. She asked if this was an accurate assessment.

Senior Director Vollmer confirmed that this was correct. She explained that all of the recommendations in the report were for positions on the Parks' operations side and that no additional positions were recommended for the Recreation or event management side.

### **Public Service**

Vice President Weaver raised a question regarding custodial services, asking whether the City was considering moving custodial duties in-house or maintaining a hybrid approach with a combination of employees and contracted services.

Senior Director Vollmer explained that the Public Service Department is creating a new facilities division in anticipation of moving into a larger facility. Currently, City facilities are cleaned on a contract basis. The Department is still analyzing whether it would be more efficient to continue using contractors or hire employees to maintain the new, larger facility.

Vice President Weaver followed up by confirming that this would involve most City employees being housed under one roof, to which Senior Director Vollmer affirmed this was correct.

Councilmember Jones asked for clarification on the organizational changes associated with the new building, specifically referencing the facilities superintendent role mentioned in the staffing study.

Senior Director Vollmer confirmed that there is currently a facilities division in Public Service with one union employee, a foreman. The staffing study recommends adding a superintendent, a maintenance worker, and possibly a custodian. She clarified that the decision on whether to hire custodians or continue using contracted services was still being evaluated.

Councilmember Jones noted that the three positions highlighted in orange on the organizational chart-superintendent, maintenance worker, and custodian-were the ones under consideration.

### **Public Safety**

President Bowers inquired about the coordination between the City and the school district regarding the proposal for additional School Resource Officers (SROs). She asked for an update on where those discussions currently

stand.

Chief Spence provided a brief overview of the current SRO staffing. The City has four SROs, two of which are stationed at Gahanna Lincoln High School under a contract with the district, while the remaining two are fully funded by the City. He explained that the discussion with the district regarding expanding the SRO program is ongoing, with particular attention to the middle schools, where there are current service gaps. The Police Department continues to interact with schools daily, whether through SROs or other resources, such as patrol or investigative officers. Chief Spence noted that with the new, larger school facilities in Gahanna, the ongoing dialogue with the district is important to determine the best way to service the schools. He emphasized that middle schools are an area of concern due to enrollment growth and facility expansions. While the City is not requesting additional SROs immediately, this is a discussion that will need to take place in the coming years as the school population continues to grow, potentially requiring further SRO staffing.

President Bowers clarified that the City is not currently making any commitments or requests for additional SROs but acknowledged that this is being discussed as a future need.

Chief Spence confirmed this, stating that the goal is to put the issue on the City and school district's radar for future consideration. He highlighted that any future SRO additions would require a coordinated discussion between the City and the school district, including determining cost-sharing and identifying service gaps, particularly at the middle school level.

President Bowers then asked about the request for two additional Community Liaison Officers (CLOs).

Chief Spence explained that the expansion of the CLO program was always part of the plan, once initial success was achieved. The City experienced an unexpected retirement, which impacted the program, but the long-term goal is to have one CLO per service zone, as the City is divided into three zones. As the community grows, the aim is to ensure that each zone is staffed with a dedicated CLO for continuity.

Councilmember McGregor asked if the City provides services to schools other than Gahanna Jefferson Public Schools.

Chief Spence confirmed that the City does provide services to other schools in Gahanna, including private schools like Columbus Academy and St. Matthew's. Under Ohio Revised Code, the City is responsible for monitoring school safety drills and responding to safety concerns at private schools, in addition to public schools. While the public schools drive the SRO program due to a cost-sharing model, the City also services private schools with the same level of attention when needed.

President Bowers sought clarification on the request for additional field officers, noting that if she understood correctly, the only requested additions for field officers were for four positions: two School Resource Officers

(SROs) and two Community Liaison Officers (CLOs).

Chief Spence confirmed that these positions were planned for the future and not immediate additions. He explained that the Police Department still had vacancies in the patrol ranks that they were trying to fill, as well as anticipated retirements in 2025. He noted that they recently added five officers, with one set to graduate from the academy next week, but there are still more hires needed for backfilling positions. The Staffing Study referenced increasing the Department to the budgeted strength. Chief Spence also mentioned that the Department conducts an annual workload-based staffing analysis to ensure that patrol staffing is meeting call demand, balancing time between reactive service calls and proactive policing measures.

President Bowers asked Ms. Miller about the numbers reflected on page 123 of the report. She noted that the current staffing of sworn officers was listed as 57, and there was a number in parentheses indicating 64. She asked what the 64 represented.

Ms. Miller explained that "64" represented full staffing levels for the Department.

President Bowers clarified that at the time of the study, there were seven vacancies before the addition of four officers.

Senior Director Vollmer updated the Council, stating that there were currently three vacancies. She also confirmed that "64" included not just patrol officers but command staff as well-sworn officers who can carry out law enforcement duties, even though their primary functions might be administrative.

President Bowers asked for confirmation that "64" included command staff; Chief Spence confirmed this. He reiterated that although command staff, like himself and the Deputy Chief, are sworn officers, their primary responsibilities differ from field officers.

President Bowers then inquired about the next chart in the report, asking if the 75 total law enforcement employees indicated the number of staff if the Department were fully staffed at present.

Chief Spence confirmed that this was correct.

President Bowers also asked about the average of 20 agencies listed in the report and whether those agencies were in Ohio.

Ms. Miller explained that the data for the 20 agencies was based on crime data, but she was unsure of the exact source, as a coworker handled that part of the study.

President Bowers concluded that for comparison within Central Ohio, the best guidance would likely come from the chart on page 124 and the preceding pages.



Chief Spence agreed, noting that the most relevant comparisons for Gahanna would be within Franklin County. He emphasized that the dynamics of Franklin County are unique compared to other counties in Ohio, making it the most appropriate point of comparison.

Councilmember Padova sought clarification on the staffing numbers, asking if the recently hired five officers were reflected in the figures presented.

Chief Spence responded that the numbers in the report likely did not reflect the recent hires, as he could not pinpoint the exact date the chart was produced. At the time the data was collected, the City was in the process of hiring additional lateral police officers. He confirmed that the Department currently has three vacancies, as some of the positions were filled after the swearing-in of the latest group of officers, which included lateral hires. Lateral officers are hired more quickly than recruit officers who must first go through the academy. He reiterated that the Department is currently three officers below full staffing.

Councilmember Jones revisited the topic of Community Liaison Officers (CLOs), asking whether the workload for CLOs is included in the staffing analysis and how their workload is quantified.

Chief Spence clarified that the staffing analysis primarily focuses on patrol staffing and their time obligations. It is much harder to quantify the workload for CLOs or SROs due to the nature of their responsibilities. He gave an example of a recent mental health case where the CLO spent about four hours working through the situation. These types of cases are difficult to measure in terms of workload. Despite this, Chief Spence assured the Council that the CLOs and SROs are fully engaged, handling a significant amount of work. The CLO program, in particular, is still relatively new, but there is already high demand for their services, and the officer is being pulled in many directions.

### **General Discussion**

President Bowers began by expressing her appreciation for the value of the document under discussion and the open conversation it allowed. However, she noted her hesitation in voting "yes" on the resolution as written. Bowers explained that there had been significant effort to create a clear framework for the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), including Council involvement and ensuring transparency. Despite that, there was still confusion about whether adopting the CIP meant those items were guaranteed to move forward in the budget. She suggested that the resolution could be amended to reflect that the document would serve as a guiding tool for future staffing discussions, acknowledging its limitations. Bowers opened the floor for a collaborative conversation to address her concerns while also thanking the Administration for their work.

Vice President Weaver followed by asking if there were any timing concerns from the Administration regarding the progression of this item.

Senior Director Vollmer replied that there were no immediate timing concerns. The Administration had planned to present the document before the 2025 staffing recommendations to aid in smoother conversations during the budget process. The intention was to refer to the staffing study within the budget documents rather than duplicating information.

President Bowers clarified that she was happy for the document to be part of the record and future discussions, ensuring that her comments did not imply otherwise.

Councilmember Renner shared President Bowers' reservations, expressing that he was unsure of the value in passing the resolution as presented. He agreed that the document provided a view of the division of labor, but he wanted the flexibility to disagree with certain aspects of it during budget season. Renner also noted that Council had long lacked a clear way to measure outcomes, and he was hesitant to approve something without a means to measure its effectiveness.

Councilmember Padova added that she understood her colleagues' concerns and appreciated the comparison of this document to the Parks Master Plan, which includes long-term ideas that may or may not be realized. She questioned whether passing the resolution offered any benefits, such as opening grant opportunities or other advantages, and whether the City would miss out on anything by not passing the resolution.

Senior Director Vollmer explained that passing the resolution by Council would show support for the initiative and the effort that City staff put into the process. It would also acknowledge the need for additional staffing in some areas and provide clarity for employees. The resolution was meant to demonstrate Council's investment in City staff and its recognition of future needs over the next five years. Vollmer emphasized that the resolution did not mean Council was committing to adding those positions but was an endorsement of the findings.

Mayor Jadwin echoed the importance of the framework provided by the document, acknowledging Council's input and concerns. She suggested that if Council had issues with the resolution's language, it could be amended to reflect a more flexible stance. Jadwin emphasized that the document was not a commitment to new positions but rather a guiding tool for future staffing decisions, similar to how the Land Use Plan operates.

Vice President Weaver proposed that amending the resolution to "accept the findings" rather than "adopt" the document might address Council's concerns.

President Bowers agreed, stating that she would be comfortable with the language of "accepting the report" and offered to work with Clerk VanMeter to amend the resolution accordingly.

Senior Director Vollmer confirmed that Clerk VanMeter had put together the resolution.

President Bowers added it was put together based on documents from the Administration and was open to any edits Councilmembers proposed and to work with Administration on edits to the Resolution.

Senior Director Vollmer noted that she had not drafted the resolution but was willing to review any edits once they were made.

President Bowers responded, acknowledging Vollmer's point and clarifying that much of the intent of the document was already contained within it. Bowers emphasized that the Council appreciated the work and recognized the value the document brought. She also highlighted the effort and time that staff put into compiling the narratives and survey responses. Bowers reaffirmed that the document would be considered during future budget discussions. She recommended moving forward with amendments to the resolution that would align with the Council's intent, and indicated there was support from other Councilmembers for this approach.

Councilmember Jones expressed her internal conflict regarding the resolution. She acknowledged the value of the document but questioned whether there was any risk in passing the resolution as it was currently written. Jones asked if voting "yes" on the resolution might limit the Council's ability to make changes in the future.

Councilmember Renner responded, agreeing with the value of the document but reiterated his concern about feeling restricted in advocating for changes to the division of labor later. He emphasized that he wanted the freedom to express concerns or make adjustments as needed during future budget discussions.

Councilmember Jones asked if such changes could be made later.

Senior Director Vollmer clarified that Council retains the ultimate authority to approve or deny the budget, including staffing recommendations. This allows for future discussions about staffing during the budget process.

Councilmember Renner reiterated that if the budget process allows for such discussions, he questioned the necessity of Council adopting the document.

President Bowers responded to Councilmember Jones' concerns, stating that her primary hesitation was the potential to set unrealistic expectations for the public and internally within the City. She emphasized that adopting the document could signal that the outlined positions and plans would definitely move forward, creating confusion similar to past instances where plans were adopted but not immediately implemented.

Councilmember Jones acknowledged this concern but noted that making the document a public record might still create expectations within the community, even without formal adoption.

Vice President Weaver agreed, stating that the budget process allows for official approval of staffing additions and appreciated the opportunity to have

these discussions beforehand. He expressed a desire for the study to have prioritized immediate staffing needs versus long-term ones, but recognized that unforeseen events could alter those priorities. Weaver supported finding a path forward for the resolution.

Councilmember McGregor asked about the expectations for the study when funding was appropriated for it in the 2024 budget, seeking clarification from colleagues on the intended outcome.

Vice President Weaver responded that the study was meant to guide the Administration's decisions on staffing recommendations for the budget, regardless of whether a resolution was adopted.

Councilmember Padova asked if the plan would be reviewed and updated each year as part of the budget process or if it would remain static.

Senior Director Vollmer explained that the plan would be reviewed annually as part of the budget process but did not anticipate significant changes for the next two to three years, especially with the opening of a new facility. She emphasized the goal of keeping the plan active and avoiding having it sit unused on a shelf, noting that passing the resolution would signal the importance of keeping the plan in use.

President Bowers reiterated her hesitation to adopt the resolution in its current form, particularly with elements like the SRO (School Resource Officer) discussions needing more time for collaboration with the school district before decisions could be made.

Senior Director Vollmer acknowledged that while the organizational chart mentioned SROs, the narrative of the report emphasized ongoing dialogue with the schools to determine the actual needs.

Councilmember Schnetzer pointed out that while the general public may view the City government as one entity, those within City Hall understand the distinctions between the City Attorney's office, Administration, and Council. He supported President Bowers' suggestion to rework the language to reflect a resolution of acceptance rather than adoption, as it would preserve the Council's autonomy while still providing a framework for future staffing.

Vice President Weaver asked if this proposal was agreeable to the Council, receiving support. He asked President Bowers to work with Clerk VanMeter to amend the resolution language.

President Bowers agreed to collaborate on amending the resolution. Vice President Weaver then expressed gratitude to Ms. Miller, Senior Director Vollmer, and the City staff for their hard work in developing the study, noting their efforts were deeply appreciated.

**Recommendation: Introduction/Adoption pending revised draft on Regular Agenda on 10/7/2024.**

**C. ITEMS FROM THE CITY ATTORNEY:****Returning for further discussion (First Reading held September 16, 2024)**

[ORD-0054-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE TO ADOPT AMENDMENTS TO PART FIVE GENERAL OFFENSES CODE SECTIONS OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF GAHANNA; TO PROVIDE FOR PENALTIES; TO PROVIDE FOR CODIFICATION; TO PROVIDE FOR SEVERABILITY; TO REPEAL CONFLICTING ORDINANCES; TO PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE DATE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Vice President Weaver introduced further discussion regarding an ordinance adopting amendments to the General Offenses Code, noting that the first reading occurred on September 16, 2024.

City Attorney Tamilarasan provided clarification on questions raised during the first Committee of the Whole discussion about the disruption of a lawful meeting ordinance. She explained that the updates reflected changes in the state code following the passage of Senate Bill 288 in April 2023, which brought comprehensive reforms to criminal statutes. One key update was the elevation of offenses involving the disruption of religious worship to a misdemeanor of the first degree, while all other disruptions remain categorized as misdemeanors of the fourth degree. She explained that the state legislature sets a baseline for protections, and while local ordinances can enhance these protections, they cannot decrease them. The previous code classified all disruptions as misdemeanors of the fourth degree, but the updated state code elevates disruptions of religious worship. City Attorney Tamilarasan recommended mirroring the state code, though she welcomed further discussion or questions.

Councilmember Schnetzer raised a question regarding Section 537.03, which includes specific references to co-workers, spouses, and volunteer firefighters. He asked if there was a specific reason for this detailed language.

City Attorney Tamilarasan clarified that the language simply mirrors updates in the Ohio Revised Code (ORC) and was not specific to Gahanna. The language is intended to ensure the City's code remains in compliance with state law.

Councilmember Schnetzer also pointed out a possible grammatical error in the code under the section on menacing, which referenced "immediately family" instead of "immediate family."

City Attorney Tamilarasan confirmed that the correction would be made.

Vice President Weaver thanked City Attorney Tamilarasan and Assistant City Attorney Roth for their work on the ordinance and confirmed that the ordinance would proceed to the regular agenda on October 7, 2024, with the proposed amendment.

Recommendation: Second Reading/Adoption with proposed amendment to EXHIBIT A on Regular Agenda on 10/7/2024.

**D. ITEMS FROM THE COUNCIL OFFICE:**

**Strategic Plan Steering Committee**

- Council Participation
- Updates to Council

President Bowers noted that she missed announcing at the last regular meeting that the Council has two appointments to the Steering Committee for the Strategic Plan. Earlier in the month, she asked Councilmembers to express their interest in participating on the committee. Bowers thanked those who indicated their interest, commending the Councilmembers for being incredible assets and allies to the community. Bowers then announced that she and Councilmember Schnetzer would serve as the Council designees to the Strategic Plan Steering Committee. She remarked that Schnetzer can be persuasive and was pleased they would be working together on this important initiative. Bowers informed the Council that the first meeting of the Strategic Plan Steering Committee would take place on October 9, 2024. She committed to providing reports to the Council following each meeting, similar to how Councilmembers Renner and Weaver provide reports on CIC (Community Improvement Corporation) meetings. She assured the Council that they would be kept up to date on the developments surrounding the Strategic Plan.

Additionally, President Bowers mentioned that Mr. VanMeter had requested shirt sizes from Councilmembers. Director Vollmer had informed them that bright blue shirts would be available for Councilmembers to wear during public engagement activities. Bowers encouraged the Councilmembers to provide their shirt sizes to Mr. VanMeter so they could be easily identified at public events.

[RES-0035-2024](#)

**A JOINT RESOLUTION AND PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING OCTOBER 6, 2024, AS NATIONAL COACHES DAY IN THE CITY OF GAHANNA**

Councilmember Schnetzer noted that the item was a joint resolution and proclamation with the Mayor. Schnetzer thanked the Council staff for their assistance in preparing the document and expressed hope that everyone had a chance to review it. He explained that the resolution aimed to recognize volunteer coaches at the youth level, particularly in light of National Coaches Day approaching. Schnetzer, who has personal experience as a parent of an 8-year-old and a 10-year-old, highlighted the significant time and effort that volunteer coaches put into providing recreational activities for Gahanna's youth. He stressed the importance of recognizing their contributions, which help make Gahanna an attractive community and a great place to raise a family. Schnetzer invited any recommended edits or additions from the Council and expressed eagerness to move the resolution forward. He noted that they had already received commitments from the Gahanna Junior League (baseball) and the Gahanna Lions Youth Football League, with

additional invitations still outstanding. He asked Mr. VanMeter for any updates.

Mr. VanMeter responded that there were no updates yet on additional organizations, but efforts were continuing with respect to invitations to others.

Councilmember Jones inquired about the Hunters Ridge Seahorses, assuming it was a swim team, to which this was confirmed.

Vice President Weaver humorously added that the Hunters Ridge Seahorses were longtime rivals of the Foxboro Barracudas, and mentioned that he had not only been a swimmer for the Foxboro Barracudas but had also served as a coach at one point.

**Recommendation: Introduction/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 10.7.2024.**

**E. ADJOURNMENT:**

*With no further business before the Committee of the Whole, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:38 p.m.*

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**Jeremy A. VanMeter**  
Clerk of Council

*APPROVED by the Committee of the Whole, this  
day of 2024.*

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**Trenton I. Weaver**  
Chair