



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

Monday, December 9, 2024

7:00 PM

City Hall, Council Chambers

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Vice President of Council Trenton I. Weaver, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. The agenda was published on December 6, 2024. All members were present for the meeting. There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

Vice President Weaver provided a housekeeping update, noting that there would be no regular Council meeting on January 6, 2025. Instead, both the organizational meeting and the regular Council meeting will be held on January 2, 2025. He emphasized this change for calendar purposes and second reading schedules for items discussed during the meeting.

B. ITEMS FROM THE PARKS & RECREATION BOARD:

RES-0046-2024 A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION 2025 PRICING POLICY AS RECOMMENDED BY THE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD

Director of Parks & Recreation, Stephania Ferrell, introduced the item regarding the 2025 pricing policy for the Parks and Recreation Department. She explained that the pricing policy guides the establishment of fees within the department and is reviewed annually by the Parks and Recreation Board. The requested changes aim to better define the process for makeup classes and correct a formatting error within the document. Based on the recommendation from the Parks and Recreation Board, the Administration requested a resolution to adopt the updated 2025 pricing policy.

President Bowers inquired about how the pricing policy integrates with the principles of recreation pricing structures and best practices. Director Ferrell elaborated, explaining that the policy aligns with the Parks Master Plan and defines when and how charges should be applied. For example, open park spaces, which provide complete community benefits, remain accessible without associated costs, as they are subsidized for inclusivity. Conversely, services such as a round of golf, which provide individual benefits, are priced

to achieve cost recovery or generate revenue. The policy incorporates a pyramid structure outlining the spectrum of services, ranging from full community benefits to individual benefit services.

Councilmember Jones sought clarification on the proposed changes, confirming that there were no major changes to the policy based on the redlined document. Director Ferrell affirmed this understanding.

Recommendation: Introduction/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 12/16/2024.

C. ITEMS FROM THE LANDSCAPE BOARD:

RES-0047-2024 A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2025 COMPREHENSIVE LANDSCAPE PLAN FOR THE CITY OF GAHANNA

Director Ferrell discussed the proposed resolution for the adoption of the 2025 Comprehensive Landscape Plan. She explained that the plan, typically reviewed by the Landscape Board every three years, was being expedited to incorporate the Bee City USA designation. This designation, reinstated through the efforts of the City's forester and horticulturist, requires a board to advocate for the program's principles, and the Landscape Board is best suited to fulfill these responsibilities. The updated plan also includes a recommended tree list, which provides options based on tree size while emphasizing the principle of planting the right tree in the right location.

Councilmember McGregor raised a concern about large trees on the approved tree list being recommended for smaller tree lawns, such as those with only 8 feet of space. Director Ferrell clarified that the principle of "right tree, right place" ensures that not all trees on the list are suitable for every location.

Councilmember Jones inquired about the removal of language related to property owner responsibilities for street trees. Director Ferrell explained that these changes were intended to align with anticipated updates to City code, as the City would like to assume responsibility for trees within the right-of-way. This shift is anticipated to improve clarity and eliminate the need for further amendments to the document.

President Bowers commended the department and staff for advancing the plan, noting that it reflects the department's values through its emphasis on sustainable practices, integration with the street tree program, and commitment to the Bee City USA designation.

Vice President Weaver asked about the Bee City USA committee's commitments outlined in the plan. Director Ferrell explained that the committee's responsibilities include expanding pollinator education, promoting understanding of pollinators' importance, and providing related resources to residents. The Landscape Board would serve as the conduit for these educational opportunities.

Recommendation: Introduction/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 12/16/2024.

D. ITEMS FROM THE COUNCIL OFFICE:2024-0249

Council Resolutions Calendar 2025

Vice President Weaver noted a list of various recognitions by month that Clerk VanMeter had distributed to the Council. Clerk VanMeter explained that the list included resolutions and recognitions that had previously been passed by the Council, as indicated by bolded entries, and was shared for Council's initial review and input for the upcoming year.

President Bowers clarified that this meeting was not the final opportunity to provide input on the list and emphasized that the document was not a commitment to pursue all listed recognitions. She noted the importance of balancing meeting agendas to ensure proper recognition without overwhelming any single session. Bowers invited Councilmembers to share additional suggestions or priorities with Clerk VanMeter, referencing emails received throughout the year regarding potential recognitions.

Vice President Weaver added that resolutions are a meaningful way to honor and celebrate the community's members and diversity, emphasizing that the list was not exhaustive and that Council could address additional opportunities as they arise during the year.

Councilmember Jones highlighted the upcoming SRO (School Resource Officer) Appreciation Day in February, suggesting it might be worthwhile to consider including recognizing this day due to it being honored early in the year.

E. ITEMS FROM THE SENIOR DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES:ORD-0093-2024**AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ACCEPT AND EXECUTE PROPOSAL FOR ANCILLARY EMPLOYEE BENEFITS THROUGH METLIFE; WAIVING SECOND READING AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY**

Miranda Vollmer, Senior Director of Administrative Services, presented an ordinance requesting authorization for the City to sign the MetLife employee benefits proposal. She explained that earlier in the year, the City issued a Request for Quotes for a benefits consultant in alignment with procurement policy, selecting NFP to conduct an initial review of employee benefits. Following this review, an RFP was conducted for ancillary benefit lines, with MetLife ultimately selected to provide services including basic life, AD&D, supplemental term life, supplemental dependent life, and employer-sponsored dental and vision plans. The total estimated cost for these benefits is \$350,000 annually, representing a \$55,000 savings over 2024 rates. Additionally, the City plans to implement a City-funded short-term disability program at an estimated cost of \$65,000 annually. The ordinance was requested on an emergency basis to ensure no gap in employee benefit coverage starting January 1, 2025. All funding for these programs is included in the proposed 2025 budget.

Councilmember Jones inquired about the contract term with MetLife. Director Vollmer explained that the terms vary by line, with dental guaranteed for three years with capped increases, vision for two years, and group life and AD&D for two years. Non-employer-provided ancillary lines are guaranteed for three years. Councilmember Jones confirmed that MetLife will provide services for at least two to three years.

President Bowers requested clarification on the financial implications of the short-term disability program in relation to sick leave. Director Vollmer explained that employees can file claims with MetLife without needing to exhaust their sick leave. The program provides 60% of weekly wages, up to a maximum benefit of \$1,500, for a 13-week period. Employees may choose to supplement this amount with their sick leave to receive 100% of their pay without fully depleting their leave hours. She also noted that while OPERS pensions are fully covered by the employer during short-term disability, employees under OP&F must submit their contribution if they wish to maintain their pension.

President Bowers asked whether employees could blend sick leave with short-term disability benefits. Director Vollmer confirmed this, explaining that employees could use short-term disability for 60% of their wages and supplement the remaining 40% with sick leave to receive full pay while conserving leave hours. She emphasized that this option allows employees to maintain their earnings without exhausting their accrued leave.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading/Waiver of Second Reading and Emergency Adoption on Regular Agenda on 12/16/2024.

[ORD-0094-2024](#)

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO A BARGAINING UNIT AGREEMENT FOR THE FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE, CAPITAL CITY LODGE NO. 9 FOR THE PERIOD OF JANUARY 1, 2025, THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2027; WAIVING SECOND READING AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY

Director Vollmer presented an ordinance requesting authorization for the City to approve the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) contract for the years 2025 through 2027. She expressed excitement on behalf of Mayor Jadwin, Director Becker, and Chief Spence that the FOP had unanimously voted in favor of the tentative agreement reached shortly before Thanksgiving. The ordinance was requested on an emergency basis to ensure the contract would take effect on January 1, 2025. Director Vollmer provided an overview of the agreement's highlights, noting that it primarily focused on wages, payroll adjustments, and wellness initiatives. The wage increase was set at 4.5% annually, adding an estimated \$1.9 million to police payroll over three years. Significant changes included the removal of 7th-day automatic double-time pay, the reduction of sick leave to 120 hours per year with the removal of accrual tiers, the elimination of sick leave payouts upon resignation (now reserved for retirement), and the replacement of major medical leave with short-term disability. Paid parental leave was also introduced.

Chief Spence provided details about the new mental wellness initiative included in the contract. This program mandates biannual 30- to 45-minute wellness visits with culturally competent Master's level behavioral health experts. These sessions aim to address work or personal stressors, enhance coping skills, and provide access to mental health resources. Chief Spence emphasized the importance of the program, noting that police officers experience a 54% higher suicide rate than the general population. He highlighted national and local benefits, including decreased time off, improved morale, fewer citizen complaints, and more positive citizen interactions. The program records attendance and broad, non-identifiable themes to guide internal educational efforts.

Councilmember Jones expressed gratitude for the inclusion of the mental health initiative and confirmed that employees still have access to other Employee Assistance Program (EAP) resources.

Chief Spence noted that this was the first time in his 33 years that a contract with the FOP was finalized before its expiration, with both bargaining units within the City accepting the agreement.

Vice President Weaver inquired about the budgetary impact of the wage increases. Director Vollmer explained that Director Bury had accounted for a 4% increase in the initial budget and incorporated the additional 0.5% in the amended budget request.

President Bowers and Vice President Weaver commended the administration and team for their efforts in completing the contract in a timely and collaborative manner.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading/Waiver of Second Reading and Emergency Adoption on Regular Agenda on 12/16/2024.

F. ITEMS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

[ORD-0095-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH THE GAHANNA COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION (CIC) FOR A TERM BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2025, THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2025, TO PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY FOR THE CITY; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY

Senior Director of Operations Kevin Schultz presented the annual agreement between the City and the Community Improvement Corporation (CIC) for 2025. Schultz explained that this agreement, which is reviewed annually, directly ties to the allocation discussed during the recent budget conversations. The purpose of the agreement is to promote and encourage economic activity throughout the City. The allocated funds are primarily used for the maintenance and management of properties owned by the CIC. Schultz noted that the agreement was adjusted in the previous year to include a more refined list of permissible uses for the funds. The agreement remains largely unchanged, aside from updates to terms. Schultz noted the City Attorney had reviewed and approved the agreement's form. The

Department of Economic Development respectfully requested an ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into the agreement, along with an emergency clause to ensure it takes effect promptly.

Vice President Weaver clarified that a waiver was not being requested for this item. Mayor Jadwin confirmed this, noting that the regular Council meeting scheduled for January 2, 2025, following the organizational meeting, would serve as the second reading. With the emergency clause, the agreement could take effect in January as planned.

Mayor Jadwin identified a correction to the agreement, which had been discussed with the City Attorney before the meeting. The amendment pertained to the placement of a specific paragraph under Section 3, "City of Gahanna Obligations." The City Attorney recommended moving paragraph three, which outlines the reimbursement process for the CIC, to Section 2, "CIC Obligations," as a new subparagraph 7. This change aligns the language with the CIC's responsibilities. Paragraph 7 in Section 2 would then become paragraph 8. The Mayor assured Council that the amended agreement would be sent promptly.

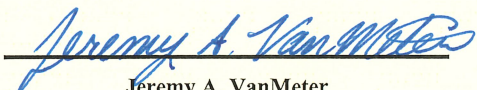
City Attorney Tamilarasan confirmed that the proposed change clarified the CIC's obligations and resolved concerns about potential conflicting language. She noted that this adjustment would make the reimbursement structure clear.

Vice President Weaver inquired about the timeline for incorporating the amended agreement into the agenda. Clerk of Council Jeremy VanMeter confirmed that the updated document could be included as long as it was received before the agenda's publication. Mayor Jadwin committed to sending the updated agreement the following morning.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 12/16/2024; Second Reading/Emergency Adoption on Regular Agenda on 1/2/2025.

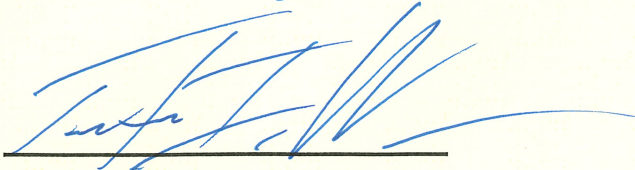
G. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Committee of the Whole, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 7:32 p.m.



Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

APPROVED by the Committee of the Whole, this
16 day of Dec. 2024.



Trenton I. Weaver
Chair