



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Committee of the Whole

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

Jamille Jones, Chair
Merisa K. Bowers
Nancy R. McGregor
Kaylee Padova
Stephen A. Renner
Michael Schnetzer
Trenton I. Weaver

Jeremy A. VanMeter, Clerk of Council

Monday, June 15, 2026

City Hall, Council Chambers

Immediately following the regular City Council meeting beginning at 7:00 PM

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Gahanna City Council met for Committee of the Whole on Monday, June 15, 2026, in Council Chambers. Vice President of Council Jamille Jones, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:29 p.m. The agenda was published on Friday, June 12, 2026. President Trenton I. Weaver was absent. All other members were present at the meeting. There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

B. ITEMS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION:

[RES-0023-2026](#)

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH PLAYCORE WISCONSIN INC. DBA GAMETIME FOR THE PURCHASE AND INSTALLATION OF A NEW PLAYGROUND AT FRIENDSHIP PARK

Stephania Ferrell, Director of Parks and Recreation, presented three items for Council's consideration. She introduced the first item, a resolution authorizing the Mayor to enter into an agreement with PlayCore, doing business as GameTime, for the replacement of the Friendship Park playground. Director Ferrell stated that the Friendship Park playground would become the fifth playground in the park system to be replaced since 2021, consistent with the outcomes identified in the Parks Master Plan and referenced in the Capital Improvement Plan. She recognized Project Manager Zac Guthrie for leading an extensive public engagement process throughout the project. Director Ferrell explained that Friendship Park ranked among the City's most visited parks, serving

both daily visitors and one of the City's largest summer camps, as well as hosting special events. She said the engagement process included public surveys, focus groups with Gahanna-Jefferson educators, and interviews with individuals who experience inclusive and accessible play. She stated that the feedback guided the development of a playground design that intentionally supported play opportunities for individuals of all needs and interests. Director Ferrell reported that Mr. Guthrie and Management Analyst Sean Bock secured assistance through the Ohio Parks and Recreation State Initiative Program, a partnership with GameTime that significantly reduced the cost of several major playground features. She also noted that the project received funding from the Gahanna Kiwanis Club and the Parks and Recreation Foundation, with the Foundation funding request appearing as a subsequent action item. She explained that the project would use the OMNIA cooperative purchasing agreement for the purchase and installation of the playground. Director Ferrell requested approval of the resolution authorizing the Mayor to enter into the agreement with PlayCore and offered to answer questions.

Councilmember Padova thanked Director Ferrell for providing the playground renderings and shared that the project generated significant interest during a recent birthday party at Friendship Park. She asked whether the fence shown in the renderings would fully enclose the playground because the images appeared to show gaps. Director Ferrell clarified that the fence would surround the entire playground and explained that the renderings omitted portions of the fence to better display the playground equipment. She said the fully enclosed design intentionally addressed feedback received during the engagement process by helping prevent children of any age or ability from leaving the playground unexpectedly, while reducing access points and allowing parents and caregivers to supervise more comfortably. Councilmember Padova said the explanation answered her question. She commented that the enclosed design at the Blendon Woods inclusive playground had proven successful, particularly for families with children of different ages. She stated that the renderings and Director Ferrell's explanation demonstrated thoughtful planning and careful consideration of community feedback. She added that she believed the playground would receive significant use and thanked Director Ferrell. Director Ferrell noted that Blendon Woods had coordinated with Jeremiah's Corner and said the City also consulted through those efforts to better understand the features

of a truly inclusive playground. She stated that the goal extended beyond accessibility compliance to creating a playground that functioned as genuinely inclusive.

Vice President Jones expressed enthusiasm for the project and asked Director Ferrell to highlight some of the playground's inclusive features. Director Ferrell explained that the design included wider ramps to allow caregivers and individuals to travel side by side, a primarily poured-in-place play surface to improve mobility for individuals using wheels or requiring greater accessibility, intentionally selected colors for individuals with difficulty distinguishing certain colors, and ground-level play features that allowed participation without climbing to elevated areas. She said the design incorporated many intentional features to accommodate a variety of needs. Vice President Jones expressed appreciation for the shaded play area and asked when the existing playground had been installed. Director Ferrell responded that the current playground had been installed in 2007, noting that the playground had reached the end of its useful life.

After confirming there were no further questions, Vice President Jones stated that Council would place the resolution on the July 6 consent agenda and invited Director Ferrell to proceed with her second item.

Recommendation: Introduction/Vote on Consent Agenda on 7/6/2026.

[ORD-0022-2026](#) AN ORDINANCE MAKING SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS AND WAIVING SECOND READING - Capital Improvement Fund for the Friendship Park Playground Replacement Project

Director Ferrell presented the second item, explaining that the Parks and Recreation Foundation had pledged \$25,000 toward the replacement of the Friendship Park playground. She stated that, upon receipt, the funds would be deposited into the Capital Improvement Fund and returned to the unencumbered, unappropriated balance. She requested an ordinance authorizing a supplemental appropriation of \$25,000 from the Capital Improvement Fund to the Friendship Park Playground Fund. Director Ferrell also requested a waiver so that the contract authorization and supplemental appropriation could proceed simultaneously.

Vice President Jones asked whether Council had any questions. Hearing none, she stated that the ordinance, with the requested waiver, would appear on the July 6 regular meeting agenda. She then invited Director

Ferrell to present the next item.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading with Waiver of Second Reading/Vote on Regular Agenda on 7/6/2026.

[RES-0024-2026](#)

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH MIDSTATES RECREATION FOR THE PURCHASE AND INSTALLATION OF A NEW PLAYGROUND AT ASHBURNHAM PARK

Director Ferrell presented the final item, a resolution authorizing the Mayor to enter into an agreement with Midstates Recreation for the replacement of the playground at Ashburnham Park. She stated that Zac Guthrie also served as the project manager for this project and recognized his contributions. Director Ferrell explained that Ashburnham Park served as a neighborhood playground, so the outreach efforts focused on nearby residents to gather feedback from those most likely to use the playground. She said that feedback, together with the adjacent nature play area and nature path, inspired the playground's design. She also noted that the existing playground equipment offered limited play opportunities and engagement. She stated that the new design included a variety of features intended to encourage imaginative play and maintain children's interest. Director Ferrell requested approval of the resolution authorizing the Mayor to enter into an agreement with Midstates Recreation for the purchase and installation of the Ashburnham playground.

Councilmember Padova asked whether the anticipated installation schedule for the Ashburnham playground matched the fall installation timeline discussed for the Friendship Park playground. Director Ferrell responded that the Administration hoped to install both playgrounds in the fall. She explained that work at Friendship Park would begin after the summer season to avoid disrupting summer camp operations. She also noted that equipment delivery remained a factor, with an estimated delivery time of eight to twelve weeks, although the schedule could vary. In addition, she explained that installation of the poured playground surface at Friendship Park required temperatures of at least 50 degrees and rising. She contrasted that with the Ashburnham playground, which would use an engineered wood fiber surface that allowed greater flexibility during installation. Director Ferrell concluded that the Administration anticipated installing both playgrounds in the fall, depending on equipment delivery and weather conditions.

Vice President Jones asked whether Council had any additional questions. Hearing none, she stated that the resolution would appear on the July 6 consent agenda and thanked Director Ferrell.

Recommendation: Introduction/Vote on Consent Agenda on 7/6/2026.

C. ITEMS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

[ORD-0023-2026](#) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO A COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT AREA AGREEMENT WITH DEFFENBAUGH FLEX, LLC FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A FLEX OFFICE/INDUSTRIAL BUILDING ON PARCEL NO. 025-014174-00, PART OF COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT AREA NO. 1

Jeff Gottke, Director of Economic Development, presented a request for a Community Reinvestment Area (CRA) tax abatement for a project involving Pioneer Development. He noted that recent changes in state law affected the confidentiality of tax abatement applications and stated that the applicant had signed a waiver, allowing all information regarding the application to be discussed publicly. Director Gottke explained that a property tax abatement represented a discount on future taxes and described it as an investment by both the company and the City. He stated that tax abatements served not only to address companies' financial needs but also to advance the City's strategic goals. He characterized the agreement as a negotiated business arrangement in which both parties sought to achieve their objectives while minimizing risk. He explained that, although risk could not be eliminated, the City reduced it through various measurements and verification processes to ensure the agreement provided the best possible outcome for the City. Director Gottke outlined the presentation, stating that it would include an introduction to the project and company representative, a discussion of the proposed agreement, an overview of the project's benefits to the City, and an explanation of how the City had minimized risk.

Director Gottke explained that the applicant consisted of a joint venture between Pioneer Development and Francis Family Investments, the family that owns Suburban Steel. He described both organizations as local entities and noted that Pioneer Development had successfully completed multiple projects totaling more than 400,000 square feet since its formation in 2021. He stated that the company operated exclusively within the Columbus region. Director Gottke reviewed the project details,

stating that the approximately 3.9-acre site lay southwest of Suburban Steel near Eastgate Parkway, Deffenbaugh Court, and the railroad tracks, with access from Deffenbaugh Court. He explained that the proposal included construction of a 35,000-square-foot flex industrial building that could accommodate tenant spaces ranging from 8,000 to 35,000 square feet. Director Gottke described flex industrial space as a hybrid office and workspace building that provided highly customizable tenant layouts. He explained that the office component would occupy approximately 10 to 25 percent of each tenant space, while the workspace would occupy the rear portion. Each tenant space would include both a loading dock and a drive-in door to support shipping and transportation needs. He stated that the office frontage created an attractive appearance while the rear maintained a functional industrial design. He added that the building's flexible construction allowed tenants to expand into adjacent spaces and supported future adaptability by avoiding highly specialized uses that would prove difficult to repurpose. Director Gottke stated that the project targeted tenants such as small-scale office headquarters, research and development firms, engineering companies, advanced or light manufacturers, technology manufacturers, material suppliers, contractors, showrooms, startups, and companies establishing an initial presence before making larger investments. He noted that Pioneer Development had successfully attracted these types of tenants in previous projects, demonstrating market demand. He also explained that the building would not accommodate large-scale distribution, heavy manufacturing, or storage operations because of the site's size, design, and physical constraints. He stated that the property's characteristics limited other development opportunities.

Director Gottke introduced David Sells, a partner with Pioneer Development, and invited him to provide additional information about the project before Council asked questions. Dave Sells introduced himself and stated that the proposed project reflected Pioneer Development's focus on light industrial flex-space development. He explained that, while industrial development following the COVID-19 pandemic largely consisted of large distribution, e-commerce, logistics, and storage facilities exceeding 50,000 square feet, Pioneer Development recognized an underserved market for smaller tenants requiring between 5,000 and 20,000 square feet. Mr. Sells stated that Pioneer Development began its first Columbus-area project in Marysville in 2023.

He reported that the company had completed six buildings of this type over the previous three years and had worked with approximately 20 businesses throughout the region. He noted that the buildings leased quickly and that vacancy rates for this product type remained below three percent despite additional regional development, indicating sustained demand and limited supply. Mr. Sells explained that Pioneer Development focused on developing vacant, overlooked sites in communities including Marysville, Grove City, Plain City, Delaware, and areas near the Columbus airport. He stated that many of these sites had remained undeveloped for decades because of their small size, irregular shapes, wetlands, or other development challenges and had generated no tax revenue. He explained that the compact design of flex industrial buildings required less land for truck courts, trailer parking, and similar industrial features, making development feasible on such properties. Mr. Sells stated that partnerships with municipalities, economic development organizations, and JobsOhio had helped attract businesses that generally employed more office staff and created more jobs than traditional warehouse or storage operations. He added that many of those businesses had established permanent roots within their communities and expanded rather than relocating elsewhere.

Mr. Sells described the proposed Gahanna site as another overlooked property with development challenges due to its size and dimensions. He stated that Pioneer Development believed the project represented the highest and best use of the site while introducing a product type that had not yet been developed in Gahanna but continued to experience strong market demand. Mr. Sells addressed questions regarding speculative development by explaining that tenants for this type of project typically committed to space within six months. He stated that Pioneer Development had worked with international companies establishing their first United States locations, local businesses expanding operations, and regional companies entering the Columbus market. He explained that constructing the building before securing tenants enabled communities such as Gahanna to compete for businesses seeking immediate occupancy and create additional employment opportunities. Mr. Sells concluded by stating that tax abatements played an important role in making projects on challenging sites financially feasible. He explained that higher development costs associated with small sites, including utility connections, tap fees, stormwater detention, and the lack of economies of scale, often prevented development without incentives. He stated that

the resulting property tax savings ultimately benefited tenants by reducing occupancy costs. Mr. Sells thanked Council for its time, consideration, and support and invited questions.

Questions from Council

Councilmember Bowers asked Dave Sells to describe Pioneer Development's relationship to its previously completed projects and whether the company retained ownership after construction. Mr. Sells explained that Pioneer Development's core business model involved owning, operating, and managing its properties through its property management division. He stated that the company intended to own and operate the proposed building on a long-term basis and did not intend to assign or transfer ownership to another entity. Councilmember Bowers asked Mr. Sells to provide additional information about the types of tenants the project would attract. Mr. Sells explained that the building would accommodate multiple tenants through a flexible design that allowed a variety of suite sizes. He stated that Pioneer Development constructed the building as an open shell with infrastructure designed to support multiple configurations before customizing each space to meet individual tenant needs. He identified regional technology service providers, contractors, and small manufacturers as typical tenants. He described examples from previous projects, including a regional technology company that combined office staff with warehouse space for service operations and a Japanese automotive supplier that established its first United States location in Ohio using a similar office and manufacturing layout. He stated that the typical tenant combined front-office functions with warehouse space for equipment, machining, or materials.

Councilmember Bowers asked how Pioneer Development estimated the projected job creation and average wages for speculative tenants. Mr. Sells explained that the estimates reflected the company's experience with similar projects. He contrasted the proposed flex-space buildings with traditional distribution facilities, noting that distribution facilities generally employed fewer people because of their operational model. He stated that flex-space tenants typically devoted approximately 20 percent of their space to offices and averaged one-half full-time employee per 1,000 square feet. He explained that the estimate excluded

lower-employment uses such as storage facilities and recreational uses. Mr. Sells stated that the projected average annual wage of \$55,000 reflected wage levels from comparable projects and broader labor market data for similar occupations. Councilmember Bowers confirmed her understanding that the guaranteed payroll for the life of the abatement totaled just under \$10.5 million and asked whether Deffenbaugh Flex LLC, Pioneer Development, and Francis Family Investments guaranteed that amount. Mr. Sells confirmed that understanding and explained that the project owners had to generate the required payroll to remain in compliance with the abatement agreement. He stated that annual reporting verified compliance and that the owners would remain responsible for covering any payroll shortfall necessary to maintain the abatement. Councilmember Bowers asked whether Pioneer Development considered the projected payroll when selecting tenants, and Mr. Sells confirmed that it did. Councilmember Bowers asked Mr. Sells to explain the financial gap analysis and why the incentive remained necessary for the project. Mr. Sells stated that the project's financial feasibility depended on balancing construction costs, a reasonable return on investment, and market lease rates. He explained that Pioneer Development projected lease rates between \$12.00 and \$12.50 per square foot, with operating expenses of approximately \$1.50 to \$2.00 per square foot, including taxes, insurance, snow removal, landscaping, and property maintenance. He stated that the proposed rates reflected current market conditions and supported construction of modern, energy-efficient facilities. He explained that, without the tax abatement, property taxes would increase tenant costs by approximately \$2.50 to \$3.00 per square foot, resulting in an additional annual cost of roughly \$30,000 for a 10,000-square-foot tenant compared to similar facilities in surrounding communities. Mr. Sells stated that neither Pioneer Development nor prospective tenants could absorb those additional costs while remaining competitive. Councilmember Bowers stated that she had no further questions for Mr. Sells but intended to ask additional questions of Director Gottke and City Attorney Tamilarasan.

Councilmember Padova asked Mr. Sells what prompted Pioneer Development to pursue a project in Gahanna. Mr. Sells explained that the Columbus region continued to experience strong economic growth and demand for flex-space buildings, but Gahanna lacked that type of product. He stated that no available buildings in Gahanna offered approximately 8,000 square feet with loading docks, drive-in doors, and

flexible office space. He explained that existing Gahanna businesses had limited opportunities to expand within the City and shared an example of a New Albany business whose owners lived in Gahanna and wanted to relocate but could not find suitable space. Mr. Sells stated that Gahanna's location, business climate, and demand made it well positioned to compete for these users if appropriate facilities became available. Councilmember Padova thanked Mr. Sells for his presentation and expressed appreciation for discussing the proposal publicly.

Councilmember Bowers asked whether Pioneer Development had disclosed any pending litigation involving municipalities or development projects on its application and whether the company currently participated in any active litigation with another municipality. Mr. Sells confirmed that the company was not involved in litigation with another municipality.

Terms of the Proposed Agreement (continued presentation)

Vice President Jones invited Director Gottke to continue his presentation. Councilmember Bowers indicated that she had several questions, and Director Gottke stated that the remainder of his presentation might address some of them.

Director Gottke reviewed the proposed terms of the Community Reinvestment Area agreement and explained that the agreement followed the City's standard structure with few modifications. He stated that the proposal included a 75 percent tax abatement for 10 years and a two-year period for the company to reach the minimum payroll requirement. He reiterated that the financial benefit of the abatement would help keep lease rates affordable and competitive for tenants. Director Gottke stated that, in return, the City would receive approximately \$4.9 million in new private investment, regardless of ownership or tenancy, as well as the projected 18 new jobs, the guaranteed minimum payroll, the required annual salary level, annual contributions to the Community Improvement Corporation to support economic development, and assignability provisions that he planned to discuss later. Director Gottke explained that he established the projected salary requirement by reviewing the types of jobs expected to occupy the building and selecting conservative regional wage estimates for

production, office, and related positions. He stated that he intentionally underpromised and expected actual salaries to exceed the required minimum.

Councilmember Renner asked about the proposed annual contribution to the Community Improvement Corporation, noting that he had not seen such a provision in previous agreements. Director Gottke explained that the requirement represented a new provision. He stated that previous agreements had directed certain payments to the Chamber of Commerce, but he believed the Community Improvement Corporation's mission aligned more closely with the City's economic development efforts and Council's goals. He acknowledged that other organizations also contributed to economic development but stated that the Community Improvement Corporation most directly supported that work. He explained that the provision would establish a guaranteed minimum revenue stream for the Community Improvement Corporation and stated that he intended to include similar provisions in future agreements to help support the organization's long-term financial stability. Councilmember Renner asked how the parties determined the annual contribution amount of \$1,000. Director Gottke explained that the amount resulted from negotiations between the parties. He stated that the original proposal had included a higher amount, but both parties ultimately agreed that \$1,000 represented an acceptable compromise while maintaining the overall affordability of the project.

Councilmember Bowers asked whether the contribution would pass through the City or go directly to the Community Improvement Corporation and noted her interest in the provision's transparency and enforceability. Director Gottke responded that the company would make the payment directly to the Community Improvement Corporation and that the City would verify the payment as part of the annual reporting requirements, along with employment and payroll information. He stated that the agreement identified failure to make the payment as a material breach of the agreement and explained that the information would become part of the Tax Incentive Review Council's calculations and recommendations to Council. City Attorney Tamilarasan added that contributions to community improvement corporations commonly appeared in economic development agreements throughout neighboring Franklin County communities, although Gahanna had not historically

included such a provision. Mayor Jadwin thanked City Attorney Tamilarasan and asked Director Gottke to explain how he developed the provision, noting feedback received from Our Gahanna and research conducted in neighboring communities. Director Gottke responded that both the community feedback and regional practices informed the proposal and reiterated that similar community support payments were common throughout the region. Councilmember Bowers observed that the consequence of failing to make the required contribution would be a material breach of the agreement and the potential loss of the tax abatement rather than collection efforts by the Community Improvement Corporation. Mayor Jadwin confirmed that nonpayment would constitute a material breach of the contract and could result in the loss of the abatement.

Director Gottke concluded his presentation by reviewing the project's anticipated benefits to the City. He stated that the proposal aligned with Gahanna's economic development strategy by promoting infill development and maximizing the value of the City's limited remaining developable land. He reviewed the City's value-per-acre calculation, which measured annual fiscal returns through income tax withholdings, tax increment financing payments, payments in lieu of taxes, NCA fees, service charges, and similar revenues divided by parcel acreage. He stated that post-1994 abatements averaged slightly more than \$300,000 per acre and explained that the proposed project qualified as a Tier Three project, which specifically included smaller flex-industrial developments with office components. He noted that the City's target range measured between approximately \$200,000 and \$350,000 per acre and stated that the project fit within that framework. Director Gottke explained that the project would generate a net positive fiscal impact of more than \$366,000 over the life of the abatement. He stated that the projected job density aligned with comparable regional projects and that the guaranteed average annual salary of \$55,000 exceeded the approximately \$48,000 regional average for similar positions. He added that the project addressed demonstrated market demand, citing vacancy rates below three percent compared with the five percent vacancy rate generally considered healthy for the market. He also stated that the proposal efficiently utilized a previously overlooked site, matched the surrounding area and market demand, and included local ownership through an existing Gahanna business. Director Gottke emphasized that the owners had already invested in the City and stated that Council

should consider that factor when evaluating the proposal.

Director Gottke then summarized the Administration's risk reduction process. He explained that the review included both quantitative and qualitative evaluations and referenced a summary sheet he had distributed to Council. He stated that the quantitative evaluation verified projected income tax collections, confirmed that the requested abatement met only the demonstrated "but for" need, recognized the market demand for the proposed product type, and addressed assignment provisions within the agreement. He explained that administrative approval would continue to apply to ownership changes resulting from mergers or internal corporate restructuring because those changes would not materially alter the agreement. He stated that Council approval would apply when the property changed ownership because a new owner and operator would materially affect the agreement. He added that administrative approval could also apply if a new owner agreed to all existing terms and satisfied the same verification requirements already approved by Council. Director Gottke described the qualitative evaluation process, which examined governance structure, project completion viability, and regulatory compliance and financial capacity. He explained that the governance review included articles of incorporation, Secretary of State filings, organizational charts, and similar documentation to evaluate legal accountability and responsiveness. He reported that the applicant received the highest rating in that category.

Director Gottke stated that the completion viability review considered management experience, company performance, successful completion of comparable projects, and similar factors. He explained that he personally visited completed projects in other communities and contacted his counterparts in those municipalities to verify the company's performance and project quality. He reported that several communities had offered to provide letters of support for Pioneer Development because of their positive experiences with the company. Director Gottke explained that the regulatory compliance and financial review examined pending litigation, Environmental Protection Agency violations, tax delinquencies, previous defaults on municipal agreements, debarment lists where applicable, bankruptcies, owner equity, debt service coverage ratios, and other financial measures to confirm the company's ability to complete and sustain the project. He stated that the

Administration rated each category using four levels: high, average, at risk, and unacceptable. Based on those evaluations, he concluded that the project presented a low risk of default or non-completion and rated it as highly likely to succeed. Director Gottke also described a community benefits evaluation that awarded additional consideration for project features supporting City priorities. He stated that the proposed project received additional credit for above-average payroll, development within a priority area, local ownership, and a demonstrated "but for" need. He added that future evaluations could also recognize enhanced architectural design, sustainable building practices, enhanced employee benefits, and similar community benefits. Director Gottke concluded his presentation by recommending an approval calendar with first reading on July 6, and second reading and adoption on July 20, 2026. He then invited questions from Council.

Additional Questions from Council

Councilmember Padova asked Director Gottke to clarify whether the proposed agreement required Council approval if the building changed ownership during the abatement period. Director Gottke explained that the agreement included an exhibit establishing the criteria a purchaser would have to satisfy in order to receive administrative approval of an assignment. He stated that any deviation from those criteria would require Council approval because it would constitute a new agreement. Councilmember Padova asked whether a purchaser's lack of an existing business in Gahanna would constitute a deviation. Director Gottke responded that it would not because the community benefits category did not factor into that determination. Councilmember Padova confirmed her understanding that administrative approval would apply if all required criteria remained the same and that Council would review any assignment involving changes. Director Gottke agreed and noted that tax abatements typically remained with the building for the duration of the abatement period. Councilmember Padova asked whether that practice was common. Director Gottke explained that the Ohio Revised Code did not prescribe a specific approach and that communities handled assignments differently. He stated that most communities required Council approval when the terms of the agreement materially changed. Councilmember Padova observed that the original recipient assumed the construction costs and investment risk associated with developing

the property, while a subsequent purchaser would acquire a completed building. Director Gottke responded that a purchaser also assumed the financial obligations associated with owning the building.

Councilmember Padova stated that she appreciated the requirement for Council review whenever an assignment differed from the original qualifications and noted that previous abatement agreements had not included similar provisions. Director Gottke explained that some existing agreements did not address property sales and stated that the Administration intended to establish clear expectations for future agreements.

Councilmember Bowers stated that she shared Councilmember Padova's concerns and asked why Council should not simply delegate approval authority for tax abatements to the Department of Economic Development if the proposed evaluation criteria governed the decision. Director Gottke responded that Council could choose that approach but stated that financial decisions involving City resources appropriately remained within Council's authority. Councilmember Bowers stated that she opposed allowing administrative approval for assignments involving arm's-length sales of properties. She explained that Council review promoted transparency by allowing residents to hear directly from new owners, understand the "but for" justification, and evaluate the community benefits supporting the incentive. She referenced a previous tax abatement request that had received divided Council support and stated that Council should continue reviewing ownership changes involving arm's-length transactions. Director Gottke recalled prior discussions regarding additional transparency measures and asked the City Attorney whether the Administration had discussed reporting administratively approved assignments to Council. City Attorney Tamilarasan confirmed that the Administration had discussed creating additional transparency or accountability measures for transfers but stated that the current agreement did not include that language. Director Gottke stated that he supported adding such a provision and emphasized the importance of transparency, particularly following recent changes to state law governing confidentiality. He also stated that the assignment language represented a procedural issue rather than a negotiated business term and cautioned against rejecting the overall agreement because of a provision the Administration could revise. Councilmember Bowers stated that she supported reporting internal ownership changes or similar administrative transfers to Council but reiterated that arm's-length transactions should

include a mechanism allowing Council to review or terminate the incentive if it no longer aligned with the original intent of the agreement. She asked Director Gottke and the City Attorney to continue refining that process. Councilmember Bowers commended the confidentiality waiver included with the application and asked whether outside counsel or the City Attorney had drafted the document. City Attorney Tamilarasan responded that outside counsel had prepared the waiver. Councilmember Bowers thanked the applicant, outside counsel, Director Gottke, Mayor Jadwin, and the City Attorney for supporting the waiver and stated that transparent public discussion remained essential when considering incentive requests involving public resources.

Councilmember Bowers asked whether the project anticipated requesting tax increment financing or other public development funding. Director Gottke responded that the project itself did not request such funding but stated that a nearby development project could potentially request tax increment financing that might indirectly benefit the proposed development. He emphasized that any such request would relate to the separate project rather than the proposal under consideration. Councilmember Bowers thanked Director Gottke for the additional information and asked whether the completed exhibits referenced in the proposed agreement would be available before first reading. Director Gottke responded that all exhibits had been completed and included with the agreement. Councilmember Bowers noted that the agreement referenced the 2000 School Compensation Agreement and asked whether the Administration had notified the school district even though no legal requirement existed to do so. Mayor Jadwin confirmed that the Administration had provided notice to the district. Councilmember Bowers requested an Excel spreadsheet, or a condensed version, showing the allocation of the foregone property taxes and identifying the entities that would have received those revenues if the taxes had been collected. Director Gottke agreed to provide the information. Councilmember Bowers stated that those responses addressed her remaining questions.

Vice President Jones asked whether Council had any additional questions. Hearing none, she stated that the proposed legislation would proceed to first reading on July 6 and adoption on July 20. She thanked Director Gottke for his presentation, and Director Gottke thanked Council.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 7/6/2026;
Second Reading/Vote on Regular Agenda on 7/20/2026.

D. ITEMS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE:

[ORD-0021-2026](#) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ISSUE A NOTICE OF AWARD AND ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH RUMPKE OF OHIO, INC. FOR RESIDENTIAL WASTE COLLECTION SERVICES

Senior Deputy Director Corey Wybensing presented an action item requesting authorization for the Mayor to issue a Notice of Award and enter into a contract with Rumpke of Ohio for residential waste collection services for the period of January 1, 2027, through December 31, 2031. He explained that the City participated in Consortium 1 through the Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio (SWACO) with several other central Ohio communities. He stated that the consortium reduced administrative burdens, improved responsiveness, and achieved cost savings by conducting a single request for proposals rather than separate procurements for each community. Senior Deputy Director Wybensing stated that the consortium began reviewing waste collection services for the 2027-2031 contract period during the previous fall. After discussions with other consortium members and reviewing Gahanna's current service model, the consortium sought bids to maintain the existing level of service. He reported that the consortium issued the request for proposals in February 2026 and secured pricing for the full five-year term with no annual increases. He stated that three responsive and responsible bids were received in April 2026 and that the evaluation considered price, responsiveness, and responsibility. He explained that the recommended contract reflected an increase of approximately \$3.68 per household per month over current rates, or about \$44.16 annually, while remaining approximately 20 percent below rates paid by many other communities. He noted that the difference between the lowest and second-lowest bids equated to approximately \$79,000 annually, or nearly \$400,000 over the five-year contract term.

Councilmember Padova asked whether Rumpke would use the same style of collection trucks as the City's current provider. Senior Deputy Director Wybensing stated that he believed the fleets would be similar and noted that both companies operated approximately half of their fleets with compressed natural gas vehicles. Councilmember Padova clarified that her concern related to the collection method rather than the fuel source. Senior Deputy Director Wybensing stated that he did not know

the answer and invited Jacob Heffron, Municipal Representative for Rumpke, to respond. Mr. Heffron responded from his seat that it would be a mix and depended on the street. The goal was to have trash in bags and recycling loose.

At Vice President Jones' request, Mr. Heffron approached the podium, introduced himself, and explained that residential front-loader trucks operated with a single employee. He stated that Rumpke typically used those trucks on recycling routes because recycling generally remained inside the carts and could be emptied mechanically. He explained that trash and yard waste routes generally required additional employees because those collections often included material outside the carts. He added that recycling created the greatest potential for loose materials to escape because it remained unbagged and lightweight.

Councilmember Padova expressed concern about litter escaping from collection vehicles and noted that the proposed contract required the collection contractor to immediately remove materials spilled during collection. She referenced contract provision 4.6 authorizing the City to withhold payments after repeated violations but expressed concern that penalties could ultimately increase costs. Mr. Heffron explained that Rumpke assigned one supervisor to approximately every ten drivers and that supervisors monitored routes, addressed resident complaints, and supported drivers. He stated that Rumpke could integrate with the City's Cityworks system, allowing supervisors to receive complaints in real time and respond quickly, as the company already did for several other central Ohio communities.

Councilmember Bowers asked whether residents would continue to contact the vendor directly for customer service. Mr. Heffron stated that residents could contact Rumpke's customer service center in Circleville, which employed approximately 30 staff members, and that the company would include contact information in its communications to residents. He explained that direct communication helped coordinate operations and customer service. Councilmember Bowers asked Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger whether the Administration had considered concerns regarding potential anti-competitive pricing practices in recommending the contract award. Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger acknowledged that similar concerns could arise in any industry but stated that the Administration evaluated the bids based on current pricing, which

still reflected an 18 percent increase over existing rates. He reiterated that the analysis showed approximately \$400,000 in savings for residents over the five-year contract period compared to the next lowest bidder. Councilmember Bowers stated that she recognized the projected savings but remained concerned that changing vendors would not improve service quality, particularly regarding loose recycling materials. She also expressed concern about potential anti-competitive practices and the long-term consistency of service.

Councilmember Schnetzer asked whether weekly collection schedules would remain unchanged. Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger confirmed that collection days would remain the same, with areas north of State Route 62 collected on Mondays and areas south of State Route 62 collected on Tuesdays. Councilmember Schnetzer also asked whether collection containers would change. Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger responded that residents would continue providing their own trash containers, the City would continue providing blue recycling carts, and the contractor would continue providing 95-gallon yard waste containers. Councilmember Schnetzer asked whether bulk collection procedures would change. Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger stated that bulk collection would remain effectively unlimited within reason, excluding unusually large collections such as eviction set-outs or court-ordered cleanouts. He recommended that residents continue notifying the contractor in advance of bulk collections.

Councilmember Padova asked whether the consortium had discussed excluding Martin Luther King Jr. Day from the collection schedule during the bid process. She recalled that residents had previously requested such a change because of the historical significance of sanitation workers' labor actions associated with Dr. King's final days. Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger stated that the issue had not arisen during the procurement process but agreed to discuss potential solutions with both SWACO and Rumpke. Councilmember Padova noted that the contract permitted exceptions to standard operating procedures and encouraged further discussion because of the community's longstanding interest in the issue.

Vice President Jones asked whether Council had any additional questions. Hearing none, she stated that the ordinance would receive its first reading on July 6 and second reading on July 20. She thanked

Senior Deputy Director Wybensing and Mr. Heffron for their presentations.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 7/6/2026; Second Reading/Vote on Regular Agenda on 7/20/2026.

E. ITEMS FROM COUNCILMEMBERS:

Councilmember Weaver:

[RES-0022-2026](#)

A JOINT RESOLUTION AND PROCLAMATION HONORING AND RECOGNIZING KYLEE TIBBS FOR HER BACK-TO-BACK OHSAA STATE WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIPS AND OUTSTANDING ATHLETIC AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

Vice President Jones reminded Council of the joint resolution and proclamation honoring KyLee Tibbs for winning her second consecutive state wrestling championship and announced that Ms. Tibbs would receive the recognition at the July 6, 2026, regular meeting.

Recommendation: Introduction/Vote on Consent Agenda on 7/6/2026.

F. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Committee of the Whole, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:03 p.m.

Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

*APPROVED by the Committee of the Whole, this
day of 2026.*

Trenton I. Weaver