



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, August 12, 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 7:03 p.m. The agenda was published on August 9, 2024. Councilmembers Renner and Jones were absent. All other members were present for the meeting. There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

B. DISCUSSIONS:

1. Council Office Internship Presentation

[2024-0148](#)

Local Government Internship Program Presentation - Charlie Schneider

Mr. Charlie Schneider, an intern with the Council Office through Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), addressed the City Council. He began by noting that this week marked the conclusion of his internship with the Local Government Internship Program through MORPC. Mr. Schneider expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to work with the City Council Office, specifically mentioning Clerk of Council Jeremy VanMeter, Deputy Clerk of Council Sophia McGuire, and Council Communications and Research Analyst Jessica Hilts.

Mr. Schneider highlighted several projects and experiences from his internship. He first mentioned his participation in the 825 Tech Center Drive groundbreaking event where he assisted with shoveling dirt. Following that, he engaged in more substantive work, starting with the Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board (OHRAB) Grant. The purpose of this grant was to preserve Gahanna Historical Village Council records. His tasks included digitizing these documents using PDF Exchange, scanning, and ultimately uploading them to Legistar, the Council Office's agenda and legislative management system. Additionally, Mr. Schneider

conducted research on short-term rental municipal regulations and potential mental health initiatives for the city. He also analyzed and archived 580 historical records, focusing on identifying gaps and inconsistencies within agreements and reports, all of which were on microfilm. This task provided him with a unique opportunity to delve into the past. He worked on the inventory for the City's deeds and easements, which enhanced his understanding of the deed transfer process from the City's perspective. He utilized the Franklin County parcel ID search for additional inquiries. Mr. Schneider also collaborated with Vice President Weaver on Council's MORPC reports, where he researched recent actions by the Ohio legislature and explored opportunities offered by MORPC.

Reflecting on his internship, Mr. Schneider expressed that he gained a wealth of knowledge and valuable skills. Attending meetings with City Council, the Committee of the Whole, and the Planning Commission allowed him to learn from the expertise and guidance of Councilmembers as they introduced positive changes to Gahanna's community. Through his research on short-term rentals, he extensively analyzed dozens of municipal zoning codes across Ohio, which helped him understand how other municipalities address their unique land use and built environment needs. His research also involved studying scholarly articles and examining the economic impacts of short-term rental municipal regulations.

Mr. Schneider acknowledged the support and advice he received from his coworkers in the Council Office, as well as from Maddie Capka in the Planning Department. Their guidance provided him with insights into local government functions, pursuing a career in public service, and improving his soft skills. He also learned to utilize various technologies, including PDFxChange, Legistar, Municode, and ArcGIS. Mr. Schneider appreciated the opportunity to attend numerous events during his internship. He found it gratifying to learn about different viewpoints from various demographics and how each event host discussed solutions for making positive and impactful changes in their communities. These experiences deepened his understanding of shaping zoning codes for more affordable housing, increasing access to sustainable modes of transportation, and expanding asset-based community development. The event hosts exemplified how to connect with the people they serve and strategically respond to their needs.

In closing, Mr. Schneider expressed his heartfelt gratitude for the warm welcome he received while working for the City of Gahanna. He acknowledged the valuable connections he made and emphasized that all interactions and conversations did not go unnoticed. He commended

the Council staff for their positivity and expertise, noting that they set a high standard of expectation in their positions. Mr. Schneider concluded by stating that it was an honor to serve the people of Gahanna and thanked the Council for the opportunity.

President Bowers expressed her gratitude to Mr. Schneider for his contributions as an intern with the City Council. She noted that it had been an absolute honor to have him work with the Council Office and other departments within the City. President Bowers extended her thanks to the directors and senior directors who hosted Mr. Schneider and allowed him to learn from them. She emphasized the invaluable and meaningful contributions he made to the work of the Council over the summer, noting that his efforts played a significant role in driving the progress they had achieved. She wished him the best in his future endeavors.

Councilmember Padova also thanked Mr. Schneider for his contributions to the office, particularly in helping to organize and bring order to various tasks. She mentioned that his presence brought a positive energy to the meetings, and she appreciated his friendly demeanor during Council sessions.

Vice President Weaver echoed the sentiments of his colleagues, thanking Mr. Schneider for his energy, assistance, and specifically for his help in putting together the MORPC reports. He expressed hope that the experience had been as beneficial for Mr. Schneider as it had been for the Council. Vice President Weaver also thanked the City administration for their role in hosting and mentoring Mr. Schneider. He concluded by asking Mr. Schneider about his plans for the future.

Mr. Schneider responded that his immediate goal was to complete his fourth year of college, focusing on passing his classes in the next semester. When asked about his interest in local government, Mr. Schneider stated that the door remained open for him to pursue a career in that field.

Mayor Jadwin added her appreciation, stating that it had been a pleasure to work with Mr. Schneider. She mentioned that he was one of four MORPC interns the City had hosted, three in the administration and Mr. Schneider in the Council Office. Mayor Jadwin praised his professionalism, particularly in handling his projects, seeking assistance when needed, and collaborating with staff. She wished him the best for his future and encouraged him to stay in touch, expressing interest in any local government job he may pursue after enjoying his senior year of college.

2. 2023 Community Grants Update - Gahanna Residents In Need (GRIN)

Corey Wybensing, Senior Deputy Director of Administrative Services, provided updates to the Council during the meeting. He began by discussing the 2023 Community Grant Program. Mr. Wybensing reminded the Council that, as part of the 2023 budget process, the Council had approved the appropriation of \$50,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to create the Community Grant Program. Mr. Wybensing reported that the program was very successful, receiving \$127,000 in requests. The Review Committee worked diligently to allocate the full \$50,000, either fully or partially, to nine out of the ten respondents.

As the monitoring and closeout processes for the 2023 grants were ongoing, Mr. Wybensing took the opportunity to provide an update on the program. He mentioned that, similar to the previous year, he had presented an update or summary of where the funding was directed. This time, he aimed to highlight the progress in the monitoring and closeout process. He also acknowledged the efforts of the Marketing and Communications team, particularly Dan Pearlman, who met with several of the 2023 grant recipients and created a brief video. The video was intended to showcase the impact of the grant program and to emphasize the importance of fostering collaboration among nonprofits within the community. Following this introduction, Mr. Wybensing indicated that the video would be played, and further discussion would follow after its presentation.

Video Comments:

Brenda Johnston, Executive Director of Gahanna Residents In Need (GRIN), began the video by welcoming viewers to the GRIN Food Pantry located on Granville Street in Gahanna. She highlighted the significant impact of the new walk-in freezer and cooler, which were purchased thanks to the City of Gahanna's Community Grants Program and other donors. Ms. Johnston explained that this addition has been a game changer, enabling GRIN to serve hundreds of thousands of meals to more than 21,000 individuals. The video then provided an inside look at the walk-in freezer, which allows GRIN to acquire food items in bulk from Mid-Ohio and other donors. Items such as sausage, single-serving mashed potatoes, pork cutlets, frozen fruits, and green beans can now be stored efficiently. The cooler also enables GRIN to store weekly food essentials, saving travel time for volunteers and freeing up space in the pantry. Additionally, larger quantities of fresh produce grown by All Saints Episcopal Church and Gahanna Community Congregational Church can now be handled with ease.

Pastor Robb Tarr of Gahanna Community Congregational Church expressed gratitude for the Gahanna Community Grant received for their Daily Bread Produce Garden. He explained that the garden primarily produces fresh vegetables that are donated to GRIN to support food insecurity efforts within Gahanna. Pastor Tarr emphasized the community's involvement in the garden, noting that many volunteers have mobility issues. The grant allowed the church to create a 600-square-foot accessible space lined with a special surface, making it easier for individuals using chairs, canes, and walkers to participate in gardening activities. The garden boxes were also designed to be more accessible, reducing the need for volunteers to bend down.

Volunteer Teresa Fournier added her appreciation for the accessible platform that the grant provided to Gahanna Community Congregational Church. She explained that the raised platform allows everyone working in the garden, including those using electric or manual wheelchairs and walkers, to reach the garden beds without needing to bend down, which can be challenging for individuals with mobility issues.

Pastor Robb Tarr concluded by expressing deep gratitude for the City's support in fighting food insecurity and fostering inclusivity among all community members and partners. He emphasized the importance of being part of a city that actively supports these efforts and acknowledged that they are not alone in their mission.

Brenda Johnston closed the video by reiterating her thanks to the City and all those who donate their time and resources to support GRIN.

Additional Comments:

Deputy Director Corey Wybensing provided further commentary on the collaboration of local nonprofits and the significance of the community grants. He expressed his gratitude to Dan Pearlman for creating the video that was presented earlier, and to Brenda Johnston and Pastor Robb Tarr for their contributions to the video. Deputy Director Wybensing then introduced Ms. Beth Bentley from GRIN, who would speak about the impact of the walk-in freezer and cooler, which was funded in part by the community grant. This served as a transition into the discussion of the 2024 Community Grant Program.

Ms. Beth Bentley began by expressing her appreciation to the Council for the grant that GRIN received. She shared that watching the video made her emotional as she reflected on the positive impact that providing high-quality produce and meats has had on the families they serve. Ms.

Bentley reported that GRIN received \$12,500 from the grant, which contributed to the purchase of a \$40,000 walk-in freezer and cooler. She emphasized that this new equipment has been a game changer for GRIN, allowing them to store over a thousand pounds of frozen items and a similar amount of cold produce and dairy each week. Ms. Bentley highlighted the challenges they faced before having the freezer and cooler, such as missing opportunities to accept large donations like pallets of turkeys because they lacked adequate storage space. Now, with the new equipment, GRIN can accept and store these donations, significantly benefiting the families they serve. She noted that GRIN has experienced a consistent 20% increase in demand every month compared to the previous year, a trend that has persisted since 2019, particularly after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Ms. Bentley spoke passionately about the importance of providing fresh produce and high-quality food to families, acknowledging that items like fresh herbs and produce are often beyond the budget of those receiving food assistance. She explained that GRIN's ability to offer these items contributes to building healthier bodies and minds within the community. The walk-in freezer and cooler have also enabled GRIN to expand their partnerships, allowing them to pick up larger quantities of donations from BJs and Trillium Farms, including items like yogurt and large quantities of eggs. Ms. Bentley concluded her remarks by reiterating her gratitude to the Council and the community for their support. She emphasized that every family deserves to have access to good quality food, whether purchased or received from a food pantry, and expressed her pride in GRIN's ability to provide the best for those in need, thanks to the community's generosity.

President Bowers expressed her gratitude to Ms. Beth Bentley for her attendance and to Deputy Director Corey Wybensinger for the presentation. President Bowers acknowledged the incredible work being done by GRIN and expressed the Council's deep appreciation for all that GRIN provides to the community. She then inquired about the funding for the refrigerated lockers project, noting that the Council was only able to meet half of the requested funds for the year. President Bowers asked Ms. Bentley if GRIN had identified other funding sources for the lockers or the remaining \$25,000 needed for the project.

Ms. Bentley responded by outlining the various sources of funding that GRIN had secured for the walk-in freezer and cooler, which included grants from the City of Gahanna, Mid-Ohio, Kroger, and the Kiwanis Club. She mentioned that GRIN had also submitted additional grant requests to Kroger and Mid-Ohio, though they were still awaiting responses. The manufacturers of the lockers had indicated they would fund part of the project, and GRIN was hopeful to receive that support.

Ms. Bentley added that individual donors had pledged between \$5,000 and \$10,000 toward the project. She noted that Brenda Johnston, who handles the financial aspects, was working on securing additional corporate donations.

President Bowers thanked Ms. Bentley for providing the additional information about the funding sources and expressed her support for GRIN's ongoing efforts to secure the necessary resources.

Councilmember McGregor shared a positive anecdote from a recent dinner where she met a volunteer from GRIN. The volunteer spoke highly of GRIN, describing it as the most well-run and kindest organization she had ever worked with. Councilmember McGregor mentioned that the volunteer had been with GRIN for quite some time and genuinely enjoyed her experience, which she found to be a nice compliment for the organization.

Councilmember Padova echoed the emotions shared earlier, noting that she, too, became emotional while watching the video presentation. She recalled past conversations about the challenges of managing donations due to limited space and the need to efficiently organize items while keeping track of expiration dates. Councilmember Padova expressed her happiness that GRIN was able to secure the walk-in freezer, acknowledging the significant impact it would have on their operations. She concluded by thanking Ms. Bentley and the entire GRIN team for their hard work and dedication to the community, and she hoped that Ms. Bentley would find some rest after what had been a long weekend.

3. 2024 Community Grants Update

[2024-0149](#)

2024 Community Grants Program - Evaluation Matrix Summary

Deputy Director Corey Wybensing provided an update on the 2024 Community Grant Program during the meeting. He began by noting that the Council had again approved the appropriation of ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funding for the program. This time, the allocation had doubled from \$50,000 in 2023 to \$100,000 for 2024. The program structure was intentionally kept very similar to the previous year, with the goal of making the grant application process efficient and streamlined. Mr. Wybensing emphasized that most nonprofits in Gahanna do not have dedicated staff for grant writing and compliance monitoring, so the program was designed to be accessible and non-prohibitive for these organizations. The primary evaluation criteria for the 2024 program remained unchanged from the previous year. The focus continued to be on priority items such as food and clothing insecurities and mental health services, with secondary considerations given to the overall general

welfare of the community. The impact of these grants needed to directly benefit Gahanna residents and could also include those within the Gahanna-Jefferson School District.

Mr. Wybensing reported that the 2024 Community Grant Program was very well received, with over 20 applications submitted by 19 different entities. Notably, eight of these entities were new participants compared to 2023, effectively doubling the number of nonprofits involved. The total funding requests for 2024 exceeded \$312,000. Despite the high demand, the full \$100,000 allocation was appropriated, with 15 of the 19 entities receiving either full or partial funding. Four entities received full funding for their requests, while the others received partial funding.

Mr. Wybensing acknowledged the high quality of all the grant applications and noted that the Grant Review Committee faced a challenging task in evaluating the proposals. The committee meticulously reviewed the budgets and projects line by line to ensure that the \$100,000 allocation was maximized for the benefit of the community. He mentioned that a summary of the 2024 program was attached to the meeting's agenda, similar to the summary provided for the 2023 program. This summary included details such as the entities that applied, the amount requested, an overview of their proposed projects, and the recommended award amounts. Mr. Wybensing expressed excitement about the positive reception of the program by the nonprofit community and looked forward to seeing the impact of the 2024 projects on Gahanna. He specifically mentioned the GRIN food lockers project as one to watch for its potential impact. Mr. Wybensing concluded by opening the floor for any remaining questions about the 2024 Community Grant Program.

Questions from Council:

Councilmember Padova referenced questions she had previously sent to Deputy Director Wybensing and sought clarification on several points, starting with the composition of the grant review committee.

Deputy Director Wybensing explained that the review committee consisted of three members, a composition that was intentionally chosen to maintain an odd number for decision-making purposes. The committee included one city employee from the economic development team, who was familiar with the community's needs and the grant funding process, and two residents of the community. One of the resident members was a CPA with a strong financial background and experience on the Planning Commission, ensuring a thorough understanding of compliance requirements. The third member of the committee varied

each year to ensure diversity among the reviewers. In 2023, the third member was Salema Rice, a CEO, and in 2024, it was Harvey McCleskey, an attorney. The summary sheet from both years detailed the committee members and noted any instances where members abstained from discussions due to potential conflicts of interest.

Councilmember Padova then inquired about the criteria used to evaluate the grant submissions and whether a scoring matrix was employed. Mr. Wybensing responded that the application packet issued to applicants outlined the program's priorities and considerations. Priority 1A and 1B focused on food and clothing insecurities and mental health services, respectively. Secondary considerations were given to projects that contributed to the general welfare of the city. The application format also included program guidelines and requirements that emphasized the impact on Gahanna residents and the Gahanna-Jefferson School District, which were key factors in the evaluation process.

Councilmember Padova asked if organizations were contacted after submitting their applications and whether any follow-up questions were posed. Mr. Wybensing clarified that the organizations were primarily reviewed based on their submitted applications. The grant review committee had the authority to request additional information or invite applicants for further clarification if needed. However, for the 2024 program, the committee found that the applications provided sufficient information, and no additional steps were required for clarification. The committee was able to make informed decisions regarding the allocation of funds based on the priorities established.

Councilmember Padova followed up by asking about situations where organizations were not funded for their full project requests and whether the application process included questions about securing additional funding if only partial funding was granted. Mr. Wybensing explained that the application budgets were carefully reviewed to ensure that all items met the program's requirements. In cases where certain budget items were deemed unnecessary for the specific project, those items were not considered for funding. The review committee focused on funding components of projects that aligned with the program's priorities, even if it did not cover the entire project. He provided an example involving mental health services at Gahanna Jefferson High School, where the committee funded specific components that were considered valuable. The notification of award included terms and conditions outlining what was being funded and the associated requirements. The monitoring and grant closeout process would ensure that the funds were used appropriately.

Councilmember Padova expressed her appreciation for Mr. Wybensinger's efforts in coordinating the grant review process, working with the committee, and presenting the information to the Council. She thanked him for his thorough explanation and for ensuring that the grants were effectively managed to maximize community impact.

President Bowers initiated a follow-up discussion with Deputy Director Wybensinger regarding the prioritization and evaluation of grant applications. She observed that certain criteria, such as providing direct services to Gahanna residents or the Gahanna-Jefferson Public School District (GJPS) residents and supporting mental health services, were prioritized in the grant process. She asked Mr. Wybensinger to elaborate on how these criteria and components were established and who was responsible for setting them.

Mr. Wybensinger explained that the criteria were established through discussions within the Grant Review Committee. While there wasn't a formal scoring system as used in Requests for Proposals (RFPs), the committee focused on maximizing the community benefit. They carefully reviewed the Priority 1A and 1B requests, which included food and clothing insecurities and mental health services, respectively. The committee dissected these requests and allocated funds accordingly. For projects that didn't require full funding, the remaining budget was allocated to Tier 2 projects that contributed to the general welfare of the city. The committee also considered the organizations' ability to execute their projects, even with partial funding, and reviewed financial statements and audits to ensure organizational stability and a high probability of grant completion.

President Bowers then asked if, now that the city had gone through a couple of cycles of the grant program, any opportunities for improvement or changes had been identified for future cycles.

Mr. Wybensinger responded that the 2024 Community Grant Program was the last round funded by ARPA. The administration is currently evaluating what a potential community grant program might look like in the future, although the same funding stream used in the past two rounds will no longer be available.

President Bowers further inquired about potential changes or improvements if the program were to continue with budgeted funds in the future. Mr. Wybensinger stated that the core structure of the program was effective and efficient, particularly because it was streamlined, making it accessible to nonprofits that often rely on volunteers. While a more robust program could be developed, it would require additional work from both

the nonprofits and the city in terms of compliance monitoring. He emphasized that the current structure had successfully balanced effectiveness and efficiency.

President Bowers also asked about compliance follow-ups with the nonprofits to ensure that grant funds were used effectively, citing the example presented earlier in the meeting. Mr. Wybensing confirmed that some projects were still in the process of rolling out, especially those that were more complex or involved infrastructure development. He provided an example of the Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), which received a smaller grant of \$850 in 2023 for sensory glasses to be used at the holiday lights celebration. He noted that some grants, like this one, had ongoing impact, while others, particularly those involving community gardens and accessibility improvements, would take more time to fully implement and show results. The City would continue to monitor these projects to ensure compliance.

In conclusion, President Bowers expressed her support for sustainably supporting nonprofit organizations throughout Gahanna, indicating that it was a priority of hers. She praised Director Wybensing for his excellent work in building and implementing the grant program and expressed her eagerness to work with the administration on future iterations of the program. She also suggested the potential for involving Council appointees in the review process or providing other forms of support to ensure continued success. President Bowers emphasized the importance of supporting organizations that contribute significantly to the community and thanked Mr. Wybensing for his efforts.

Vice President Weaver expressed his gratitude to Director Wybensing for leading the initiative on behalf of the City and for the informative presentation. He then inquired about the process for determining partial awards, specifically raising concerns about instances where a partial grant—such as 25% of the requested amount—might not be sufficient for an entity to carry out its project without seeking additional funds. Vice President Weaver asked if this potential shortfall was identified during the application process and whether there was any follow-up to better track the outcomes.

Director Wybensing responded that the monitoring process included follow-up on grant awards, which helped the city assess the success of funded projects. He referenced the successful implementation of projects such as the GRIN freezer and refrigerator initiative, as well as the GC3 initiative, and sensory headsets. The monitoring process ensures that the funds were used as intended, with ongoing checks until a closeout process confirms that the funding was utilized appropriately and

effectively. He also emphasized that the review committee carefully examined budgets to determine which components of a project could be funded in alignment with the program's priorities, particularly those benefiting Gahanna residents and Gahanna-Jefferson School District students.

Vice President Weaver concluded by restating his appreciation to Director Wybensinger and the administration for the program. He expressed a desire to see the grant program continue in a sustainable manner in the future.

4. Criminal Code Review - City Attorney Tamilarasan

City Attorney Tamilarasan presented a discussion point to the Council regarding a comprehensive code review of the City's criminal offenses, specifically focusing on the ethnic intimidation ordinance. Ms. Tamilarasan explained that during a recent prosecution in Franklin County, an issue arose that highlighted a gap in the current ordinance. The case involved a resident who repeatedly found banana peels placed in front of his vehicle in a racially motivated act of intimidation. Despite clear evidence of racial motivation, the charges had to be dismissed because the current ordinance did not cover actions that occurred on public roadways, rather than on private property or the vehicle itself.

City Attorney Tamilarasan noted that the City's ordinance closely mirrors state code, which limits the offenses that can be considered under the ethnic intimidation statute. However, neighboring jurisdictions, such as Columbus, have more comprehensive codes that include additional offenses like disorderly conduct, criminal trespass, and littering-offenses that would have been relevant to the case in question.

City Attorney Tamilarasan proposed that the Council consider expanding the list of predicate offenses under the city's ethnic intimidation ordinance to include these more common offenses. She also suggested renaming the ordinance to "discriminatory intimidation" and broadening the protected categories to align with those already recognized in the city's housing code. This would include protections based on race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, disability, familial status, and military status. She pointed out that this approach would be consistent with similar statutes in cities like Westerville and Reynoldsburg, which have adopted parts of Columbus's ordinance without including components like mandatory jail time, which she deemed inappropriate for Gahanna. Ms. Tamilarasan invited questions and comments from the Council on this proposal.

President Bowers thanked City Attorney Tamilarasan for bringing the

issue forward. She expressed strong support for the proposed changes, noting that it made sense to mirror the protections already in place in the city's housing code and to ensure consistency with the criteria used to protect against employment discrimination within city employment. President Bowers also appreciated the nuanced approach of not adopting the Columbus ordinance in its entirety, allowing for greater discretion in the city's code.

Vice President Weaver also expressed his gratitude to Ms. Tamilarasan for presenting the item to the Council. He looked forward to reviewing the proposed revisions, including any redlined changes, in the near future.

C. ITEMS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION:

[RES-0031-2024](#) A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO APPLY FOR ALTERNATIVE FUNDING THROUGH THE MID-OHIO REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (MORPC) ATTRIBUTABLE FUNDS FOR THE BIG WALNUT TRAIL - SECTION 8

Director of Parks & Recreation Stephanie Ferrell sought a resolution to grant the authority to apply for MORPC (Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission) attributable funding for the construction of the Big Walnut Trail. This specific section of the trail would extend from Rocky Fork southeast to Tech Center Drive. Ms. Ferrell explained that this was not the first time the City had applied for this funding. In the previous cycle, the application was submitted but was unfortunately not successful. However, given the timeline of the project, there is an opportunity to reapply, and she indicated that the screening application had already been submitted. MORPC requires formal authorization from the City as part of the final application process, and Ms. Ferrell respectfully requested a resolution to meet this requirement.

Vice President Weaver expressed his support for the initiative, stating that any opportunity to secure outside funding for such a beneficial project was commendable. He thanked Director Ferrell for her efforts in pursuing this funding opportunity.

Recommendation: Introduction/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 8/19/2024.

D. ITEMS FROM THE SENIOR DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS:

[ORD-0051-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO A PURCHASE AGREEMENT WITH VALUE RECOVERY GROUP II, LLC, FOR PROPERTY LOCATED ADJACENT TO 825 TECH CENTER DRIVE; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY

Kevin Schultz, Senior Director of Operations, presented a proposal for

land acquisition. Director Schultz began by referencing a similar presentation he made two years ago, where he introduced the ordinance to purchase 825 Tech Center Drive. This evening, he discussed the potential purchase of an additional two acres of property directly behind 825 Tech Center Drive. The property in question is part of a larger 3-acre parcel owned by Value Recovery Group LLC. The proposal involves splitting the 3-acre parcel, with the portion marked in purple on the map (running north and south) remaining under the ownership of Value Recovery Group LLC. This portion would be merged with the adjacent property to the east, creating a 4-acre development site. The City would acquire the portion marked in blue, located immediately south of the city's existing property line.

Director Schultz emphasized that this acquisition is seen as a strategic move to further secure the police facility located in the southern portion of the building at 825 Tech Center Drive. Acquiring this land would restrict any potential development on the property immediately behind the police facility. He noted that the City currently has no plans to build on the acquired property, but the addition of these two acres would be beneficial for future city development needs. The negotiated price for the land acquisition is \$150,000 for the two acres. Director Schultz highlighted that, based on market analysis and recent sales in the area, development parcels in this district are selling for well over \$200,000 per acre due to the development pressures in Central Ohio. The purchase and sale agreement has been reviewed and approved by City Attorney Tamilarasan. Director Schultz requested that the Council approve an ordinance authorizing the mayor to sign the purchase and sale agreement and to close on the property within the next 45 days, with a final date of October 31, 2024. He indicated that the ordinance would need to be approved on an emergency basis to meet this timeline. Director Schultz concluded by offering to answer any questions from the Council.

Councilmember McGregor inquired about the buildability of the parcel under consideration for acquisition.

Director Schultz responded, confirming that the parcel is buildable, although the land drops off slightly as it approaches the reserve area on the south side of the property. He also clarified that the property outlined in blue, which is part of the acquisition, is currently owned by the city and is designated as reserve land. This area is managed and maintained by the Parks & Recreation Department. He noted that The Golf Depot is located immediately south of this reserve property.

Councilmember McGregor expressed her support for the acquisition,

noting that it is a beneficial move for both the City and the current owners. She pointed out that the current owners would no longer have to pay taxes on the land, and given the lack of road frontage, the parcel is unlikely to be developed. She concluded by stating that this acquisition represents a great use of the property.

Councilmember Schnetzer began by asking Director Schultz for a reminder about the drainage on the property under discussion. Councilmember Schnetzer recalled a stream in the reserve area and asked if there was additional drainage on the site.

Director Schultz confirmed that there is existing drainage in the form of a swale on the back side of the building and an additional drainage channel on the west side of a large warehouse facility that runs directly to the creek. However, he clarified that the blue-highlighted area under consideration for acquisition does not have any drainage.

President Bowers then inquired whether it would be possible or desirable to add the newly acquired parcel to the existing reserve area to ensure its protected status. Director Schultz acknowledged that this was indeed possible and that the City could choose to add the land to the reserve rather than keeping it for potential future expansion or development.

President Bowers expressed her interest in this idea, noting the beauty of the area and suggesting that preserving it as green space could benefit the community. She mentioned the potential for connecting the area to hiking trails, which would be a valuable amenity.

Continuing, President Bowers asked for a ballpark estimate of the total costs associated with the purchase, including any additional fees, to have a complete understanding of the financial commitment.

Director Schultz explained that Value Recovery Group originally asked for \$175,000 for the two-acre parcel. He assured the Council that the total costs, including additional fees such as a 6% broker fee (approximately \$6,500), would not exceed the \$175,000. He clarified that any other associated costs, such as transfer fees, would also be covered within this budget. He emphasized that while these costs were part of the negotiation, they would still keep the total under the \$175,000 mark.

President Bowers sought further clarification regarding the funding source, asking if this purchase was covered under the contingency associated with the 825 Tech Center Drive project. Director Schultz confirmed that the purchase was indeed funded through the appropriated

budget for the 825 project but clarified that they were not using any contingency funds specifically allocated to the Elford construction project. He explained that the money for this acquisition had been set aside as part of the broader budget for the 825 project and had not been designated for any specific use, allowing flexibility for this purchase.

President Bowers expressed satisfaction with the explanation, remarking that it was good to see a plan come together smoothly.

Vice President Weaver echoed the positive sentiments of his colleagues, expressing appreciation for the clarity provided by Director Schultz. He looked forward to seeing the acquisition move forward and thanked Value Recovery Group for collaborating with the City administration on this project.

**Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 8/19/2024;
Second Reading with Emergency Adoption on Consent Agenda on 9/3/2024.**

E. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Committee of the Whole, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 7:58 p.m.

Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

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

Trenton I. Weaver
Chair