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, March 9, 2026 **7:00 PM** **City Hall, Council Chambers**

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Gahanna City Council met for Committee of the Whole on Monday, March 9, 2026, in Council Chambers. Vice President of Council Jamille Jones, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. The agenda was published on March 6, 2026. Councilmember Michael Schnetzer was absent from the meeting. All other members were present.

Vice President Jones announced one addition to the agenda, an update on the Community Grants Program, notated as the new Item C on the agenda.

B. ITEMS FROM COUNCIL OFFICE:

ORD-0007-2026 AN ORDINANCE TO ACCEPT THE ANNEXATION OF APPROXIMATELY 7.6 ACRES FROM JEFFERSON TOWNSHIP, FRANKLIN COUNTY, OHIO, TO THE CITY OF GAHANNA; LOCATED AT 4736 AND 4722 JOHNSTOWN ROAD (PARCEL ID NOS. 170-000068 AND 170-000069).

Vice President Jones invited David Fisher, counsel on behalf of the annexation applicant, to speak.

David Fisher introduced himself and Tim Spencer. He thanked the committee for allowing additional time to meet with the Committee of the Whole and explained that he had been out of town during the previous meeting. He stated that he wanted to attend personally to discuss the matter before the annexation reached final consideration. Fisher said he

had been a resident of Gahanna for approximately 33 years and lived on Cherry Bottom Road. He noted that he practiced law and also engaged in real estate development. Fisher stated that he believed he might be the only developer who regularly appeared before Council who lived in the community, paid taxes in the city, and had a long-term commitment to Gahanna. He referenced his involvement in the redevelopment of the former FOP site on State Route 62 and Cherry Bottom Road, explaining that the project had been a lengthy and difficult process that included lawsuits and challenges to his professional license. He stated that he persisted because he believed the project would ultimately benefit the community. He said the resulting community park had become a valuable amenity that connected parts of the city and attracted many residents who now used the walking paths daily.

Mr. Fisher explained that Jim and Darlene Toney, the owners of the property in question, had been friends of his for many years. When they began considering retirement, they discussed options for their property and he offered to assist them. Fisher stated that he and his partners entered into a contract for the property approximately two years earlier and had worked through the process deliberately rather than rushing it. He explained that the property currently lay in Jefferson Township and that the team had completed a pre-annexation agreement with the city several months earlier. The county commissioners had approved the annexation request and Council would now consider it, with a second reading and possible final vote scheduled for the following Monday. Fisher stated that the development team had the option to submit zoning simultaneously with the annexation but chose not to rush that step. Instead, they planned to gather input from the city, planning staff, and residents before determining final plans. He explained that the project would not be developed for immediate sale but would remain a long-term investment. He stated that he wanted to construct a development he could drive past daily with pride as a resident of Gahanna. Fisher described the concept as a mixed-use project with limited retail uses such as a restaurant, fitness facility, or medical office, along with residential apartments designed to be sustainable, attractive, and durable over time. He acknowledged the presence of a large pond on the property that could not be altered because it functioned as a wetland. He stated that the development team would work with the city and neighboring residents to determine how the pond could potentially serve as a community amenity. Fisher also mentioned the possibility of

installing a gateway sign welcoming visitors to Gahanna, like the one along the corridor near UDF. He expressed his belief that annexation would allow the city to guide development in the area rather than leaving it under township jurisdiction. Fisher asked Council to consider approving the annexation and stated that he would continue working with planning staff, neighbors, and city officials during the zoning and development process. He then offered to answer questions.

President Weaver thanked Fisher and Spencer for attending and expressed appreciation for Fisher's earlier meeting with residents from the Creekway Court neighborhood. He noted that neighbors had raised concerns about the pond and the possibility of adding amenities around it. Weaver stated that some residents worried about trails or improvements due to the condition of surrounding land and encouraged Fisher to remain in communication with those property owners if the project moved forward. Weaver also emphasized that annexation represented only one step in the process and explained that rezoning and additional public comment opportunities would follow if Council approved the annexation. Fisher responded that he recalled three primary concerns raised by neighbors: the overall change to the area, the pond, and traffic. He explained that the pond had become a wetland and could not be filled or removed, although the development team could work around it and potentially incorporate it as a community feature. He reiterated his commitment to developing a high-quality project that improved the property's current condition. Regarding traffic, Fisher stated that traffic concerns arose in nearly every development project. He noted that traffic along State Route 62 from New Albany through the roundabout would continue to increase regardless of the project. He stated that proper planning, including well-designed entrances and exits, could allow the development to accommodate additional traffic responsibly without harming quality of life in the area.

Vice President Jones asked if any additional questions or discussion remained. Hearing none, she thanked Fisher and Spencer for attending and noted that Council would see them again the following week.

Recommendation: Second Reading/Adoption on Regular Agenda on 3/16/2026.

C. UPDATES FROM ADMINISTRATION:

2026-0057 Community Grant Program Update to Council - March 9, 2026

Committee of the Whole

Vice President Jones introduced the next agenda item, the Community Grant Program update, and recognized Senior Deputy Director Corey Wybensinger to present the information.

Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger stated that the program had reached its fourth consecutive year. He provided a brief overview of the program's progress since 2023 and discussed the upcoming 2026 funding cycle, which the City intended to launch the following Monday. He explained that the City had completed four rounds of funding over three years. In 2023 and 2024, the program used American Rescue Plan Act funds. In 2025, the City transitioned the program to local funding. He noted that the City conducted two funding rounds in 2025 because the Grant Review Committee did not allocate the full $100,000 in the first round. The committee awarded $81,250, leaving approximately $18,000 available. Later in the year, the City launched a second round after food insecurity concerns emerged. Wybensinger stated that the program had funded 43 projects across 25 individual nonprofit organizations since its inception. Wybensinger stated that the 2026 program would include only minor adjustments because the City implemented most major changes during the transition from federal to local funding. He explained that staff continued refining program guidelines to clarify application procedures and improve the quality of submissions. He announced that the City would host a voluntary information session or webinar to allow nonprofits to ask questions about the application process. He explained that the session aimed to support smaller nonprofits that lacked experience applying for grant funding. He also noted that the addition of a grants analyst had helped staff guide nonprofits toward stronger and more sustainable programming.

Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger stated that staff would modify the eligibility review process. In prior years, the Grant Review Committee evaluated both eligibility and project details during in-person meetings. He explained that this process required four resident members and a city employee to spend significant time reviewing eligibility requirements. Under the updated process, the Department of Administrative Services team would complete the initial eligibility review and identify applications as eligible or ineligible. The Grant Review Committee would then focus on evaluating projects. He explained that staff would continue using the OpenGov software platform for application submissions and reporting,

noting that the City had already received recognition for using the platform in the permitting process. The updated system would include automated reporting tools, reminders, and easier document uploads. Wybensinger stated that program priorities would remain unchanged. Priority 1A addressed human necessities such as food and clothing insecurity. Priority 1B focused on mental health and counseling services. Priority 2 addressed safety, health, and welfare needs such as transportation, housing, and utility assistance. Priority 3 supported general improvements within the Gahanna community. He explained that grants would remain reimbursable and capped at $10,000. Staff believed this limit encouraged achievable projects while allowing equitable distribution among nonprofits. Wybensinger reviewed the eligibility requirements. Applicants must qualify as IRS-registered nonprofit organizations located within the Gahanna community, defined as the City of Gahanna and the Gahanna-Jefferson Public School District. Programs must serve a population composed of at least 51 percent Gahanna residents. Applicants who previously received funding must close out prior awards and submit all required documentation before receiving additional funds. Wybensinger explained that the Grant Review Committee would evaluate eligible applications. The committee consisted of two Council appointees, two mayoral appointees, and one city staff member, typically from the economic development team. The committee reviewed applications based on program priorities and guidelines and recommended full awards, partial awards, or no awards. Wybensinger stated that partial awards occurred frequently because the committee sometimes chose to fund only certain components of a proposal. Staff confirmed with applicants that they could complete the funded portions before issuing awards.

Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger outlined the proposed timeline for the 2026 grant cycle. The City planned to release the notice of funding opportunity on March 16, 2026. Staff would distribute the announcement through direct email to nonprofits, social media posts, and the City newsletter. The City scheduled the virtual information session for March 24. Staff would send an application reminder on April 6. The application portal would close on April 13. Staff would accept paper or email submissions if necessary and would enter those applications into the system internally. The City planned to issue award notices around April 23. Wybensinger explained that staff required progress updates and reporting throughout the grant period. He stated that smaller nonprofits

sometimes became busy with operational responsibilities, so required check-ins helped maintain project progress. Each grant required a final report summarizing outcomes, participation numbers, and community impact whenever possible. Because the grants operated on a reimbursement basis, recipients submitted documentation of expenses, which staff reviewed for compliance before issuing reimbursement payments. Wybensinger concluded his presentation by highlighting a 2025 project at Creative Options involving an adaptive beehive developed in partnership with Peace Lutheran Church. He explained that the specially designed hive accommodated individuals with mobility and accessibility needs. The installation occurred in the fall, and the organization tentatively planned a ribbon-cutting event on June 6, 2026.

Councilmember McGregor asked whether the April 13 application deadline referred to midnight or the close of business. Wybensinger responded that the deadline typically occurred at the close of business because staff manually closed the application portal.

President Weaver asked whether staff would remove ineligible applications before the committee review or simply identify them. Wybensinger explained that the committee would have access to all submissions. Staff would categorize applications as eligible or ineligible in a shared folder and provide explanations. Committee members could review those determinations and discuss them during deliberations. Weaver also confirmed that a separate city staff representative served on the committee and that this individual did not belong to the Department of Administrative Services team that conducted the preliminary review.

Councilmember Padova asked whether the committee conducted interviews with applicants. Wybensinger explained that interviews occurred only if the committee required clarification. The committee could request meetings with applicants in person or virtually. Padova asked whether the interview stage occurred as a standard second round. Wybensinger clarified that the committee requested interviews only when necessary. Councilmember Padova asked whether staff could provide Council with a list of all organizations that received funding in the second round of the previous year. Wybensinger stated that he would review the previous communications and resend the list if necessary.

Councilmember Bowers asked whether staff allowed applicants to correct clerical errors or missing responses after the portal closed. Wybensinger explained that staff attempted to assist applicants when possible to ensure strong applications. Staff had previously contacted applicants who misunderstood documentation requirements and requested corrections. While staff preferred to maintain the submission deadline, they would allow minor clerical corrections when appropriate. Councilmember Bowers also asked whether staff had identified connections between the Community Grant Program and the City's strategic plan. Wybensinger responded that many funded projects aligned with strategic plan initiatives, including sustainability efforts, community gardening programs, neighborhood development, and other initiatives that strengthened community resources.

Vice President Jones praised the informational session and educational support offered to nonprofits. She stated that smaller organizations often lacked time and expertise to pursue grant funding, and the City's approach provided both financial and educational support. She asked whether staff had considered creating a standardized template for final reports. Wybensinger explained that staff had begun developing a template that could accommodate different project types while minimizing additional administrative burdens. He added that staff already met with grant recipients when they signed their grant agreements to explain reporting expectations and available support. Vice President Jones also asked whether the program had always operated on a reimbursement basis. Wybensinger explained that the City initially used advance payments during the federal funding period but transitioned to reimbursement-based payments when the City adopted local funding.

Councilmember Renner thanked Wybensinger for the presentation and praised the program's development. He stated that staff had matured the program thoughtfully by implementing detailed procedures and safeguards to ensure responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars. Wybensinger acknowledged the team effort involved in managing the program.

Vice President Jones asked whether any additional questions or discussion remained. Hearing none, she thanked staff for the update and recognized the work completed on the Community Grant Program.

D. ITEMS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY:

RES-0008-2026 A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO A SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER (SRO) CONTRACT WITH THE GAHANNA-JEFFERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR THE 2026-2027 SCHOOL YEAR

Chief Spence presented the proposed 2026-2027 School Resource Officer (SRO) agreement with Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools. He explained that the Police Department worked with the City Attorney, school administration, and the school district's legal counsel to update the agreement language. He stated that the most significant change involved the cost-sharing model. Under the previous model, the district funded 75 percent of one SRO position and 50 percent of another. The proposed agreement changed the model to an equal 50 percent cost share for three SRO positions. Chief Spence explained that the prior model would have increased the district's contribution by approximately $6,500 for the upcoming school year, but the revised agreement increased the total district contribution from approximately $40,000 to $48,735.32 across all three positions. He added that staff reviewed cost-sharing models used by school districts outside Franklin County and found that a 50 percent cost share represented the most common midpoint among comparable jurisdictions. He noted that the Board of Education had already approved the agreement and that the changes would take effect for the upcoming school year. He also stated that the City had updated the memorandum of understanding with the district that governed the operational aspects of the SRO program.

Councilmember Bowers acknowledged the comparison with other jurisdictions and asked what prompted the cost-share change at this time. Chief Spence explained that the City approved the addition of another SRO position in the 2026 budget. He noted that the Police Department had previously adjusted staffing as the school district expanded, including assigning a city-funded officer to serve the middle schools. He stated that the additional SRO position would serve Gahanna Lincoln High School beginning in the 2026-2027 school year. Councilmember Bowers confirmed that the change reflected expanded staffing resources and an effort to balance the cost-sharing arrangement. Chief Spence confirmed that explanation. Councilmember Bowers noted that the Board of Education had already approved the agreement and

asked Vice President Jones, who served as liaison, whether the board had raised any concerns.

Vice President Jones stated that the board approved the agreement without significant questions or discussion at its most recent regular meeting. She added that the approximate $48,000 increase resulted from the addition of the third SRO position. Chief Spence confirmed that the change expanded the cost-share model from two officers to three officers and established a 50 percent cost share for each. Vice President Jones asked whether the additional officer would serve the high school beginning next school year. Chief Spence confirmed that the change applied to the 2026-2027 school year. Chief Spence explained that the department would post the new position within Deputy Chief Moffitt's division and complete the training required under the Ohio Revised Code before the school year began. He stated that the department occasionally adjusted assignments to address operational needs. He explained that the department currently assigned one officer to cover the three middle schools and also maintained SRO coverage in the elementary schools.

Vice President Jones asked how the officer assigned to the three middle schools managed scheduling and whether the officer visited each school daily. Chief Spence explained that the officer balanced time among the schools based on needs within each building. He stated that specific incidents or calls for service sometimes required the officer to spend more time at one school during a particular week, but the department attempted to maintain balance among the three middle schools.

Councilmember Bowers expressed appreciation for the service provided by the School Resource Officers and the entire Gahanna Police Department. She referenced recent threats reported across multiple Ohio school districts and stated that community members had commended the professionalism and organization displayed by the department. She also thanked Gahanna Lincoln High School staff and students for responding responsibly during the situation. Councilmember Bowers acknowledged the financial pressures facing public schools but emphasized that the strength of the community remained closely connected to the strength of the school district. She expressed hope that the district would continue to provide services across the community.

Recommendation: Introduction/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 3/16/2026.

E. ITEMS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE:

ORD-0009-2026 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS - Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS) Grant Fund for Body-Worn Camera Services

Director Bury presented a request for supplemental appropriations related to a grant the City received from the Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS) for the body-worn camera maintenance service contract. She requested supplemental appropriations in the amount of $90,000.

Vice President Jones asked whether Council had any questions or discussion. Hearing none, she stated that Council would place the item on first reading March 16, 2026, with adoption scheduled for April 6, 2026. She asked whether members preferred to place the legislation on consent, and Council agreed to proceed with the Consent Agenda.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 3/16/2026; Second Reading/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 4/6/2026.

RES-0007-2026 A RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE A THEN AND NOW PURCHASE ORDER UNDER OHIO REVISED CODE 5705.41(D)(1) FOR THE PURPOSE OF STOP LOSS COVERAGE THROUGH SUN LIFE

Director Bury presented a then-and-now purchase. She explained that under the Ohio Revised Code, the encumbrance date must occur before the invoice date. She stated that she could authorize then-and-now certifications for amounts up to $3,000. Any amount exceeding $3,000 required Council approval. She explained that the resolution requested Council approval for a then-and-now purchase related to the City's stop loss insurance.

Vice President Jones asked whether Council had any questions or discussion. Hearing none, she confirmed that Council would place the item on the Consent Agenda March 16, 2026, and thanked Director Bury for the presentation.

Recommendation: Introduction/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 3/16/2026.

F. ITEMS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

RES-0010-2026 A RESOLUTION DETERMINING THE SELECTION OF SUCCESSOR MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR THE GAHANNA

NEW COMMUNITY AUTHORITY.

Director of Economic Development Jeff Gottke addressed Council regarding three administrative cleanup items related to the New Community Authority (NCA) established in the Crescent District the previous year. He provided background information explaining that the Ohio Revised Code established a prescribed structure for the initial board of a new community authority. He stated that this initial board functioned as a placeholder structure until either statutory population thresholds allowed for elections or Council adopted an alternative governance system. Director Gottke explained that the resolution before Council reauthorized the board structure that Council had adopted the previous year, which extended the placeholder model until residents began living within the district. Because that one-year period had now passed, Council needed to reauthorize the structure. He stated that the proposed legislation remained nearly identical to the resolution adopted the previous year, with three changes. First, the resolution defined board member terms, which neither Council nor the NCA board had previously established. The language specified that terms would begin on January 1 and end on December 31 of the final year of the term. Second, the resolution converted the temporary placeholder structure into a permanent structure. The current structure consisted of one city representative, three citizen representatives appointed by Council, and three developer representatives appointed by the developer. Director Gottke explained that staff recommended making this structure permanent rather than implementing elections. He noted that the population threshold required for elections had not yet been reached, which would require waiting at least another year. He also stated that conducting elections among a small group of private residents could prove complicated and that it was possible no residents would choose to run for the board, which would leave seats vacant. Director Gottke explained that the proposal retained Council's authority to appoint the three citizen representatives and added language expressing a preference for appointing residents of the district. If no resident applicants were available, Council could appoint another city resident through its normal appointment process. He summarized that the changes defined board terms, made the placeholder structure permanent, and emphasized the preference for appointing district residents.

Councilmember Renner thanked Director Gottke for reviewing the details

and stated that he appreciated the careful work involved in reviewing and verifying the resolution. He expressed his full support for the proposal.

City Attorney Tamilarasan stated that she had worked closely with Director Gottke to draft the resolution. She clarified several points regarding the language. She explained that the resolution allowed up to three appointees to reside within the district and stated that the language directed Council to appoint district residents unless Council determined that no appropriate applicants resided there. She also clarified the term language. Because the first appointments occurred mid-year, the draft language specified that those terms would expire on December 31 of the year following the appointment. She explained that Council intended to align future appointments with the organizational meeting on January 2, which would create full two-year terms running from January through December.

Councilmember Bowers asked whether other communities with new community authorities had adopted similar appointment systems. Director Gottke responded that the election system described in the Revised Code represented the anomaly and that most NCAs used alternative appointment systems. City Attorney Tamilarasan confirmed that staff had consulted with NCA legal counsel and that most communities used appointment mechanisms. She added that she planned to follow up with NCA counsel regarding how frequently communities required district residency. Councilmember Bowers asked whether a future Council could return to the election model if residents later requested that change. City Attorney Tamilarasan stated that Council could amend the resolution at any time. She explained that the previous resolution included a sunset provision, which required the current reauthorization. The proposed resolution did not include a sunset provision and would remain in effect unless a future Council amended it.

President Weaver expressed appreciation to Director Gottke and City Attorney Tamilarasan for their work. He reiterated his strong preference that Council appoint residents from the district when possible but acknowledged that circumstances might make that difficult. He asked whether Council would need a redlined amendment before the next meeting. City Attorney Tamilarasan responded that she believed the parties were aligned and that she only wanted to clarify the language.

Councilmember Bowers asked whether Council could incorporate language or procedures encouraging outreach to Crescent District residents when filling appointments. She suggested communicating with the property manager or distributing notices to residents. Clerk VanMeter suggested adding the position to the City's onboarding system for board and commission applications and issuing a public notice seeking applicants from the Crescent District. He stated that he could forward such notices to Director Gottke for distribution through the property manager. Councilmember Bowers asked whether Council should incorporate that outreach process in the resolution. Clerk VanMeter stated that emphasizing communication with residents would align with the City's existing practices for other boards and commissions, though Council could choose to include such language if desired. Director Gottke asked whether the Clerk's office maintained internal processes for appointments and whether those procedures could incorporate the outreach step. Councilmember Bowers confirmed that she referred to the onboarding system mentioned by the Clerk. City Attorney Tamilarasan stated that the resolution already required that appointees be residents of the district unless Council determined that no qualified resident applicants existed. She explained that board and commission postings already described the qualifications and scope of appointments, which would encourage resident participation. Councilmember Bowers noted that the discussion had occurred on the record and expressed hope that future Councils would remember the intent behind the residency preference.

Vice President Jones asked whether Council had any additional questions or discussion. Hearing none, she stated that Council would place the legislation on the Consent Agenda for the March 16, 2026, meeting and thanked the participants.

Recommendation: Introduction/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 3/16/2026.

G. ITEMS FROM COUNCILMEMBERS:

1. Procurement Code Discussion

2026-0054 Procurement Code Research Materials

Vice President Jones introduced the next agenda item, a procurement code discussion requested by Councilmember Bowers, and recognized

Councilmember Bowers to begin the discussion.

Councilmember Bowers thanked her colleagues and the administration for revisiting the topic and explained that she requested the discussion to consider adjusting the contract authorization threshold for expenditures that fall outside the competitive bidding requirements established by the Ohio Revised Code. She began by reviewing the current conditions. She stated that contracts that do not require competitive bidding and fall below $250,000 may currently be executed administratively without separate Council approval unless a supplemental appropriation is required. Councilmember Bowers stated that research of neighboring municipalities indicated that Gahanna's threshold was significantly higher than those of peer communities in central Ohio. She explained that legislative review in many comparable municipalities typically occurred at levels closer to $50,000 to $75,000. She reminded Council that the current policy was established relatively recently in early 2022 when the code first codified a formal contract authorization threshold. She acknowledged Director Bury's work in developing the policy following audit recommendations. Councilmember Bowers explained that federal procurement guidance influenced the policy and that the City adopted the higher threshold during the period when the administration needed to move COVID-19 relief funding efficiently. She stated that those circumstances understandably led to a higher threshold than those commonly used in municipal governance. She added that, now that the City had returned to more typical operating conditions, Council should reconsider whether the threshold continued to reflect best practices for a city of Gahanna's size.

Councilmember Bowers stated that Council had also received a list of professional services purchase orders issued between 2022 and the end of 2025. She explained that the administration issued approximately $14.5 million in professional service purchase orders during that period. After reviewing the data, she observed a functional distinction in how contracts tended to fall. She explained that contracts above approximately $90,000 typically related to larger capital initiatives, strategic projects, or significant policy initiatives. She acknowledged that some strategic or policy-related contracts also fell below that amount, but she stated that many of the smaller contracts appeared to involve routine administrative services, ongoing operational needs, or smaller professional engagements. Based on both the regional comparison and

her review of the purchase order data, Councilmember Bowers proposed that Council consider a $100,000 threshold for contracts requiring Council authorization. She explained that this level would preserve administrative flexibility for routine operational matters while ensuring that larger strategic expenditures received Council review and discussion in a public forum.

Councilmember Bowers noted that Council had also discussed the possibility of establishing a regular reporting structure during a prior Committee of the Whole meeting. She stated that she looked forward to hearing from the administration on that topic as well. She explained that she viewed the issue as an opportunity to pursue a comprehensive solution that included either reporting, approval, or both. Councilmember Bowers emphasized that her proposal did not intend to slow projects or question the work of the administration. She stated that the proposal aimed to strengthen transparency and allow Council to fulfill its responsibility as stewards of public funds. She explained that Council's role extended beyond appropriating funds in the budget to providing oversight of how those funds were used. She concluded that adjusting the threshold would ensure that significant expenditures received appropriate public discussion and would allow Council and the administration to engage in dialogue before contracts were finalized. She stated that good governance required both branches of government to carry out their respective roles, with the administration executing the work of the City and Council providing transparent oversight of public spending. Councilmember Bowers added that the proposal sought to align Gahanna's practices more closely with regional norms while reinforcing the transparency and accountability residents expected when significant public funds were committed. She thanked Council for the opportunity to present the overview and stated that she looked forward to hearing from the administration.

Mayor Jadwin thanked Councilmember Bowers for her overview and acknowledged Vice President Jones for framing the discussion as an open dialogue. She stated that the administration prepared some slides to support its comments. Mayor Jadwin noted that Council adopted the current procurement policy four years earlier in March 2022, when Council established the $250,000 contract authorization threshold. She stated that Council held extensive discussions at that time about the reasons for adopting that threshold. She explained that the City had

experienced no issues with the policy over the past four years and had received strong audit results while continuing to provide reporting to Council. Mayor Jadwin also noted that Council had adopted the procurement policy change unanimously at that time. Mayor Jadwin stated that her administration had made numerous changes over the past six years to strengthen governance practices and continued to evaluate policies regularly. She explained that, after hearing Council's recent comments regarding the procurement policy, she met with her team to review how the policy had functioned and to consider Council's feedback. She clarified that the professional services purchase order list previously shared with Council reflected funds appropriated rather than funds actually spent. She explained that the City opened purchase orders based on appropriated budget amounts and often returned unused funds at the end of the year. She emphasized that the approximately $14 million referenced represented appropriated purchase orders rather than actual expenditures. Mayor Jadwin then invited Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger to present the administration's recommendations.

Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger stated that the administration believed the procurement thresholds adopted in March 2022 had worked effectively and had supported operational efficiency within the City. He explained that the current thresholds allowed staff to respond more quickly to operational needs, reduced transaction costs, and encouraged vendor participation in smaller and mid-sized projects. He noted that these improvements helped change the perception among vendors and encouraged them to pursue work with the City. He added that the City had maintained compliance and oversight while reducing administrative burden. Wybensinger stated that staff had engaged in extensive discussions over the previous month to better understand Council's perspective. He explained that he had met with Director Bury multiple times and had also discussed the issue with Senior Director Schultz, Senior Director Vollmer, and Mayor Jadwin. He stated that staff continued to align decision-making with the Our Gahanna Strategic Plan, including Goal 2 A.16, which called for streamlined procurement and financial practices. He explained that staff wanted procurement rules that employees could understand and apply quickly and that vendors could easily navigate when doing business with the City.

Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger presented the administration's recommended adjustments to the procurement thresholds. He

recommended maintaining the current $10,000 micro-purchase threshold with no changes. He recommended modifying the small purchase threshold to $149,999, which would move the City closer to the threshold used by Upper Arlington. He stated that staff anticipated other municipalities would continue increasing thresholds as costs of goods and services continued to rise. He explained that the small purchase category would still require multiple competitive quotes, which matched the current process. Wybensinger also recommended creating a third category called the competitive solicitation threshold. Under this proposal, any purchase exceeding $150,000, regardless of whether the purchase involved professional services, equipment, or construction, would require Council authorization for the Mayor to enter into the agreement. He stated that combining the competitive proposal and sealed bid language into a single threshold would simplify the procurement process and clarify when Council authorization was required. He explained that the change would maintain compliance while allowing the City to respond quickly when operational needs arose.

Councilmember Renner thanked Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger for presenting the recommendation and asked whether the proposed $150,000 threshold aligned with practices used by other central Ohio municipalities. Wybensinger responded that the recommendation aligned with the Upper Arlington example previously provided and noted that many municipalities had moved toward thresholds near $100,000 and were gradually increasing them. Councilmember Renner stated that he appreciated the administration's attention to internal processes and vendor accessibility. He explained that efficient procurement helped ensure vendors could participate easily and complete projects for the City. He also stated that residents frequently reviewed Council agendas to track project status and understand when infrastructure improvements might occur in their neighborhoods. He explained that lowering the threshold would place more project discussions on the public agenda, which would increase the information available to residents. He acknowledged that this approach would require additional administrative work but stated that it would allow residents to follow project timelines more closely. He added that upcoming capital improvement planning discussions would also connect to these project updates. Councilmember Renner stated that he supported the recommendation to reduce the threshold from $250,000 to $150,000. Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger responded that he appreciated the feedback but

expressed some concern about using procurement thresholds primarily as a communication mechanism. He explained that additional procurement procedures could add weeks to project timelines because formal competitive solicitation processes required additional administrative steps. He stated that staff aimed to remain responsive to community needs and worried that additional procurement steps could slow projects unnecessarily. He acknowledged that government processes already required multiple steps and emphasized that staff wanted to maintain efficiency whenever possible. Councilmember Renner responded that he understood the concern but believed government should move deliberately to ensure public understanding and participation. He reiterated his support for the administration's recommendation.

Mayor Jadwin addressed the discussion and thanked Councilmember Renner for his comments. She stated that the administration shared the goal of transparency and accountability when communicating with residents. She explained that adding more contract approvals to Council agendas might not necessarily improve communication about project timelines. She noted that contracts often appeared on the agenda months before construction or project work began because additional steps followed vendor selection. She stated that residents sometimes misunderstood these steps and assumed work would begin immediately after Council discussion. Mayor Jadwin referenced the annexation discussion earlier in the meeting and explained that annexation represented only one step within a longer development process. Mayor Jadwin stated that the City could find a balanced approach that addressed Council's interest in transparency while preserving administrative flexibility. She explained that rising costs required the City to maintain flexibility when locking in vendor pricing. She suggested that the proposed $150,000 threshold could balance those needs while additional reporting mechanisms, particularly through the implementation of the Our Gahanna Strategic Plan, could enhance communication with Council and the public. Mayor Jadwin concluded that the proposed approach represented a reasonable compromise that addressed Council's concerns while preserving operational efficiency.

Councilmember Bowers thanked the administration for presenting a recommendation and sought clarification regarding the proposed changes. She noted that eliminating the Ohio Revised Code competitive

bidding requirement and establishing a small purchase threshold up to $149,999 would nearly double the current competitive bid threshold established under state law for certain contracts. She stated that the change would reduce the number of contracts requiring requests for bids that would come before council and asked for clarification on that point. Director Bury responded that most construction contracts currently exceeded $150,000 due to present-day costs. She stated that when Council reviewed legislation related to competitive bidding, most contracts presented already exceeded the $150,000 level. Councilmember Bowers stated that she believed Council had recently received a request for bid item under $100,000 and asked whether that was accurate. Senior Director Schultz responded that she was likely referring to the purchase of a tangible good, which did not fall under the same bid requirement. He explained that the item was not a bid-based procurement. He recalled an example from the previous year involving streetlight pole painting. That project initially exceeded the bid threshold and required a formal bidding process; however, the City did not receive acceptable bids. Staff then reduced the project scope below the bid threshold so the City could obtain three quotes and complete the work. He explained that this example demonstrated how the proposed change could allow the City to complete work more efficiently. He also referenced traffic signal work planned at Morrison Road and Hamilton Road totaling approximately $188,000, which had already been bid. He stated that most construction-related work exceeded the $150,000 level unless it involved relatively small projects. Councilmember Bowers stated that Council had not previously received notice that the administration would propose increasing the competitive bid threshold. She explained that she had not yet had an opportunity to review past requests for bids in detail to determine where they fell within the threshold range. She then addressed the difference between a $150,000 threshold and the $100,000 threshold she previously proposed. She explained that the purchase order data provided showed 31 purchase orders exceeding $100,000 over a four-year period, which averaged approximately seven or eight items per year. She noted that recent updates to Council rules allowed resolutions to pass with a single reading, which would limit delays in approving contracts. Based on that volume, she stated that the additional Council approvals required under a $100,000 threshold would likely have minimal impact on timelines. Councilmember Bowers reiterated her appreciation for the administration's effort to respond to Council's comments and stated that she supported raising the competitive bid threshold above the

Ohio Revised Code level, though she believed $100,000 might be more appropriate than $150,000.

Vice President Jones thanked the administration for continuing the discussion and presenting a proposal. She stated that the conversation involved multiple numerical thresholds and complex procedural changes, which made it difficult to visualize the overall effect. She requested an updated version of the procurement decision tree showing the current policy and the proposed changes, preferably using visual distinctions such as color coding to clarify how the process would change. She stated that a visual representation would help Council better understand which items would appear before council and which would remain administrative. Vice President Jones also stated that she believed the discussion had begun blending two different topics: procurement policy and communication with residents. She explained that she viewed those issues as separate discussions. While she supported informing residents about City activities, she noted that procurement policy focused on internal processes rather than resident-facing communication. She suggested that Council separate those conversations to avoid confusion. Senior Director Schultz responded that staff had previously discussed reporting mechanisms through the implementation of the strategic plan and that additional reporting would likely occur through that process. He stated that Council and the administration likely shared similar goals regarding transparency and communication. He explained that differences in opinion primarily centered on the specific threshold amounts rather than the overall intent of the policy. He added that procurement approvals alone would not fully address communication challenges because many projects required long timelines between contract approval and visible construction activity.

President Weaver thanked the administration for presenting a recommendation and acknowledged the extensive discussions that had taken place in recent weeks. He stated that he appreciated the administration's effort to incorporate council's feedback into the proposal. He asked for clarification regarding the proposed third procurement category labeled "competitive solicitation." Specifically, he asked whether the proposal would simplify the bidding process by allowing flexibility between sealed bids and requests for proposals. Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger explained that the proposal aimed to streamline the ordinance language. Under the proposed system, staff

could determine whether a sealed bid or a proposal process best suited the procurement. He stated that both processes would still follow applicable procurement rules, but staff would choose the method that best served the City's interests. He cited the streetlight pole painting project as an example where a proposal process might produce better vendor participation than a formal bid process. President Weaver stated that the example helped illustrate the issue and acknowledged that procurement processes could create barriers for some vendors. He noted that smaller businesses sometimes lacked the capacity to complete complex bidding documentation. He expressed support for maintaining flexibility that could help smaller vendors compete for City projects, including minority-owned, women-owned, and small local businesses. Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger confirmed that smaller businesses often struggled with full competitive procurement requirements because they lacked administrative staff to complete the documentation. He stated that proposals or quotes often allowed those businesses to compete more effectively. He noted that many small contractors viewed contracts between $100,000 and $150,000 as significant opportunities, even though those amounts represented relatively modest projects for the City. President Weaver then asked whether the City tracked whether vendors qualified as small, minority-owned, or women-owned businesses. Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger stated that the City encouraged the use of those businesses but did not currently track that data through a formal reporting process. He explained that implementing such tracking would require modifications to the procurement process. Councilmember Renner noted that similar programs at the county level used voluntary disclosure forms and required vendors to register with the state Department of Commerce. Director Bury added that the City already maintained a vendor registration packet and could include optional fields allowing vendors to identify themselves as minority-owned or women-owned businesses. She stated that the City's accounting system could record that information if Council wished to track it. President Weaver stated that collecting that information could help council evaluate whether procurement policies encouraged participation by smaller businesses. He also referenced the purchase order analysis previously provided by Director Bury and asked how difficult it would be to produce similar reports in the future. Director Bury indicated that generating the report was manageable. President Weaver stated that he found the purchase order analysis extremely helpful and suggested that regular reporting

could provide Council with a clearer understanding of procurement activity. He concluded that he supported increasing the threshold from $79,568 but believed that a $100,000 threshold might be more appropriate than $150,000.

Councilmember Renner stated that he had no further questions but wished to clarify two points for the record. First, he disagreed with the suggestion that procurement and public communication represented separate discussions. He stated that procurement represented one of the most powerful functions of government and inherently served as a form of public reporting. Second, he emphasized that procurement thresholds should reflect current market conditions. He stated that labor costs had increased significantly in recent years and that many smaller projects now exceeded $150,000 due to those increases. He explained that labor, rather than materials, often represented the largest cost component in modern contracts. He also noted that small, minority-owned, and emerging businesses frequently faced disadvantages when competing under complex procurement procedures. For those reasons, he expressed greater comfort with the $150,000 threshold.

Vice President Jones summarized the discussion and reiterated her request for an updated procurement decision tree illustrating the potential policy changes. She stated that Council would continue discussing the matter during future committee meetings as members worked toward a resolution. She asked the administration whether they had any additional questions for Council. Hearing none, she asked whether the updated decision tree could be prepared before the next committee meeting. Staff indicated that they would provide it in advance of the next meeting. Vice President Jones thanked the administration for developing the recommendation and for continuing to work collaboratively with Council on the issue.

2. Second Quarter (April, May, June) Honorary Resolutions Discussion

2026-0002 Resolutions Calendar for 2026

Vice President Jones introduced the next agenda item regarding honorary resolutions. She explained that earlier in the year Council discussed reviewing the recognitions completed during the previous year

in order to plan ahead for the current year. She noted that the materials attached in Legistar showed the recognitions completed during the second quarter of the previous year. Vice President Jones opened the discussion for Council preferences regarding which recognitions should continue during the second quarter of the current year. She stated that she was interested in continuing the Juneteenth recognition and invited input from Council and the Mayor, noting that several recognitions had been joint proclamations the previous year.

Councilmember Renner stated that he wished to lead the Earth Day resolution. He explained that he had contacted the Mayor earlier regarding the topic. Councilmember Renner noted that the 2026 Earth Day theme was "Our Power, Our Planet." He explained that the theme emphasized collective action, community involvement, and the ability of individuals to advance environmental progress. He proposed shifting the Earth Day resolution to focus on future action rather than solely recognizing the holiday retrospectively. Councilmember Renner suggested using the resolution as an opportunity to encourage community participation by asking residents, churches, educators, and organizations to complete simple environmental actions such as planting trees or installing rain gardens. He also noted that the City already hosted litter cleanup events and recycling programs. He suggested creating a forward-looking resolution that could encourage community involvement and allow council to report on the progress the following year.

Councilmember Bowers stated that she wished to introduce a resolution recognizing Mental Health Awareness Month in May. She noted that the City had previously recognized maternal mental health and related observances but believed it would be appropriate to recognize the broader mental health awareness month given the attention and resources dedicated to mental health within the community. She asked whether the Mayor would be interested in participating in a joint proclamation. Mayor Jadwin stated that she had already recognized Mental Health Awareness Month previously and invited Councilmember Bowers and Council to join her in expanding the recognition as a broader proclamation.

Vice President Jones asked whether Herb Week would remain on the list of recognitions. Councilmember Padova confirmed that it would remain

and stated that she had been working with Clerk VanMeter regarding the recognition. She noted that Herb Day occurred on the first Saturday in May and stated that the recognition should occur during the first council meeting in May. Councilmember Padova added that Clerk VanMeter had contacted Tom Gregory to determine whether he could provide another presentation regarding the Herb Ladies. She stated that the presentation could continue providing historical insights about Gahanna and that the recognition would be fitting given the City's new Council meeting location and the opportunity to honor the community's history.

President Weaver stated that the list of second-quarter recognitions appeared appropriate and that all represented worthwhile causes. He stated that he supported moving forward with the recognitions.

Councilmember Bowers stated that the ALS recognition from the previous year had been more of a special recognition and did not necessarily need to occur annually, though she acknowledged that the cause remained worthy of recognition.

President Weaver noted that additional recognitions could occur throughout the year to celebrate specific accomplishments within the community. He stated that he had recently learned of a young individual in the community who had performed noteworthy work and that he planned to bring forward a recognition after contacting the individual. He encouraged Councilmembers who wished to lead recognitions to coordinate with Clerk VanMeter and to connect with the administration if they wished to pursue joint proclamations with the Mayor.

Vice President Jones thanked the members for the discussion. She stated that the purpose of the conversation was to plan ahead rather than create an exhaustive list and that Council could still introduce recognitions later in the year as needed. She explained that the discussion aimed to avoid last-minute scheduling and expressed appreciation for everyone reviewing the list and providing input.

H. ITEMS FROM THE CITY ATTORNEY:

RES-0009-2026 A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CITY ATTORNEY TO ENTER INTO THE SIX REMNANT DEFENDANTS SETTLEMENT.

City Attorney Tamilarasan presented a resolution requesting

authorization to enter the City into the Six Remnant Defendants Settlement. She explained that the settlement involved six remaining companies identified as participants in the national opioid settlement agreements. She stated that, consistent with previous resolutions adopted by council, the City sought authorization to enter into the settlement and receive the funds as they were distributed.

Vice President Jones asked whether Council had any questions or discussion. Hearing none, she stated that Council would place the resolution on the Consent Agenda for the March 16, 2026, meeting.

Recommendation: Introduction/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 3/16/2026.

I. 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 16th *day of* March *2026.*

Jamille Jones