



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Finance Committee

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

Michael Schnetzer, Chair
Karen J. Angelou
Merisa K. Bowers
Nancy R. McGregor
Kaylee Padova
Stephen A. Renner
Trenton I. Weaver

Jeremy A. VanMeter, Clerk of Council

Monday, November 28, 2022

City Hall, Council Chambers

Immediately following the Committee of the Whole meeting on November 28, 2022

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Councilmember Michael Schnetzer, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:00 p.m. The agenda for the meeting was published on November 23, 2022. All members were present for the meeting. There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

B. DISCUSSIONS:

1. FY 2023 Budget

Chairman Schnetzer said he had a couple of housekeeping notes. The Mayor is not present today, as she is feeling a bit under the weather. Therefore, Director of Administrative Services Miranda Vollmer is going to lead the presentation. He noted that for anybody that might be viewing at home or anybody in Council Chambers that was not here for the last Finance Committee discussion, Council has been submitting questions to the Administration in advance so that they can come back with more complete answers to make the best use of time in Chambers. A couple other questions dealt with staffing, and they were sort of intertwined and connected, so the ask from the Administration was that they could come back with a broader presentation as opposed to taking them piecemeal.

2. Staffing

Director Vollmer said she is here on behalf of Mayor Jadwin's administration to present on the 2023 staffing recommendation request. She noted for Councilmember Angelou that she had the organizational charts that Angelou previously requested and would get those to Council this week. In this presentation, Vollmer said the goal is to answer questions from November 14 under the general government heading, questions numbered one and two,

and from November 21, the HR questions numbered two and three. This presentation includes organizational charts that are found in the budget book. Items marked in yellow are 2023 new positions that are being requested. Items marked in green are 2023 reclassifications. Items marked in blue are existing. Vollmer first reviewed the City's organizational structure, which can be found on page 10 of the budget book. After the staffing presentation, she said the administration will talk about the budget impact questions that were asked a couple weeks ago, and then Director Ferrell has some follow up items on the Street Tree Program questions from last week.

Vollmer said that on page 10 is the proposed City's organizational structure, which you can see as the two new senior directors, the senior deputy director, and then aligns all eight departments underneath those positions. With Public Safety, the chief of police and the Division reports directly to the director of public safety. This is on page 87. The recommendation and request for 2023 is to add a mental health clinician that would be paid for out of the Public Safety Fund with an anticipated chargeback for services with Mifflin Township.

Councilmember Angelou asked if there had been any word from Mifflin Township on this. Chief Spence said the last update he had was this was still working through their budget process. He reminded that if the township does not wish to cost share in that position, then the Department would just come back, have a presentation in front of Council, and see if a supplemental appropriation for the full salary amount was warranted.

Vollmer continued with the Department of Engineering, which can be found on page 108. On the operations side, Council will see in the next few slides for the operational departments, the senior director of operational services followed by the senior deputy director at the top. Those will be in yellow throughout the presentation as those are 2023 additions being requested. Largely, the Department of Engineering consists of a reclassification of job titles, not pay grades. When Director Komlanc started, he reviewed his staffing levels and what was currently here. With vacancies that had occurred in his Department, he realigned that department. In green is the senior civil engineer of transportation and mobility. That is just a rename from the assistant city engineer. The project administrator was formerly the development engineer. Due to the increased workload from engineering with the funding for capital improvements and the increased economic development in Gahanna, this position will allow for a single point of contact for developers and permitting and will assist with a wide range of engineering projects, not just focus on development as that comes and goes. In addition, the project administrator I was at the beginning of this year reclassified to a supervisor position to supervise project inspectors. So, this is the title change to project administrator II to reflect the difference in those two positions.

Vollmer explained a couple changes with the Department of Public Service, which can be found on page 96. The first change is the senior director and the deputy director and then a maintenance worker under the Streets

Division. That funding is 25 percent from the Street Fund and 75 percent from the Enterprise Funds. This position will replace two-part time team members and seasonals that have been budgeted in previous years, as the City has been unable to fill those. This will be at a cost savings of over \$67,000 to the City. In addition, some other updates to public service include the electrician position being removed due to it being vacant since it was being added to the budget and workforce issues recruiting for that. In February 2022, through a supplemental appropriation, the utility supervisor was added. That employee started in October 2022. The operations manager which was vacant in 2022 was removed from the 2023 request. Vollmer said they continue to review staffing to ensure that existing employees are being utilized appropriately. Once a new director gets on boarded, should that position need to be added back or reimagined to something else, there could be a request for supplemental that is possible in 2023. It is hoped that the City will begin to onboard a new director in January of next year.

Councilmember McGregor clarified on the maintenance worker with the yellow box on Vollmer's presentation. She said the chart in the budget book looks a little different. Councilmember Angelou also noted the page was different from what Vollmer was referring to. McGregor said she thinks that it is just that the maintenance worker is a different position from what is on the budget book. Vollmer said she had to stretch the org charts out to help fit them on the screen, so that might be some of the differences, too. Chairman Schnetzer said it looks like the line still rolls up under the streets foreman. The position is listed. The layouts slightly differ. Vollmer said, yes, this is because of the spacing on the PowerPoint slide. All of those positions report up to the streets and utilities supervisor. He has direct oversight for all of those positions on all the downlines, except for the utility supervisor is the direct supervisor for the utility foreman and the equipment operators. The streets foreman, equipment operators, and maintenance worker report directly to the superintendent. McGregor asked, looking back at Engineering, is there an engineer that looks at water? There used to be a water resources engineer. Vollmer confirmed that this position was retitled to senior civil engineer for utilities. Jim Turner was rehired in October.

Vollmer noted that next is the Department of Planning. She said that this year the Department had a vacancy in the planning and zoning administrator role. Vollmer said that she, along with Director Blackford, tried for many attempts to hire a planning and zoning administrator but were unsuccessful. They changed that position to a management analyst for planning. That person operates as a planner, assisting Director Blackford with plan review getting some additional training as well. That was a change of planning and zoning administrator at a C18 that was changed to a C13 for that planner position.

Regarding the Parks & Recreation Department, Vollmer said that due to the size of that department, she split the visual into a slide for recreation and a separate slide for parks. With recreation, there is one new request and one reclassification request. The new request is for a part-time recreation coordinator, one for aquatics, with funding coming out of the Parks & Rec

Special Fund. The Aquatics Division requires months of preparation to prepare an adequate training and implementation for that large operation, so this additional part-time year-round position will assist in the preparation and coordination of the large seasonal staff that is on boarded for the summer. The next request for recreation is in green, the recreation supervisor. That position is currently held by a recreation coordinator II. It is a request to reclassify that position to a supervisor. The funding for that is also out of the Parks & Rec Special Fund. This position is responsible for community events and activities. They also manage the seasonal staff for events and paddle boats. The other half of Parks & Recreation is the Parks Department. Vollmer noted that the yellow box midway down is a supervisor of forestry. She noted this was talked about at the last meeting. The request is being made after the job audit was conducted due to the work being performed at a supervisory level. The Department would be adding a supervisor for forestry as the new position. The forestry foreman will remain. Vice President Bowers asked if the horticulturist position is currently filled or vacant. Vollmer said the position is currently filled.

Switching to the administrative side, Vollmer continued with the structure of the Department of Finance. The senior director of administrative services is a reclassification in green and again the senior deputy director is in yellow, as it is an add. The finance analyst positions are funded out of the General Fund. The green one is a request to reclassify a current administrative coordinator as a finance analyst so this person can perform higher-level tasks related to accounts payable, financial reconciliations, financial reporting, and data analysis. The new add, the yellow finance analyst, is to oversee the procurement policy that was adopted by Council during 2022 and streamline procurement by assisting other departments with procurement issues, such as pricing and shipping. Councilmember Angelou clarified the listing of "finance analyst (3)." Vollmer clarified that the City currently has one finance analyst and one administrative coordinator. The request is to add one finance analyst and reclassify a current employee to a finance analyst, so there would be a total of three or a net add of one in the Department of Finance. Chairman Schnetzer noted positions in green are reclassifications and positions in yellow are new additions.

Vollmer moved on to the request in Human Resources. There is a request to add a risk management and safety administrator out of the General Fund. This position will report directly to the senior deputy director to reestablish and update the City's safety programs and policies, establish and manage a comprehensive safety training program for City employees, and in addition, maintain the City's risk insurance program. Vollmer said as former Director Crawford left the City, the risk management and property liability insurance formerly fell under Public Service. That is being realigned under the administrative services. She explained that this involves a large amount of work to ensure that the City's risk program and insurance is the best it can be to protect the City.

With the Department of Information Technology, there is a request for two

additional positions. One is the asset administrator, which would be funded 30 percent out of the Parks & Rec Special Fund, 30 percent out of the Public Service Special Fund, and 40 percent out of the General Fund. This position would be the technical expert to the CityWorks asset management application as it is being utilized by Public Service, Engineering, and Parks & Recreation. It would ensure continuity across the platform, implement requested changes, provide technical support and training while following best management practices. Additional tasks for this position would be managing database records, including users, equipment, labor rates, materials, supplies, adjusting individual service requests, and also assist the GIS administrator with the asset management program. The second request is for a CAD administrator. The funding is 25 percent out of the General Fund and 75 percent out of the Public Safety Special Fund. This would serve as the technical expert to the computer-aided dispatch or the "CAD" and records management system or "RMS" application utilized by the Division of Police. Vollmer noted that as previously discussed, the City and the Division will be implementing a new CAD system in 2023. The funding for that is in the budget. This position will be a critical part of the implementation. A few years ago, Chief Spence requested a technical services analyst that was approved by Council. It never panned out during the hiring process and then the pandemic hit, so it was removed from the budget. Vollmer shared that this is a similar position, just with a different title in IT to support the Division of Police and all the technology that they have to do their operations. Vice President Bowers asked if records would still be housed within Public Safety or fall into this role somehow. Chief Spence said when they use the term records management system, that is how the Division generates all of its reporting. CAD is the dispatching side with the field-based reporting, crash reporting, incident reporting, and offense reporting, aggregating all of that data that is housed in the Division's records management system. It is really not the same as a records person, such as someone that is fulfilling public records requests. Bowers asked if the staffing position that is fulfilling public records requests is staying within Public Safety. Chief Spence asked if Bowers was speaking specifically to the CAD administrator or in general. Vollmer said there is a current employee who fulfills records request. Chief said that is correct. Bowers said that is staying then within GPD. Chief confirmed.

Vollmer said the next department is Mayor's Court. There are no requested changes to Mayor's Court. It is just the reporting structure showing the senior director of administrative services.

The next department is Economic Development. Vollmer said the green position is the economic development administrator position. This was a reclassification from a manager at a C20 to an administrator level at C17. This position is currently vacant and posted for applications right now. Vice President Bowers asked why the reclassification being recommended. Vollmer said that was recommended after reviewing best practices in the Central Ohio area. Many other economic development departments of this size have an economic development administrator as well. Vollmer said that

after discussions with Director Strum and how his department operates, it made more sense to have both of those positions reporting directly to him instead of having a manager and somebody reporting there because of the functions of those two different positions. Bowers asked if that reclassification might create any difficulty in filling that position. She asked if both of those [economic development] positions are vacant currently. Vollmer said that is correct. They are both posted. Bowers asked if Vollmer thought that the classification from C20 down to C17 would make it harder to fill. Vollmer said she did not think so. She thinks the job market, the labor market in general, is tight for all positions. She has not had a chance to look to see how many people have applied yet. She said both positions were posted right before Thanksgiving.

Vollmer said all those departments are wrapped up into the requested reorganization in the Mayor's Office. She showed the chart that depicts this information. She thought this was on or around page 57. In the green is the senior director of administrative services reclassification. And then the three additional in yellow, the senior director of operations, senior deputy director, and the risk management safety administrator reporting directly to the senior deputy director. The risk management and safety administrator listed in the budget book shows as reporting to the HR manager. Vollmer stated that after additional information about the risk management and property and liability insurance that came to light recently, it was decided that it should report directly to the senior deputy director up to the senior director. That position will service citywide items, not just HR items. The funding for the senior director of administrative services is 25 percent split between HR, Finance, IT and the Mayor's Office. That is the same split for the senior deputy director. The senior director of operations split is 20 percent from Parks & Recreation, Public Service, Planning, the Public Service Special Revenue Fund where Engineering is funded out of, and then the Mayor's Office. Chairman Schnetzer confirmed that the senior director of administrative services is funded out of departments, not different funds. Vollmer said this is correct, as these departments were within the General Fund.

Councilmember Angelou asked if the risk management position was a new one. Vollmer said it was in the budget book under the HR department. Chairman Schnetzer said Vollmer had acknowledged that an edit has been made organizationally moving it from HR to the Mayor's Office. Vollmer said this is correct. Schnetzer asked if it would be possible to have a PDF file of this presentation sent to Council afterwards. Vollmer confirmed she would send it. President Renner asked if the Clerk could take that presentation and print for incorporation into the budget books in the appropriate locations. Schnetzer asked if there was a way to get one chart for the entire organization. He did not mean every single lifeguard listed or anything like that, but something that would be comprehensive. Vollmer asked if anyone cared how big this was. She said she can have GIS staff print one on the plot printer. It would be rather large. Schnetzer said if it was in a PDF file, he personally can make it work. Councilmembers said an electronic copy would be fine. Vollmer said they are all separate, so it might take her the rest of the

week but could be provided.

Councilmember Padova said she had asked a question a couple weeks ago and thinks she was not very clear in asking it or she did not understand the answer correctly. Regarding the senior deputy director, are all of these departments reporting up to the senior deputy director and then that person is going to report to the director of operational services and administrative services or are they essentially on the same level as Engineering, Public Service, Planning, Financing, and Human Resources, etc. Vollmer said the senior deputy director's direct reporting line is to the senior director of administrative services. The departments report directly to those senior directors. The senior deputy director's only direct report is the risk management and safety administrator. Padova said she was a little bit confused when she saw it listed in all of the other departments, but supposed it was due to the fact that the position would be interacting with all of those other departments as well. Is that correct? Vollmer said yes.

Councilmember Weaver said with respect to general staffing, since Council passed the salary ordinance, has Director Vollmer gotten a sense in terms of recruitment or attraction and retention that this is helping. Are we where we need to be? Vollmer said, yes, she thinks it is helping. The HR department issued memos after Council passed the new compensation plan that gave employees details on what they were moving to, to be realigned in the step program, and also indicated the amount of their new wage next year on their anniversary date that they would get from their step. This was around October. She said the resignations have slowed dramatically since that time. For current recruitment, some of the current positions we have vacated are difficult to fill positions in general. For example, we have a systems administrator position open in IT. Those are always hard to fill positions in the public sector just because of the amount of money that private sector pays for someone who is a systems administrator. She added that the other positions that have come open so far, the City has not had any trouble filling line-level employees, our maintenance workers, those types of jobs. The City runs civil service tests for those. There are always at least 20 to 30 people out for those. She said that with part of the salary ordinances and compensation plan, too, it enabled the City to hire some people back. Jim Turner, for instance, with that new comp plan, the planner, and it enabled the City to fully staff the recreation department, which had not been done in a while. Chairman Schnetzer said to underscore the comment about the labor market being tight, he had read an article that quoted the Cleveland Fed President in saying that in her conversations with businesses and their district that despite a consensus that the economy may be leaning toward recession, a lot of the businesses have reported to her that they intended to hold on to their employees because they envision it being so hard to get them back. This is quite an interesting development, as with past recessions unemployment is sort of the signature hallmark of how you identify them.

3. Budget Impact

Director Vollmer asked if everyone received a handout on budget impacts. You can see across the top it has the different funds. The first line has the new unclassified positions. That includes the yellow on the org charts. That does not include the deputy director or the senior director of operations, as those are detailed later in the "new org." There was a follow-up question asking for the cost for those three positions. The first line with \$247,102 is salary and then underneath it the \$151,821 is total fringe, which includes insurance. There are the totals for the General Fund, Public Service Fund, Public Safety Fund and Parks & Recreation Fund. Underneath there, you will see the 2022 communications technician add. That position was approved in this year's budget. However, due to some budget changes at the last minute, it was actually missed in the appropriation ordinance. The administration never came back to ask for a supplemental because the City has been struggling to hire communications technicians this year. Therefore, the administration actually had not needed the funding. Vollmer noted the City did just have two individuals accept conditional offers for those jobs, though. This is something that was missed in this year's appropriation. The next one where it says new org, the \$214,910 is salaries. The total fringe is \$36,235. The rest of the fringes on this page do not include insurance. It is listed at the bottom. She said you will see the senior director of operations split 20 percent. The next couple lines are the union contracts and negotiated increases. The first one, the FOP-OLC, is our communications technicians that run our dispatch room. The \$87,642 is salary and fringe is underneath. Following that is the FOP contract, which is our police officers, sergeants, and lieutenants. She noted you also see under the Public Safety Fund an amount over there as well, as some of our school resource officers and community liaison officer are funded out of there. The next line is the United Steel Workers, a new contract. We are currently negotiating their contract. This is an estimate. There is money out of the General Fund and the Parks & Rec Fund for this. The impact of the General Fund is lower on these positions, as the ones that are in Public Service are paid out enterprise funds primarily. She said this is an estimate that could go higher or lower depending on contract negotiations. The next line says "UNC," that is unclassified, or the new compensation program that we just discussed. There is money in the General Fund for that, as well as the Parks & Recreation Fund. The next line is unclassified employees' reclassifications that Vollmer talked about that were listed in green. Included here is the administrative coordinator in finance reclassified to a finance analyst, that is a going from C12 to a C13. The reason there is a reduction here is because the marketing manager was at a C19. That was reclassified to a marketing specialist at a C13. That employee was hired earlier this year. Also, again, she noted the economic development manager from a C20 down to economic development administrator at C17. This is a net savings to the City. For the next lines, Vollmer explained these are net changes to uniform allowance due to rising costs, the net insurance change, that is insurance for all of the positions we just talked about excluding the new unclassified positions. Because those are new and vacant, Vollmer said the administrations automatically budgets for family insurance. Therefore, this can change depending on what the selected coverage is that the new positions picks. This is the insurance change for the rest of the city

population and then the net miscellaneous salary changes and fringe changes are those reductions that are due to attrition, other 2022 changes, or allocation changes for employees. She said that would carry across all four funds as well. There is a line on there for police pension, "FOP net," as the City is required to put in per state code.

Vollmer shared a slide on totals in her PowerPoint. The first slide is the total for the new unclassified position. She added the General Fund, Public Safety Fund, Parks & Rec, and Public Service altogether. The total budget impact is \$785,587 across all funds for these positions and including insurance. Chairman Schnetzer said if we were to go back to the org chart portion of the presentation, everything that was in yellow adds up to the \$785,000. Vollmer said it included that, minus the senior director of operations and the senior deputy director. There was a question asking for the detailed breakdown of that which is on the next slide. For organizational changes, there is the General Fund ones that were discussed and then the 20 percent for Public Service and the total \$279,708. This does not include insurance in the fringe. Councilmember Angelou asked if this information will be provided for incorporation into the budget books. Vollmer said she would send them along with the PDF of her PowerPoint.

Vice President Bowers asked with the organizational changes that are on the slide, were these net changes? Vollmer said that is correct. It includes the two new positions, the senior director of operations and the senior deputy director, and then the salary change for the senior director of administrative services because that is technically a reclassification into a different pay grade. Bowers asked if the IT manager will be backfilled. Vollmer said that is correct. Bowers said the director of administrative services would not be backfilled because that would just become the senior director of administrative services. Vollmer said that is correct. The finance manager would be backfilled as well. Bowers said the total of the three positions listed on the slide is the net change and not the total of the three positions. Vollmer said that is correct. Chairman Schnetzer confirmed whether this slide included insurance. Vollmer said it was everything but insurance. Schnetzer asked why that was. Director Bury provided an explanation, which was not fully audible. Bowers concluded that the insurance would be captured on the net new. Vollmer said that total will fluctuate based on the four tiers insurance and whoever the new employee is and what tier they select. Bowers asked if the senior directors would be at a C24. Vollmer said she would look up to confirm. Chairman Schnetzer asked Director Bury about the General Fund category, the \$1,797,000 which ties out to page 49 in the budget book. Can she help to understand the approximately \$100,000 that is shown as a reduction under net miscellaneous salary changes and net miscellaneous fringe changes? He said Vollmer touched on it very briefly. He is just trying to figure out how to make the math work there. Vollmer said the senior directors are pay grade C26. The senior deputy director is at C25. Current directors are at C24. Schnetzer clarified with Bury that the first column towards the bottom of the sheet, there is that miscellaneous salary changes and net miscellaneous fringe changes that approximate about \$100,000. He is

curious as to what might be lumped in those categories. Bury said what she was able to do was isolate who the new positions were. She was able to isolate the union contract changes and the unclassified changes. What she was not able to narrow down to individual items were things that have occurred since the 2022 budget was passed. She noted the City had some attrition. The City had some employees leave that were higher paid that have had new people come in that are being paid less potentially than what their counterparts who had left the city were making. Bury said the City also had some allocation changes, and also changing some positions - the ones Vollmer had mentioned that the City was trying to hire maybe a higher-level position, but then determined that we were not having any success. So, a decision was made to back those down a little bit. Bury said it was basically just capturing what she could. These were the final pieces that are just due to changes that occurred since the budget was originally passed in 2022 to what we are dealing with now. Bury is reconciling to the amended, or revised, budget, not the original budget. This involved isolating what she could and then chalking up the rest to people that left, changes in who the City was going to hire, and allocation changes.

Chairman Schnetzer said he did not receive any additional questions between the last meeting and today. He noted there would be a Finance Committee on the back end of the City Council meeting December 5. He asked for Council to get any additional questions to him. If he has it in his inbox when he logs in Thursday morning, he will make sure to get them to the administration by noon.

4. Street Tree Program

Director Vollmer noted the administration was also prepared to answer the questions on the Street Tree Program tonight.

Stephania Ferrell, Director of Parks & Recreation, thanked the Committee for the opportunity to bring this up again. She created a visual to better articulate the Street Tree Program. This is something that is clearly beneficial but is going to take time and quite a bit of effort in order to implement appropriately. She said that in order for the City to do this successfully, they have taken an evaluation of other surrounding agencies that are similar in size and also some that have a more robust tree program. Ferrell said the Department has really taken a phased approach to what a fully comprehensive Street Tree Program may look like for the City of Gahanna. She said the phases do not necessarily mean years. Phase one could be four years, five years, and so on. It really comes down to making sure that we have a good handle on the inventory of street trees that we currently have before we expand a program that goes beyond what we have the capacity to handle. The costs that are associated with this are an evaluation from 2021. Over time, the expectation is that those values have already inflated. She said that when we have the staffing in place to truly understand what the workload is, that will give us a better understanding. For tonight, she wanted to at least provide an estimation of what the City could expect to see with this program. The first phase for 2023

is involves getting the staffing structure in place so that the City can move forward with some progress with this program. This is the request with the forestry supervisor and backfilling with the forestry foreman. Within that first phase, the Department would take an approach to hazard removals. She explained that today, they only look at hazards based off of a request. The Department is not seeking out those hazards. With phase one, Ferrell said they would actually have a planned approach and formalize a rating system for the City's inventory in order to manage any removals that would be necessary. This could be anything with a significant health decline or structural defects to be removed as part of the program. The City would transition into a policy update. Therefore, the Department would have to manage the current practice and communicate that with residents as well. From a staffing standpoint, with the forestry supervisor and maintenance coordinator, the goal there is to provide not only the supervisory expectation of pushing this project forward, managing the team in the field and a \$120,000 contract. This is not necessarily something that the Department has the capacity to do with its current staffing structure. The maintenance coordinator is an individual who has certain skill sets. Arbor does need skills for running equipment and evaluation of tree health. Ferrell said we would need to have individuals who have that skill set, which is not necessarily easy to find. She referenced Chairman Schnetzer's earlier comment on hiring and added that when you are trying to find qualified staff members who have a specific skill set, it may be even more challenging. That is another reason why taking a phased approach is advantageous for the City. Again, these phases are outlined on the visual. She said this will help to move us towards a fully comprehensive approach which would be removals, maintenance, and then replanting to make sure that we have a handle and the ability to actually improve the City's urban canopy.

Councilmember Weaver asked if we do a lot of what is in phase one already. Ferrell said we only do hazard removals by request. We do not have a formalized approach to planned removals.

Vice President Bowers asked what year Ferrell expects that we are able to roll out phase one. Is Ferrell expecting that we will be able to roll out phase one in a certain timeline 2023-2024? Ferrell responded that phase one will take place in 2023 with the approval of staffing. That would be the inception of moving towards the phase one approach. The hope is to have a rating system in place to then request additional funding in 2024 to complete phase one. Bowers asked if the staffing that is requested in phase one sets up the Department to start engaging in phase two like the pruning by cycle or the code changes, or at least developing a plan for that. Ferrell said absolutely. The plan that the Department has is based off of evaluation from other like agencies, but that is with having a working foreman, and of course the parks and facilities superintendent, as well as a forestry supervisor. These positions will provide a dedicated approach to a program of this stature. Bowers asked if Ferrell thought that the staffing levels requested in this current budget at the classification levels are sufficient. Are both of these positions classified? Ferrell clarified that the supervisor is unclassified. Bowers asked whether the

projected salaries to fill these positions are sufficient. Ferrell said Director Vollmer might be a better person to respond to the question. Vollmer said the forestry supervisor is recommended and requested in the 2023 budget. The maintenance coordinator is not requested. Bowers asked whether this position was stricken? Ferrell said she thinks the question is if the salary request for the forestry supervisor is adequate to gain that employee. Was that the question? Bowers said, yes, that was the question. Vollmer said, yes, it is. Bowers asked with the maintenance coordinator, do we have that person on staff currently? Ferrell said the goal would be to promote an internal staff member into that. It is an elevated position that would require certain certifications or requirements, but the goal would be to promote an internal candidate. Vollmer added that this position is not in the budget request for 2023. She said the goal would be to get the forestry supervisor on boarded first because that more than likely will require a backfill of the forestry foreman. Until we can fully implement these staffing changes and add the supervisor, it is important that we establish positions and allow them to be onboarded properly and trained properly before adding new staff underneath. This serves to enhance the program and ensure it is successful. Vollmer said we have to let that employee be onboarded, have a backfill, and have the job duty separated because right now there is one person performing too many functions and it will be split. If we were to backfill a forestry foreman, that requires special skills as Ferrell stated. Vollmer said that at this time we do not know if there is somebody currently on staff that we can promote or not. That is a civil service position (the foreman position). The City will have to run a civil service test. With this, you are looking around the April time frame before civil service tests can be executed and somebody can actually be hired and onboarded. Bowers asked if that foreman is in phase two. Vollmer said there is a current foreman. This is a second foreman in phase two. Ferrell said once phase three would be fully implemented, we would end up with two forestry foremen underneath that forestry supervisor. Bowers said the reason why she is so interested in this, and she knows the director feels the same, is that this is a really important program to our residents and being able to roll this out ties in with our sidewalk program. Bowers said she wants to make sure that we are putting enough priority in rolling out and implementing this program. It is asked for by residents. Bowers thinks it will work well with our capital program. She stressed the importance in seeing this program move forward, to see that there is the staffing and funding behind it to really get it implemented. Vollmer said it could be a possibility that if the City was able to onboard new employees quicker than anticipated that the administration could come back and ask for a supplemental for additional staffing or for additional contract cost. That is not currently being budgeted. She said that it is very important that as we now have money from Issue 12 that the City plans appropriately for staffing and allows people time to be onboarded and trained properly before we throw brand new things at them. Vollmer stated that is not a successful model for any city or any business. Bowers acknowledged Vollmer's comments but noted that as we promote people, she understands that we would want to make sure that they have got the staff underneath them so that they are not continuing to do the load. Vollmer said, correct, and by establishing the forestry supervisor that will

allow the forestry foreman to be back out in the field and maintaining safe operations when doing tree removals.

Councilmember Angelou said it seemed to her that there might be difficulty finding the right people to be able to do all these things. When this says hazard removals, if a resident were to call and say such tree was a hazard, do the residents have to pay to have them done? Ferrell responded that it is a responsibility of the resident. If we have a situation that, for example, a plow truck cannot get through a street, the City will do those removals and typically do not charge that back to the resident. However, she said that by Code, the City does have the capacity to do so. Angelou asked with the possibility of having this program, would people know what they have to pay if they have this hazard. She said she had a tree taken out that was \$900. Ferrell said the cost really depends on the size of the tree and on the hazard posed, and on what equipment needs to be on site in order to manage it, along with the safety of what's around it. She said it is hard to gauge what exactly that cost could be, but it is not cheap. Ferrell expressed that from the administrative perspective, there is definitely some interest to manage a good, healthy inventory of trees. That is the main goal. Angelou said that the sidewalk was important here as well because the trees are lifting sidewalks up and causing difficulties in walking. Ferrell said some of the concern there as well is there are some tree removals that will happen with the sidewalk program because of the hazards that they are creating with the sidewalks. We do not require to replace the trees, which will impact our canopy negatively if we do not have a plan for it.

President Renner said his comments dovetail with comments from Vice President Bowers on the importance of the Street Tree Program. From Council's perspective, Council does not or should not get into the weeds of what Director Ferrell needs to do. Renner said what Council really wants to understand is, does Ferrell have the resources and can this be done in a timely fashion? That is really the ask. Can Ferrell give Renner a flavor or an idea on what the timeline is that she is projecting? And if Council said that is not doable, how much money does she need in order to make this work? Ferrell said that for now the staffing piece is huge. We need the staff in order to manage the program. She said if we get this structure with our forestry supervisor, along with our forestry foreman in place, that will help to actually manage the project. The Department's goal is to move into phase two within the next three years. Again, this is having a cycle of pruning. Those cycles could be for four to six years based on a cycle. It is going to take time. This is not to say that a replacement program cannot be in place within the four-to-six-year cycle, but it takes the staff and the equipment in order to manage a program of that size. The goal is to get this in place, full phased as quickly as the Department can do it responsibly. Ferrell stressed we did not want to move forward with the fully fledged program if the City does not have the ability to maintain and actually implement what the City promises to the residents. Renner reiterated that the biggie is dollars and time. Could Ferrell express in dollars and in time what was needed to get to phase two? Ferrell said with just time, yes. With dollars, not right now. Renner apologized that he

did not want to put Ferrell on the spot about dollars, but what is the timeline she is projecting to get to phase two? Ferrell said if they are able to hire the individuals in year one, the Department would want to have phase two in progress in three years. Renner shared that he had lost ash trees. He lives on a corner lot. He said the City did have a program that had some structure. He lost four ash trees. Woodside Green lost an abundant number of ash trees because they said that they had a program. Renner said, now all of a sudden, he is being told that in 2022, we do not have a program and we need to redo this program in such a way that it is going to take three more years for us to develop a program. Ferrell said the street trees have always been the residents' responsibility. During the ash borer, there was a program that was put in place because of that impact. When the emerald ash borers came into play, the city did provide a program in order to help reduce that impact because it was substantial. There was opportunity for certain HOAs or residents to opt-in to the program. Some opted out of it and did not want it because there was at that particular time treatments that were available to try to save the trees. She said there was not a comprehensive Street Tree Program. It was a program to manage the emerald ash borer. Understanding that this is very frustrating, this is why with the management of a Street Tree Program would diversify species so that we are not losing an entire neighborhood to one particular tree. Renner said he understands that but that it is frustrating to hear that it is going to take us yet more time in order to get to some level that residents think that we are already there. He said he understands Ferrell's logic but if she needed more dollars, to just say that and then Council can deliberate. Renner said he will be a large proponent of providing that in order to shorten the timeline. Ferrell said the City wants to see this program in full-fledge, but also she wants to be realistic and be responsible. She does not think two years is realistic. It is going to take time to manage the inventory that we do have. She shared that the City at this particular time did not have a proper count. The City needs to start there. She reiterated getting a supervisor in place and trained, getting a foreman in place and trained takes time.

Councilmember Angelou said Gahanna has more trees than any place in the whole region, which is spectacular. She acknowledged it is difficult finding the people to do the work. She thought that it would be difficult unless there are interns and people that are from universities to come in to do this type of work.

Councilmember Weaver said that generally when he was out knocking doors last year that the Street Tree Program, or the idea of one, was probably a top five, if not a top three issue for people. He would love to see this implemented and knows Director Ferrell would, too. To try and get at something that Renner and Bowers were getting at, Weaver said Ferrell had just indicated that it would be about three years to be fully implemented if we get the staffing. But at the moment, there is not a plan for the maintenance coordinator role under phase one in the coming year. Are we now looking at four years in theory? Ferrell said not necessarily. It really comes down to what Director Vollmer stated that we would not move forward with that

maintenance coordinator until we have the upper tiers in place. In the event that we do have our forestry supervisor as well as our forestry foremen, then the Department would evaluate looking at that maintenance coordinator. She said we would not want to hire that individual before having the other two individuals in place. Weaver said he understood. And would she potentially come back for a supplemental or something? Ferrell said potentially if the Department had the capacity and if those positions are filled. Weaver asked if there is model program out there for a similarly situated community that the director is aware of? Ferrell said there are many. The City of Dublin has a robust program. Whether there's is similar in nature, she said in some cases yes, and in some cases no, but that is a model program that the Department is evaluating.

Councilmember McGregor asked if the City had a list of approved street trees that maybe do not have the roots that uproot the sidewalks. Ferrell said the City had a prohibited tree list. By code, there are also street tree requirements that one must meet based off of the tree laws. It determines what size of tree should be planted there. That is in coordination with approval of the city forester. There is a process in order to plant. A person must submit for a right-of-way permit in order to do any work in that right-of-way. McGregor asked if there was a list of trees specifically that are ok and are appropriate for street trees. Ferrell said the City only has the prohibited and not preferred. McGregor suggested that maybe the City should do that - have a preferred list. Ferrell said that is something that would be beneficial. McGregor said she knew that the street adjacent to her street lost all their emerald ash due to the emerald ash borer. She said that somebody in their neighborhood went through and got the names of people that wanted to have a street tree and then they paid so much to have the trees done. They repopulated their trees on their street on their own. McGregor said people did not have to wait for the City to do it. They took it upon themselves to do it. Ferrell said that is definitely something that can be done. We do not require it. McGregor said Ferrell was right that people needed to be cautious of the right-of-way.

Chairman Schnetzer said the program McGregor mentioned worked in conjunction with the City for the permitting and bulk buy with the volume discount and timing of the year. Schnetzer said he thinks they did it in the fall because it was a little bit cheaper at the nursery. He thought the replacement was a Chinese rubber tree or something like that. He said the trees are doing fine now.

Vice President Bowers said in looking at the org chart on page 79, the forestry supervisor would report to the parks superintendent. Does it make sense, since this is such a high priority item for the residents, for there to be a program coordinator specifically for the Street Tree Program? Is that something that could potentially expedite this? Bowers said she sees things in phase two that could be started now like code changes. For Bowers, this is a key Issue 12 program. Ferrell said that with a policy review, that is when we take a look at what needs to come into play for those code changes. Chapters 913 and 914 in our Code would have to be completely rewritten.

This is something that the Department would be prepared to do. This is why in phase one, that policy review also includes that update of that code language as the as the program is rolling out. This is not to say that we have to wait in order to make those strides into that accomplishment, but when Ferrell is looking at the evaluation of what that process looks like, it is policy first and then updating the official code. Bowers said she used that as an example, and what Ferrell said makes sense. She is still wondering would the addition of a street tree program coordinator be helpful in implementing the phases? Ferrell said that with the second foreman coming into play, the thought process there would be to have an arbor team for street trees and an arbor team for parks. She noted there is still work that needs to be done without the Street Tree Program. With that org chart, having those maintenance coordinators, along with the forestry foreman and team members under that hierarchy, Ferrell said the Department would have the capacity to manage the Street Tree Program under the forestry supervisor. Bowers asked if there has been any exploration on a collaboration with Public Service on a shared position. Ferrell said in some capacity, the Department works with Service through the sidewalk program, with the city forester evaluating trees that along the sidewalk program. As far as the Street Tree Program, Ferrell said this would be managed through the Parks & Recreation Department.

Councilmember Padova said she thought that she heard Ferrell say that the three-year timeline is to get to phase two, not phase three. Ferrell said that is correct. Padova asked what the timeline is to then get to phase three? Ferrell said it is hard to say today. It is hard to put a timeline on it because, again, we need to get a handle on our inventory first. Ferrell made it clear that this program is a priority with not only the Department but also with the administration as a whole. She stressed the need to make sure that the City is doing it in an effective way. If we have the staff and the progress in place to get phase three done in three years, then fantastic. It is hard for Ferrell to say the City is going to have this fully done in four years. Padova said if Ferrell had the resources to do so, the timing is not going to be necessarily solved, such as to get to from phase one to phase two. There would be some of those issues, but Padova asked from phase two to phase three, did Ferrell see timing being a little bit less of an issue and the money being the bigger issue than the timing? Ferrell said she would agree. The phases do not associate with years. She reiterated that it is not to say that phase two and three could not happen in one year. Ferrell said that moving into phase two is going to be the timing challenge and the staffing challenge around making sure that we have a good handle on that progress. Phase three is reintroducing trees into our program. Ferrell said she would see that being a shorter timeline. She said the phases were not meant to garner a disappointing response. It really was to show that a Street Tree Program is not as easy as one might think. It is going to take time in order to make sure that it is done the right way.

Chairman Schnetzer said he had been on Council long enough to recognize that these programs sometimes take time to build up. The sidewalk program that was mentioned before was first a thought cloud in 2017. Construction for

the first time is now slated for calendar year 2023.

President Renner thanked Director Ferrell. He applauds her efforts in creating a Street Tree Program. He said Ferrell gave Council details that probably they did not need to really know. He emphasized again, at this level, Council needed to know dollars and time. What do you need in order to get this? What is the program? Just dollars and time. He understands yet may not like the answer.

Chairman Schnetzer said he did have a question about details. This is more so he can wrap his head around where this is going, what the vision is. He noted there has been a lot of talk about staffing. There has been a lot of talk about skill sets. There has been talk about equipment. Schnetzer said he also sees contract cost explicitly listed on all these phases. Is the vision as we sit here today that we will have City staff administer something, and a third party essentially does most or all of it or is this something that Ferrell envisions bringing in-house? Ferrell said the vision is a combination of both. There will be trees that the City will not have the capacity, nor want to have in order to take down. It could be that they are too large, and it is a liability. She said the City will be able to manage some of that in-house, but it will also be managing a contract in order to get the work done.

Councilmember McGregor asked if the vocational schools, Eastland or Fairfield, had a program in street tree maintenance or something like that. Ferrell said she did not know but would definitely be interesting to learn about it if they did. Ferrell said the Department has its team members in place in order to at least acclimate them into that skillset. For certification for an ISA certified arborist, one must have so many years of actual on-the-job knowledge before they have the capacity to even sit for certification. If we are asking somebody off the street to join the Department's team, with that certification they are going to need some type of skill in order to do so. She explained this is why the Department has that tier with team members in order to at least have the ability to gain the skills or the timeframe that is necessary to progress them into a certified arborist. Director Vollmer noted that she and Director Strum are working with the vocational schools in the area to be more present in their classrooms for recruiting efforts and civil service exams because you can time civil service exams up with when people graduate.

[ORD-0074-2022](#)

AN ORDINANCE TO MAKE APPROPRIATIONS FOR CURRENT EXPENSES AND OTHER EXPENDITURES OF THE CITY OF GAHANNA, OHIO DURING THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2023

**Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 12/5/2022;
Second Reading/Adoption on Regular Agenda on 12/19/2022.**

C. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Finance Committee, the Chair adjourned

