

CITY OF GAHANNA CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION

TO: Members of the City of Gahanna Charter Review Commission

FROM: Ethan Charles Barnhardt, Chair

DATE: April 3, 2026

RE: Proposed Charter Language for Articles III and XI of the Gahanna City Charter

The attached draft language addresses two proposed amendments to the City of Gahanna Charter.

Article III — Strategic Plan

This proposed amendment builds on the input and conversations the Commission has had to date regarding the Administration’s proposal to embed a strategic planning requirement in the Charter.

The draft language accomplishes several things:

- Establishes the Mayor’s obligation to prepare and submit a strategic plan as unconditional, while acknowledging that any comprehensive update requires a Council appropriation.
- Grandfathers the 2025 plan as the operative document under the new provision.
- Establishes a 36-month review cycle requiring the Mayor to assess whether the plan warrants targeted amendments or a comprehensive update and present that assessment to Council; and
- Reserves the full public comment process for any update submitted for adoption.

The intent is to operationalize the strategic planning requirement in a durable way — keeping the plan visible, building in regular accountability, and subjecting it to structured review — without creating an unfunded mandate or locking the City into a major expenditure on a fixed schedule.

Article XI — Planning Commission

The proposed Article XI changes respond directly to Sarah Pollyea, Esq. 's proposals, addressing removal procedures and delegating responsibility for commission governance to the Commission itself.

The current charter language is rigid: it embeds fixed attendance thresholds that do not account for changes in meeting frequency and uses terms such as “excused absence” without definition.

Rather than replacing one set of charter-embedded specifics with another, this approach delegates the full framework to the Commission’s rules of operation — with mandatory subjects the rules must address — and removes the operational detail from the charter entirely.

This reflects a sound charter-drafting principle:

- Charters are difficult to amend and should establish obligations and structure, not operational minutiae.
- Rules of operation can be adjusted as circumstances change without a ballot measure.
- A 6/7 supermajority requirement to amend the charter-mandated provisions of those rules provides a meaningful check against a bare majority quietly weakening the framework.
- Council’s appointment authority and political accountability guard against changes that are permissive to the point of being unworkable.

Strategic Plan – Article III Draft Language

§3.04 - The Mayor shall cause to be prepared and submitted to Council a strategic plan for the City. The preparation of any comprehensive update to the strategic plan shall require an appropriation by Council for that purpose.

Annually, the Mayor shall issue a report to the Council on the progress made in achieving the goals and objectives of the strategic plan. ~~The strategic plan shall be updated as needed by the Mayor, and such updates shall be submitted to Council for review, public comment and adoption.~~

Not later than 36 months following adoption of any strategic plan, and every 36 months thereafter, the Mayor shall present to Council a written assessment of whether the current plan remains adequate, requires targeted amendments, or warrants a comprehensive update, including the Mayor's written rationale for such recommendation.

Council shall determine by resolution whether to direct targeted amendments, initiate a comprehensive update, or affirm the current plan without amendment. Any resolution directing amendments or a comprehensive update shall authorize the Mayor to submit a proposed appropriation for that purpose.

Any strategic plan or comprehensive update submitted to Council for adoption shall provide the public an opportunity to comment prior to Council action.

Planning Commission Removal and Rules – Article XI Draft Language

§11.01 – The Planning Commission shall consist of seven (7) electors of the Municipality not holding other Municipal offices.

On the first January 2 following the effective date of this Charter, two (2) of the seven (7) electors shall be appointed by the City Council to serve a term of three (3) years, one (1) shall be appointed by the City Council to serve a term of two (2) years, one (1) shall be appointed by the City Council to serve a term of one (1) year; one (1) shall be appointed by the Mayor to serve a term of three (3) years, one (1) shall be appointed by the Mayor to serve a term of two (2) years, and one (1) shall be appointed by the Mayor to serve a term of one (1) year. Thereafter, on each January 2 (if January 2 is a Sunday, then on January 3) and as the terms expire, appointments shall be made for a term of three (3) years by the respective appointing authorities for the position for which the term is expiring. No person shall serve as a member of the Commission at the same time the person is an employee or official of the City.

~~A member of the Planning Commission may be removed for just cause by the appointing authority appointing the member to that position.~~ A member of the Planning Commission may be removed for failure to meet attendance requirements as established in the Commission's rules of operation adopted pursuant to Section 11.02, or for just cause. Removal shall be determined by the appointing authority in accordance with the provisions governing such appointment.

For purposes of this section, just cause shall include, but is not limited to: failure to perform the duties of the office; violation of applicable law or ethics requirements; or conduct that substantially interferes with the effective operation of the Commission. Prior to removal, the member shall be provided written notice of the basis for removal and an opportunity to respond to the appointing authority.

A removed member shall not be eligible for reappointment to the Planning Commission for a period of five (5) years following removal.

A vacancy occurring during the term of any member of the Planning Commission shall be filled for the unexpired term in the manner authorized for an original appointment providing this is done within forty-five (45) days after the date such vacancy occurs. If appointment is not made by the appropriate appointing authority within forty-five (45) days after the date such vacancy occurs, the other appointing authority shall make appointment to the Planning Commission for the unexpired term.

§11.02 - The Council shall establish the date, time and place for the first meeting each year, at which the Planning Commission shall organize under a chairman and vice chairman. The Mayor shall preside at this meeting until the chairman is elected. ~~The Planning Commission shall establish its own rules of operation, meetings shall be open to the public, and a record of its resolutions, findings and determinations shall be maintained.~~ Meetings

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~~Also, any member of the Planning Commission that has been absent from four (4) consecutive regular meetings of the Planning Commission or a total of six (6) regular meetings of the Planning Commission, during any twelve (12) month period, whether excused or not, is removed from membership on said Planning Commission.~~

The Planning Commission shall establish its own rules of operation, which shall include provisions governing: the minimum attendance requirements for members; the designation and treatment of excused and unexcused absences; the process and grounds for removal of a member for failure to meet attendance requirements, including notice to the member and an opportunity to respond prior to removal; and the definition of just cause for removal pursuant to Section 11.01. Such rules shall be consistent with this Charter.

The rules of operation in effect immediately prior to the effective date of this section shall remain in force until amended or superseded in accordance with this section. At the first organizational meeting of the Planning Commission following the effective date of this section, the Commission shall review its rules of operation and adopt amendments incorporating the provisions required by this Charter. Amendments to provisions required by this Charter shall require the affirmative vote of six (6) of the seven (7) members of the Planning Commission. All other amendments to the rules of operation may be adopted by a majority vote of the members present, provided a quorum is present.

Rules of operation shall be reviewed and readopted, with any amendments, at the Planning Commission's first regular meeting of each year.