



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Committee of the Whole

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

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

Jeremy VanMeter, Clerk of Council

Monday, May 9, 2022

7:00 PM

City Hall, Council Chambers

A. CALL TO ORDER

Vice President of Council Merisa Bowers, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. All members were present for the meeting.

B. ADDITIONS/CORRECTIONS

Vice President Bowers, Chair, stated that at the request of the Mayor, the Committee would change the order of number two and three under Discussions. The Multi-Use Trails would be discussed first, followed by the Sidewalk Program.

C. DISCUSSIONS

1. Council Rules: eComment, Communications & Public Input

Council Member Weaver said that in conversations with Clerk VanMeter and based on the research that has been done, he is just trying to get a sense from colleagues on what, if anything, there is an appetite for in terms of public input. He knew there have been some other suggestions that have popped up, such as video comment. VanMeter said that where Council left off in discussion on eComment there were a few questions that he did follow up with Granicus on. One was the "Captcha" feature (a Captcha is an image that has various letters and numbers that a person would see to enter them to confirm being an actual person and not a robot). He added that Granicus can do this in a couple ways, one is for the user's initial registering for an account for eComment and the other would be an email verification. Granicus did recommend this as a best practice to help facilitate weeding out any robots that might be trying to produce spam. The other question VanMeter asked Granicus was whether a commenter could opt to not have their comment made publicly but just direct it to Council. The response from Granicus was they were wondering why this might be desired because eComment is

designed as a public comment solution. So, having a private or direct comment would typically be seen as problematic because the comment is being made directly in reference to a topic or issue at a meeting and becomes part of the public record. Granicus did offer to provide some sort of demonstration or wider conversation, if a group of Council members or the entire Council would like. VanMeter referenced an email sent to Council on various features that eComment offers, as well as the links to Riverside, California and Lakewood, Ohio to kind of explore and see what eComment looks like on various public entity websites. VanMeter acknowledged that he did have an inquiry from Council Member Padova regarding video capabilities for hearing of visitors. VanMeter, with the help of Kevin Schultz, IT Manager, did a couple tests on this with a couple short video clips just sent from a Gmail account to the City to see if it would transmit. VanMeter said that unfortunately something that was three minutes long, Gmail would not allow it to be sent because of the restrictions on attachment size. However, Schultz does believe this can be worked around. Schultz commented that the City could potentially put in an upload feature on the website so a person who's looking to comment can drop that file in and the City gets notification that an email has come in. He noted that from an IT standpoint, this could create a little bit of a support issue with how timely somebody is trying to upload a comment. Staff primarily leaves at 5:30 p.m., so there could be a little bit of a challenge there with support. He did not think it was insurmountable but foresees at least in the immediate that there may be a smaller support issue with folks trying to submit. Weaver thanked both VanMeter and Schultz for the feedback. He thought Ms. Padova's suggestion was relatively prescient and might potentially address some colleagues' concerns about the veracity of who might be submitting any potential eComment as it relates to video. He asked whether there were concerns about storage of data. Schultz confirmed that there were no concerns regarding that. Weaver said that the clerk and Mr. Schultz would need some sort of general sense of where Council's desires lay, if there was any interest in pursuing this any further.

Council Member Padova said that when Council started talking about this, she was fully in support of needing to make meetings more accessible to people who may not be able to get here on Mondays at seven, especially with it being the exact same time, exact same day of the week. If somebody has something to do every Monday, they are never going to be able to make it. The more that she listened to everybody's comments, and when Council started getting into this eComment, she said it made her a little bit more hesitant. Padova said that the staff worked so hard on putting Council agendas together, getting all of this very factual information to Council, and it concerns her that somebody would be able to go on [eComment], make a comment that contradicts what staff has presented to Council, and then the next person could come on and see their comment, not open up the documents and make their judgments off of that rather than the factual documents that are attached to Council agendas. This was her biggest concern with doing the eComment, as well as policing it. For example, at what point does Council say getting rid of this comment because it is whatever it may be. She thought that could become a hairy situation. So, the

thing most like somebody walking through the doors and speaking to Council during its meetings would be submitting a video that could play and people would be able to see it. This would be entered into the record just as if they were in attendance. Padova added that hopefully this is something that Council would be able to work out, as it would be most like what Council is currently doing.

President Renner said Council Member Padova brought up a unique and interesting idea. He asked Padova whether she proposed wanting to do the video in lieu of the eComment or wanted it as an addendum to eComment. Padova responded, yes, she would like to do the video rather than the eComment. Vice President Bowers said before the Council moves on with discussion, she wanted to clarify what her understanding of the proposal is right now. First, comments presented would be directly related to an agenda item or piece of legislation. Speakers would have to select what potential agenda item or legislation that they were commenting on. Second, it would come from some type of registered or verified account that they would have to go through a Captcha process or create an email-based verified account with the City. Third, it would be a video comment that would be uploaded to the City's site to some type of portal. Bowers asked if this was the correct framework she was hearing from Council. Renner said it was a great summary. Council Member McGregor said people can come into Chambers and say anything. It does not have to be an agenda item. Bowers said this is correct. McGregor clarified whether the comments should be tied to an agenda item in the video. Bowers said she thinks the idea behind why this form would be tied to an agenda item would be to help supplement someone being able to come in, to call, to send a letter, or to send an email. This would be one more way in which they could have a comment about a particular piece of legislation. Renner said he thought this was really good. When he started this exploration some time ago, there was a question that came in commenting about something that was on the agenda, but this was never supposed to take place of somebody coming in. He did not think Council bounded it by being inclusive of those who want to just comment on anything. He said email is proper for that. Renner did not think Council would ever really envision the eComment to capture just nebulous discussions about the City. This was really about agenda items.

Council Member Schnetzer said Council Member Padova had an interesting proposal. He said it is one that in concept he supports because it would theoretically eliminate one of the big concerns that he has heard from a number of members of Council. The concern was impersonation -- just creating a fake account and submitting something trying to influence the discussion. Schnetzer said this phenomenon occurs on various mediums out there, such as Facebook. To avoid Council's official record from being susceptible to that, he thinks the video in lieu of a written comment does make sense if mechanically it can be done. He said he is not opposed to giving it a shot. He envisions it as a three-minute time frame, somebody types in their name and address, and a video pops up. He said he would assume after some period the video is deleted, such as after the transcript of what

they verbalized has been put into written format. Padova said she thinks this may have been misunderstood at some point because what she was proposing was not having a video uploaded with an eComment attached to an actual agenda item. She proposed one could upload a video somewhere on the website. This eComment would not exist. The video would simply be played at a Council meeting during public comment. The video would be played on the YouTube channel while the meeting is streaming, and Council would watch it for the first time during the meeting just like everybody else watching on YouTube. She added that it would be entered into meeting notes just as if the individual was standing in Chambers. Padova clarified with Mr. Schultz and Mr. VanMeter whether this is what had been tested or with eComment. VanMeter said they had tested the ability of someone to send a video through email.

Council Member Weaver clarified with Mr. Schultz whether the City would use Granicus or another host for the submission if email is not the easiest thing. He said the direct upload of the video would then be played. Padova added that it would not have to be attached to an agenda item because Council's public comment, as Ms. McGregor stated, does not have to be about an agenda item. She said that maybe an individual would have a recommendation they would like to bring to Council's attention that is not on the agenda yet. Weaver said he thought with previous research done with Granicus in the potential uploading of any comments (video or otherwise) there was an option to select an agenda item. If that was the will of Council to have it tied to a specific item, which is what Weaver said he thought he was hearing from others on Council, that would be a possible add-on feature to whatever portal is used to receive the video file. Schultz said there are a couple different things being discussed. The eComment feature is described very well. Schultz added that Ms. Padova's proposal is a different proposal. This would come in and be uploaded via our website, not through eComment. There would be no mechanism to attach it to an agenda item and have that be publicly accessible until the meeting when it is played via YouTube and streamed. Council would see it for the first time. The public would see it for the first time. Then, it would be memorialized in the minutes and as part of the YouTube video. It would not be memorialized inside of Legistar itself. It would be uploaded through the City's systems and not through Legistar systems.

Vice President Bowers said she did not think it was a good use of time or resources and would not be in favor of just accepting video comment for any reason on any topic. Bowers would support video, video that was from a verified account that was tied to an agenda item. Padova asked whether the City could verify the account if it was video uploaded onto the website. Schultz said the City currently does not have a registration mechanism that he is aware of and would have to investigate that. It would have to be added to the website capability for registering an account, an outside account, a public account with the City. From a process standpoint, if somebody did not comment on an agenda item, if that was Council's proposal or what gets implemented, then [the clerk] would not show it at the meeting at that point.

Council would just keep it to the side and treat it as if it was an email or something like that. President Renner said it appeared Council now had three choices. One is that Council just pursue the eComment path. Number two is Council forego the eComment and accept video with Ms. Padova's stipulations. Number three is that Council could try both. He said he thinks in the interest of time, Council should try to state which direction Council would like to go and move on it.

Council Member Angelou said it appeared to her that Council is assuming people have the ability to have videos and the ability to be able to send emails. She said there are many people in the community that do not have those things. Instead, what they do is come walking through [Chambers'] door. Angelou added that if they can do that, she does not see why Council needed to do any of this. It is not as though someone is hundreds of miles away or are in a different county. To her, it is more meaningful when watching people talk and sometimes Council must give them extra time because they are coming up with something that is very valuable.

Council Member Schnetzer said to answer President Renner, he did not know that our concerns about the verification or the risk of impersonating somebody or creating a fake account regarding just the eComment has necessarily been solved. So, from that vantage point, he was in favor pushing that one to the side. If there is desire to increase accessibility for individuals that cannot physically be present and Council wants to further explore the video option to the extent that the City has the bandwidth to do so, he is in favor of at least going down that path and seeing what all it entails. Padova said for the record she thinks eComment is a very slippery slope. Council has all seen how people can be behind a keyboard. She thinks that putting their face to something and still having the accessibility is what she would be in favor of. Weaver stated he would be comfortable just pursuing the video option. When this was originally posed to Council, he had been pushing for inclusion of commentary for individuals who could not make it to a Council meeting for whatever reason to provide some opportunity for members of the community to make their voice heard in a way that is no less meaningful than coming to a Council meeting. Weaver added that he thought the option to pursue some sort of video accomplishes that. It hits a lot of the boxes on concerns about potential impersonation that the eComment raised. Weaver said he hears Council colleagues on that. It is great feedback, and he is happy to pursue just the video option. He offered a general thanks to Council colleagues for being willing to look at this. McGregor said people can still email or call Council. The video is not a bad solution to what is being sought and maybe better than eComment. She asked if there was a way Council could try it for six months, see how it goes, and then alter it or change it and come back and revisit it if it does not work. Bowers said absolutely that Council could tweak it, revisit it, and see how the implementation goes and how the use goes. To be clear to the users, Bowers said this would be specifically for public comment in lieu of in-person Hearing of Visitors. Those who choose this option need to be aware of when they are uploading that video that this is going to be made part of the public record. She added it is

going to be played at a City Council meeting. She would like it to be about topics impact the general welfare of the community versus it being something more private. Sometimes Council will get an email about a particular issue that a person might not want to be announced or read out loud at a public meeting. Bowers said where she finds this to be different is that it is going to be specifically for a remote Hearing of Visitors comment. She stressed that she wanted to make sure that is clear when people are uploading it. Bowers thanked everybody their work and thoughtfulness on this. Bowers said in terms of timeline, coming back to the next Committee of the Whole with an update on the tech end of the proposal and a proposed Council rule that can be reviewed at the next Committee meeting.

2. **Update from Department of Public Service & Engineering: Resident Inquiry Regarding Multi-Use Trail**

[2022-0148](#)

Clark State Rd Map

Mayor Jadwin thanked the Committee for accommodating the slight change in the agenda order. Item number two as it currently exists on the agenda leads directly into the first action item. For the benefit of continuity of dialogue, she thought it would be helpful to discuss item number three first. This item pertains specifically to a discussion of a concept of a multi-use trail that would extend from Headley Park south down Clark State Road, giving communities along the west side of Clark State Road access, walkability access, to Hannah and Headley Park. Jadwin added she thinks everyone understands the need for walkability and connectivity within our community. She thinks all agree that parks, trails, sidewalks, and multi-use paths are all an integral part of having that walkable, connected community. Jadwin said several on Council had reached out and asked what this is about and why it was on the agenda. She mentioned it was about the Clark State Road Multi-Use Trail. Within the last week, several within the administration received direct emails from residents asking about the possibility of encouraging community leaders to look at putting a multi-use trail along Clark State Road to create walkability, connectivity, and safe passageway. Because of the level of inquiry that the City had directly received from residents, as well as some of the social media engagement that administration saw, the administration thought it might be helpful to have a discussion with Council. Committee of the Whole is usually the one time that the administration gets to have an informal dialogue with Council. Jadwin said there are several things associated with this project that she believes would be helpful as Council continues to receive public comments about this. Jadwin wanted to provide clarity on some of the things that she saw in some of the emails. For example, it is important to review what plans the City does and does not have in place at this time, what the City is currently working on, what might be involved in looking at a project of this magnitude with many complexities to it and have a high-level understanding of what kind of next steps would be taken. She shared that the City is working on a Parks Master Plan. There is also a long-term Community Improvement Plan and maybe that folds in together with this. A project of this magnitude would involve multiple departments within the City. There are

multiple directors here this evening. Director Stephania Ferrell from Parks & Recreation, Caitlin Ridge, Assistant City Engineer, and Director Grant Crawford, the city's Director of Public Service & Engineering are here to discuss and answer questions.

Director Ferrell started off with where the City is with trails. The Big Walnut Trail is our regional trail system. The City is very close to completing the last section, trail section 8 of the Big Walnut Trail. Along with that, the administration understands the importance of having those east-west connections with that spine. Over the last two years the City has only seen an influx of participation with its trails and bike routes. The City has a formalized Big Walnut Trail plan. Ferrell noted the City does have a draft plan for those east-west connections; however, it has not been fully vetted with boards and commissions. The City has also adopted a maintenance plan for sidewalks. Instead of just moving forward with a multi-use trail plan, it was very advantageous for the City to move forward with an active transportation plan that incorporates trails, sidewalks, crosswalks, bike routes, and anything that advocates for a walkable or bikeable community. Ferrell said the city has submitted for an active transportation plan through Ohio Department of Transportation. This is ultimately an in-kind grant to have a firm work with the City to get an active transportation plan. The information that we have from the draft plan is still very much useful. The City does utilize it. There are active plans in place that have been speared from that draft plan, one of which is the Headley-Hannah Connection. Ferrell said that Council approved the ability for the administration to study what it would look like to connect Hannah Park to Headley Park. The two parks are very popular and connected to a lot of neighborhoods. So, if the City could get neighbors safely to and from parks, that is a win for everybody. Ferrell shared the City just entered into an agreement with OHM to have an alignment study and gain some cost estimates to what that connectivity would look like. The City administration is very much active into our trails. Ferrell said that as Mayor Jadwin mentioned, trails are in the master plan and consultants have noted how stakeholders frequently mention trails as important to the community. Ferrell said the Department wants to continue to invest time into making sure that the City has a safe, walkable, bikeable community. Mayor Jadwin clarified with Ferrell on when the active transportation plan funding was submitted. She also asked whether there is an expected timeline for when the City is to hear back. Ferrell responded there is a tight turnaround. The City submitted in March and expects to have an answer by the end of May. If awarded funding, the City must actively participate within four weeks of receiving the approval and the expectation is that the City has a formalized adopted plan by June of 2023.

Assistant City Engineer Ridge said on the engineering side, based on these inquiries from residents, the Department has investigated what it would take to design and construct a trail along Clark State Road. Clark State Road is a county-managed road. The City would have to coordinate closely with the county on anything that it would want to do along there. Ridge pointed to the map displayed for Council's viewing, stating most of Clark State Road is outside of the City of Gahanna corporation limits. In addition to coordinating

with the county, the City would have to also coordinate closely with Jefferson Township to get this trail done. To add to that complexity, Clark State Road is also a "Scenic Byway", and that designation would introduce obstacles with clearing trees and things like that that would also be necessary for constructing the trail. Ridge said the Department did talk to the county to see if they had any plans in the future for a Clark State Road trail. The county currently does not have plans for a trail in their capital improvement plan (CIP). Jadwin confirmed this plan is for 10 years. Ridge said this plan was recently revised, so this would cover the next 10 years. They know that there's been a lot of interest from the community on this. Due to this, the county has agreed to provide or prepare a study this year to explore the feasibility of putting a trail along Clark State Road. Jadwin said that after the City received emails from residents she reached out to Cornell Robertson, Franklin County Engineer, as Ms. Ridge just shared, to find out if this was even on their radar. Jadwin said Mr. Robertson shared that it was not in their CIP, which he had just finished. However, based on the conversation that they had, Robertson agreed to have his staff look at a study of this to try to identify what would be involved, identifying some of the things that Ms. Ridge just mentioned, such as the Scenic Byway and then coming back to the City. Jadwin hoped the City would then be able to figure out where a trail is in their plans and how that might fit within the City's long-term CIP. Jadwin noted the City has hundreds of projects that are lining up to be part of the CIP, but it would be up to Council to have discussion as to where that might fit and prioritize. Ridge noted that Jefferson Township is going after the active transportation plan that the City is also seeking. She thought that with everyone going through the process this presented an opportunity to have a better plan in the future.

Vice President Bowers asked where the City is with the communication with Jefferson Township on this issue. Jadwin said there has not been any communication with Jefferson Township on this yet. Director Crawford commented that Clark State Road is maintained by Franklin County. Any trail connection in this would be in conjunction with the county as the primary entity that would lead the trail improvement project. The township would have a say and would likely be a part of it as well because much of Clark State Road does abut the township. However, Crawford said there is a lot of unincorporated land in and around and connecting to Clark State Road. Crawford thought the City was in a good position right now with the county taking the initial step of a study. This could lead to a partnership with the City depending on the results of the county's study. Director Ferrell said that with Jefferson Township seeking the same active transportation plan, the City has communicated in conjunction with them with what that means. Any trails that lead into Jefferson Township to Gahanna and vice versa would benefit both entities. Ferrell said the City has been speaking in coordination with what that would look like. With the Big Walnut Trail being regional, there is no reason why the City's east-west connections could not be regional as well. Jadwin said the City did reach out to Jefferson Township when they were looking to seek funding for the active transportation plan as well and the City suggested working together knowing the areas that overlap. The [township officials] did

go back and talk to either the trustees or the township administrator about this. They came back and said they preferred to just submit separately. Jadwin said the City will continue to have a dialogue with the township and see where they end up with their funding. Bowers thanked Jadwin and the directors in attendance. She noted this update on what grants are being pursued was very helpful and helps Council do its job more effectively.

Council Member Weaver thanked the Mayor and staff for putting this topic on the agenda. He said he also received several emails and in-person requests for this as well. Weaver said the residents that were sending those emails were all residents of that westernmost portion of Clark State, specifically Theori and Uxbridge Ave within Gahanna corporation limits. He shared that the concern that was voiced by residents was needing to gain non-vehicular access to Creekside. Weaver said he loved hearing about the potential Headley-Hannah connection, as well as potentially all the way down Clark State Road in partnership with the county and township. He believed there would be residents that would attend next week's Council meeting as well to share their thoughts during Hearing of Visitors. Mayor Jadwin said the emails that she had mentioned Creekside but then they specifically talked about being able to walk and bike up to Hannah and Headley. Director Crawford said (referring to the map displayed) from a very high-level view you see the gray area does overlap Clark State Road and goes to the north side or the west side of Clark State Road. There are still jurisdictional challenges in there that would have to be part of an overall plan with the county. The other piece, he noted, is all these neighborhoods do have existing sidewalks. While it is not the most direct and efficient route, there are sidewalks through there that will lead them back to Hamilton Road and eventually down to Creekside. Jadwin added that even though the green section on the map as Council Member Weaver noted is within Gahanna corporation, that still falls under the jurisdiction and work under the county engineer's office. They would still ultimately be the controlling authority on it. Weaver again thanked the Mayor and staff. He asked whether the OHM plan is just for the Headley-Hannah connection. Director Ferrell confirmed this to be correct. She noted as part of the OHM contract there is a separate review for cost estimates and preferred alignments for Shull Park to the library.

Council Member Angelou noted that a lot of what was captured on the map for Clark State was not the City's possibilities because it is not within the City limits. She said stressed the need to talk about safety, as the City has other places that need to have sidewalks and trails to be able to be safe. Angelou said that fact that somebody has not been hurt on West Johnstown Road is a miracle. She proposed that before the City would ever want to do something on Clark State there were other places in need. Angelou added that it would be a surprise if Jefferson Township pays for their part of a Clark State Road trail because it is a long stretch. She said that West Johnstown Road is important to her because kids want to ride their bikes and at night, they cannot go down that street because of traffic. Angelou said she understands that the [Clark State trail] is a good possibility, but it is not going to happen for many years and Johnstown Road should be happening right now. President

Renner said Angelou's comments were spot on in managing public expectations. Renner explained that he believed it was a wonderful and powerful thing that a group of residents bring an issue or idea to the City, especially considering having Issue 12. Renner said the City needs to share more with the public, as there is a long list of projects that the City has got to get to as Council Member Angelou mentioned. He also said Vice President Bowers had talked to him about James Road needing a sidewalk. He also said Hines Road needs improvements. These are just a few. People can look at the City's capital projects list to see what needs to happen. Renner reiterated he valued the public initiative on Clark State Road, as well as the administration's discussion on the possibilities going forward. There are many challenges with Clark State Road, including the multi-jurisdictional issues, as well as a creek that would need to be crossed and all the land that would have to be acquired for easements. Renner asked the administration to consider in their analysis in Clark State trail whether this is the best route to address east-west connectivity.

Council Member McGregor said that when the City passed Issue 12, we said there were years' worth of deferred maintenance that had to be done. This was supposed to last for 20 years. The City is in year two or three and that means we still have lots of projects that were identified two or three years ago. McGregor said this is not to say [Clark State Road] is not a good project. It is just going to have to wait in line with other things that have been identified already ahead of it. She hoped the City could get there one day but stressed that the City has a backlog of projects to bring forward and finish first. Mayor Jadwin said she appreciated the comments from Council. She said that to have residents speak up and say they would like to have this does mean everything. She thought it would be fruitful for Council and administration to have this conversation today due to the amount of reach out that the City had on this and walk through all the things that must happen and what is already in progress for a multi-use trail. Jadwin again thanked Council for adding this discussion to the agenda. Vice President Bowers said Council encourages the administration to come forward and have updates like this, as it is fantastic to hear about the Headley-Hannah connection, the grant submission, and bringing Council up to date on some of these items that administration is working on.

Council Member Angelou asked about the last part of the Big Walnut Trail and options at this point. Director Ferrell said that right now the alignments are being reviewed by ODOT. It does cross the over I-270 on Hamilton Road. Their review includes alignments and safety precautions. Once the City gets approval there, the project will be able to move forward. Angelou said with this being the last part of the project, it would be wonderful to get it finished. Ferrell noted this is the last portion for a reason, due to the challenges associated with it. She said the City is very close. Vice President Bowers asked what the timeline was. Ferrell said within the next five years the City will have a completed project. Director Crawford noted the important piece is the City is closer to completing Big Walnut Trail Section 8 than the City has ever been. Crawford noted that former city engineer Karl Weatherholt worked on this,

former service director Rob Priestas has worked on it, and city engineer John Moorehead has worked on it. Crawford said there have been many different iterations of options with this trail but that the City is setup uniquely right now in that ODOT is looking to do a replacement of the Hamilton Road Bridge, which will provide the opportunity--possibly the one and only opportunity-- to make that connection. Crawford thanked Council for approving the budget to put funds in there to move it forward. The bridge replacement project had been on the docket for many, many years. There is not much time left on it based on the condition of the pavement, so it is anticipated that in fiscal year 2023 the project will start and take a couple years. Jadwin said in staff discussions she believed they had talked about the bridge work first and then the trail coming after. In 2025 or 2026, the trail section construction is anticipated. Ferrell added that because of the level of traffic, the City wants to pair the bridge and trail together to mitigate traffic interruptions. Bowers said it was great to hear the timeline. She saw a runner crossing on the side of the road the other day and hated to see that. She wished it was sooner, but glad to know the City was continuing to move forward on this.

3. **Update from Department of Public Service & Engineering: 2021 Sidewalk Program**

[2022-0149](#)

2021 Sidewalk Maintenance Program Timeline 05-09-22

Assistant City Engineer Caitlyn Ridge presented a timeline for Council to review. She noted that it had been a while since the February Town Hall that was held with property owners as part of the 2021 Sidewalk Maintenance Program. The Program has had some challenges. The City is off its original planned schedule. Ridge wanted to take this opportunity to provide Council with an update and some clarification on how the City got to where it is at this point and what to anticipate going forward. Initial discussions on the Program began as early as fall of 2019. In the winter of 2020, the Department brought its presentation to Council over three different occasions to provide some options for the Program and to ask for input from Council. As part of that process, there were some differing opinions about the development of the Program. Administration moved forward with the development of the program and drafted revised code that was the best fit for the community. The resulting draft amended city codes 521.06 and 903.01. Those were presented to Council on May 24, 2021, and then adopted June 21, 2021, and effective July 21, 2021. The next step was entering into contract with EMH&T to allow them to help the City prepare and provide brochures and notifications to the residents to complete the sidewalk compliance inspections, to provide construction services, and to provide some legislative support. The City received their contract August 17, 2021. The Council saw the contract on August 23, 2021, during Committee with a request for waiver and emergency. Council opted to have the contract go through two readings. The Mayor was authorized to enter the contract with EMH&T October 20, 2021. The contract was signed October 25, 2021. As a result of this, the City delayed the Program schedule by one month. During that time, the Department also brought forward on September 20, 2021, the Program Area which was

approved by Council. Due to the delay of the code development and the contract with EMH&T, the timeline for the first Program was condensed. In addition, sidewalk inspections were then pushed into the winter season, which introduced several weeks of weather-related delays. Once the Department got the Program Area approved, the contract with EMH&T signed, the City could proceed with doing its work. Residents and property owners within the adopted Program Area were mailed a notification letter and information about the program on December 3, 2021. By December 13, 2021, EMH&T began their sidewalk inspections for the Program. Three days later, Ridge went out and started quality control review of the inspections with EMH&T. This being the City's first program, the Department had to learn how to apply the sidewalk maintenance criteria that it had developed. There was a learning curve there for both the City and EMH&T. The City continued to coordinate with them for that quality review throughout the entire inspection process, but due to these issues and weather delays, the inspections were not completed by mid-January as originally planned. Ridge said the administration feels that the City owes it to the residents to make sure that the criteria is fairly and accurately applied and that everything was being done correctly. The City held a town hall meeting for the residents February 2, 2022. The Department provided an update on the Program and answered any questions from residents and the property owners. Initial inspections by EMH&T of the entire Program Area were delivered to the City by March 4, 2022, and at that time the Department began a quality control of the entire Program. Ridge personally went out and walked every sidewalk panel and evaluated them to make sure that it was being applied as the City wished. Ridge made updates and adjusted the data based on what she found and returned that to EMH&T by March 24, 2022. Since then, it was handed off to EMH&T to start summarizing the inspection data and to prepare the notices that the residents will receive that explain what defects were found on the sidewalks adjacent to their property. Once those notices are finalized (currently in process), the Department plans to bring a Resolution of Necessity with permission to bid to Council on May 23, 2022. The Department anticipates that with the Resolution of Necessity, which allows the City to provide notices to residents or notices to be served to the property owners, and the permissioned bid to be effective by June 6, 2022, notices would be served to the residents soon after. Following that process, the residents will receive information on various things like opting out, what the next steps they have until the City begins construction. The Department anticipates bidding for construction in the fall of this year; however, the City does not plan to begin construction until spring of 2023. The Department does not feel it can complete the entire program in the fall before winter, as it is not conducive to doing concrete work at that time. Instead of leaving residents with partial repairs on the property, the City is hoping to start it in the spring of next year to allow continuous work. The City would then complete the construction in summer of 2023. The Department would then bring forward special assessment after completion and schedule with Council at that time a public hearing. The public hearing would be used to present the formalized costs that would be assessed to the property owners. The Department expects that the special assessment would then be effective in 2024. Ridge said that with

the few items that are coming forward in the coming weeks and the coming months, it is a tight timeline. Therefore, any delays now could affect that schedule a little bit more.

Ridge added that the Department is also preparing for the 2022 Sidewalk Maintenance Program at the same time. The Department plans to also bring the 2022 Program Area to Council to be adopted within the next month. The City is already in contract with EMH&T to help with the 2022 Program. Once this is adopted, the Department will have a schedule. Ridge thinks there will be more time with the 2022 Program overall. However, the schedule will have little flex to it. The issues with 2021 was having inspections in the winter and delays with that. So, inspections are not going to happen in the winter this time.

Council Member Angelou asked whether 2022 would be overlapping with 2021. She thought this might be difficult to do both at the same time. Ridge confirmed they will be overlapping and once the City gets the Program going, there will be three different program areas that it will be working on at any given time. Ridge said what Angelou might be getting at is with the delaying of the construction of the 2021 Program to next spring, how is that going to work with the construction of the 2022 Program? Ridge said that how the Department has it planned out, the City would be going to construct the 2022 Program next summer. With this, one would follow the other. The Department does not have any concern about those both happening. Angelou said that in 2023 it would potentially just be like normal. Ridge confirmed that the 2022 Program would be constructed in summer of 2023, and at the end of 2023 or beginning of 2024, the Department would hope to then bring the 2023 Program Area. The long-term goal for future programs is at the end of the year to bring Council the Program Areas for adoption to start the inspections in the spring, do the notices, allow people to decide if they want to do the construction themselves, then doing construction either that fall or potentially into the next spring.

Vice President Bowers asked that with the 2021 Program going out to bid in fall of 2022, would the Department be ready to have the 2022 Program bid at the same time. She wondered whether there would be an economy of scale to consider. Ridge said that the Department plans to bid the 2021 Program at the end of this year. This benefits the City by getting this year's prices to do work next year. In doing that, the Department will not be ready at the end of this year to bid the 2022 Program. The City would bid that out by winter or early next year. Bowers said in terms of process, the Department had done a great job at spelling that out and explaining why the City is on a tighter timeline with this. Bowers asked that with the Resolution of Necessity and the permission to bid anticipated to be on the next Committee of the Whole agenda, whether the Department could have that uploaded by the Wednesday before so that the Clerk has enough time to get the legislation written for publication and draft agenda. Ridge confirmed that the Department is working on it and plans to have it there a week in advance.

D. ITEMS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE & ENGINEERING

1. [ORD-0025-2022](#) AN ORDINANCE TO ADOPT AMENDMENTS TO GAHANNA CODE SECTION 521.06 - CONSTRUCTION, REPAIR AND REPLACEMENT OF SIDEWALKS, INTEGRAL APPROACHES/APRONS AND RELATED AREAS

Assistant City Engineer Ridge said that with the sidewalk maintenance program, property owners have the option to allow the City to complete the repairs for them and then repay the City those costs through an assessment on their property taxes or have the option to opt out of the Program and complete the repairs themselves. At the Town Hall meeting in February, the City received feedback from the residents that they would like the option to be able to pay in-full that cost for the repairs that the City makes instead of it being assessed to their property taxes. Ridge said there is currently no mechanism in Gahanna Code to allow the property owners to pay that cost of repairs made by the city outside of the assessment process. Therefore, the Department is proposing to add a subparagraph to code 521.06 Section J "any persons affected by this section may opt to pay all the costs determined pursuant to subparagraph two above directly in lieu of having said costs assessed against real property. Said costs must be paid in full within 30 days of the date of said public hearing referenced in subparagraph 2 above or the assessment will be issued as outlined herein." The public hearing referenced would present the actual cost of the repairs that were made at each property. Once the public hearing happens, property owners would have the 30 days to make that payment in full before Council would go through to levy assessment against the property for that cost. Ridge noted that the city attorney has reviewed this Code change and the Department coordinated with the director of finance to make sure that the City has the necessary accounts set up to allow this. Allowing payment in-full outside of an assessment is beneficial not only to the resident but also to the City. For the City, it means that the City will get reimbursed for costs quicker than the special assessment process. Other communities in the area that have sidewalk maintenance programs are also set up this way. This would not be unique to the City of the Gahanna's sidewalk maintenance program. If this Code is adopted, the Department plans to make the property owners aware of this change by providing that information in their notice that they will receive in June that provides them with the defects that were found on the property.

Vice President Bowers said that as she understands it there are three ways for a resident to pay or to be compliant if they are in the sidewalk program area. One is if their property is identified as needing a sidewalk repair, and they are in the program area, they can opt-out and hire their own contractor and pay their own costs within the appropriate time, and the repairs must be reviewed by the City. The other option is they can opt-in and once they have opted in, they have the choice to either have the cost through the assessment, which would give them the ability to pay that through a tax assessment over five years through their property taxes or they could pay it in

one lump sum to the City within 30 days of the public hearing. Ridge confirmed this to be correct. Bowers said that property owners could benefit from the reduced cost because of it being part of a "bulk rate" that the City secures. Ridge said that was correct. Mayor Jadwin noted that is all correct except for the fact that they are automatically in unless they opt-out. Ridge noted that if one opts out and does not complete all the repairs or the repairs were not done correctly, then they will be re-entered into the program and the City will do those repairs. They would still have the option to pay those costs in-full outside of the assessment or through the assessment at five years at zero percent.

Council Member McGregor confirmed that if one opts out, they must have the repairs completed before the City does the other repairs. Ridge confirmed that they would have 105 days from the date that they received the notice to complete the repairs and the City will not begin construction until after that period has ended.

Council Member Padova clarified that when one receives the notice, they will know what the cost is if they want to pay it up front rather than [through the assessment]. Ridge said the notice will have several things in it. One will be the identification of each of the panels that were identified to have a defect. It will let them know what the primary defect was. It will also give them the estimated cost to make that repair as part of the Program that the owner themselves will be responsible for. The items that the City will take care of, such as removal of a tree as part of the Program are not included in that cost estimate. It is just the owner's cost that they would be responsible for. The Department would also outline what those next steps entail, when they have the option to appeal, when the deadline for opting out is, and their deadline for completing the repairs if they choose to opt-out.

Vice President Bowers asked if Program construction has not started yet, would one be given an extension for weather. She said a neighbor got a notice in February that he needed to bring his sidewalk up to Code within 30 days. Ridge said as part of the program, the Department anticipate having those notices out there in June. Mayor Jadwin wondered whether the issue Bowers brought up was a code enforcement issue. Bowers confirmed it was but that she was overlaying that issue on this because of the possible timeline issues. Ridge said the Department just finished the inspections this March. The notice to property owners includes what those inspections are and will be delivered in June. That will start the 105 days, meaning that they will have that time all within summer, so there should be no concerns with them being able to get it completed within those 105 days in the summer season. Bowers said she was not so much concerned about this cycle. Bowers said if the notices are sent out at a different time of year, would the Department consider some mechanism for weather extensions. Ridge responded that the Department is setting up the schedule so that issue would not happen. The City's intent is to not send out notices on this right before winter and say that there is 105 days to make those repairs in the middle of winter. If the City completes the inspections in the fall, the City will not send out the notices in the fall. The City

would wait until closer to spring (February or March) to give them the 105 days to then do that inspection. Ridge said when the Department is planning out future programs, they try to make sure that they happen in the season that is appropriate for stage that it is at with the program. Bowers thanked Ridge for the resident-centered approach in thinking through the program. Jadwin said that on the code enforcement issue, residents will receive a notice. Now that people know that the City has a sidewalk maintenance program, the administration has residents reaching out wanting their neighbors to be fixing their sidewalks right now. Jadwin suspected that the code enforcement team will be busy, too. Jadwin said that with Bowers' example, when someone gets a notice of violation and 30 days to fix it, if in 30 days it is not fixed, then code enforcement would go back. Jadwin said that the City would not expect somebody to fix the sidewalk in the middle of February, but the City will follow-up with them again. If after they are revisited and it still has not been fixed, then they will receive a citation. They would come into Mayor's Court and deal with the prosecutor. If someone has engaged a contractor, and because it is the contractor's schedule, Jadwin said she suspects that someone from the city attorney's office would see that as proof that one is taking remedial efforts and work with the individual on that. City Attorney Mularski said the notice of violation is a little misnomer. He said that what code enforcement is saying is there is a violation but not that you have a violation. They say fix it or you will get a citation. If they work with code enforcement, they will find that code enforcement work with people all the time, giving them more and more time. If they do get the citation, then they go to Attorney Mularski and the same thing -- he just wants it fixed, so he would work with them and try to get it fixed.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading 5/16/2022, Second Reading/Adoption Regular Agenda 6/6/2022.

2. [MT-0012-2022](#) A MOTION AUTHORIZING THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SERVICE & ENGINEERING PERMISSION TO BID THE EAST JOHNSTOWN ROAD TRAIL

Director Crawford said this project will install roughly 1,200 feet of multi-use trail that will connect a couple of subdivisions along with the YMCA and a skilled nursing facility that are along East Johnstown Road right at Riva Ridge Boulevard and YMCA Place. Council previously approved three hundred thousand dollars' worth of TIF funding uh through past budget approval. Due to unforeseeable cost escalations, the Department is requesting a supplemental appropriation in the amount of 130,000 from the unencumbered balance of the North Triangle TIF. This is located on East Johnstown Road right where the trail is going. The additional funding will cover construction administration, inspection, and increased construction costs due to inflation. Council Member Angelou asked where this is going to be done on Johnstown. Crawford said it would be the west side or the north side depending on how one looks at it.

Recommendation: Adoption/Consent Agenda 5/16/2022.

3. [ORD-0026-2022](#) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING A SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION - North Triangle and Johnstown Road TIF Funds

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading 5/16/2022, Second Reading/Adoption Regular Agenda 6/6/2022.

- 4. [MT-0011-2022](#) A MOTION AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF GAHANNA'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SOUTHWEST OHIO PURCHASERS FOR GOVERNMENT (SWOP4G) ROAD SALT COOPERATIVE BID FOR THE 2022-2023 WINTER SEASON.

Director Crawford said the City is part of the Southwest Ohio Purchasers for Government (SWOP4G). It is a cooperative purchasing agency. They partner with other governmental agencies to cooperatively purchase road salt for the winter months. As members, the City is eligible to partake in that. Council Member Padova asked whether during the facilities discussions somebody said the dome is too small for the City to get a break on buying in bulk. Crawford said there are a couple ways that the City can acquire salt. In the SWOP4G program, the City tells them how much to purchase so the Department tries to anticipate the amount of salt that it will need this next winter and that is what they will put on the bid. They do not penalize the City if we do not reach that level. There is another purchasing agency through ODOT that the City can purchase salt from where it would penalize the City if it did not utilize all the salt. The City could see lower salt prices if it could go to the other cooperative purchasing group with more storage space available in the salt dome.

Recommendation: Adoption/Consent Agenda 5/16/2022.

E. ADJOURNMENT

The Chair announced the adjournment of Committee of the Whole at 8:28 p.m.

Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

*APPROVED by the Committee of the Whole, this
day of 2022.*

Merisa K. Bowers