



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

City Council

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

Trenton I. Weaver, President
Jamille Jones, Vice President
Merisa K. Bowers
Nancy R. McGregor
Kaylee Padova
Stephen A. Renner
Michael Schnetzer

Jeremy A. VanMeter, Clerk of Council

Monday, May 4, 2026

7:00 PM

City Hall, Council Chambers

A. CALL TO ORDER: Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance, Roll Call

Gahanna City Council met in Regular Session on Monday, May 4, 2026, in Council Chambers. President of Council Trenton I. Weaver called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Vice President of Council Jamille Jones delivered an Invocation and led members in the Pledge of Allegiance. The agenda was published on May 1, 2026.

Present 7 - Merisa K. Bowers, Jamille Jones, Nancy R. McGregor, Kaylee Padova, Stephen A. Renner, Michael Schnetzer, and Trenton I. Weaver

B. ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA:

Councilmember McGregor requested that Council move the proclamation recognizing Jewish American Heritage Month from the Mayor's Official Report to the Presentations portion of the agenda. President Weaver approved the request without objection.

C. PRESENTATIONS:

**1. Joint Resolution/Proclamation by Council and Mayor Jadwin
Herb'n Restaurant Week, May 2-8, 2026**

President Weaver introduced a joint resolution and proclamation by Council and Mayor Jadwin recognizing "Herb'n Restaurant Week" from May 2 through May 8, 2026, and invited Councilmember Padova to speak.

Councilmember Padova stated that Gahanna had held the designation of Herb Capital since 1972 through the efforts of community leader Jane

“Bunnie” Geroux. She explained that the City continued to promote that distinction through several initiatives, including the Ohio Herb Center, Herb Day, and Herb’n Restaurant Week. She noted that Herb’n Restaurant Week coincided with National Small Business Week and provided an opportunity to recognize and support the small businesses that contributed to the City’s economic vitality, community character, and culinary innovation. Councilmember Padova invited Visit Gahanna Director Lori Kappes to provide an overview of Herb Day and recognized the Sargent Family of SGT Coffee for participating in Herb’n Restaurant Week. Councilmember Padova then invited Councilmembers, Mayor Jadwin, and City Attorney Tamilarasan to participate in a group photograph with Director Kappes and the Sargent Family.

Director Lori Kappes thanked the community for attending Herb Day and reported that the event had been successful despite cool weather conditions. She stated that organizers sold approximately 3,000 plants and retained only 10 unsold plants at the conclusion of the event. She also noted that 30 artisan vendors participated and expressed appreciation for the strong attendance and positive response from attendees. Director Kappes thanked the event volunteers and the City Parks and Recreation staff for their assistance with the event. She also encouraged residents to visit visitgahanna.com for a list of Herb’n Restaurant Week participants and highlighted the lemon balm latte offered by SGT Coffee.

President Weaver thanked Director Kappes and then transitioned to Mayor Jadwin’s proclamation recognizing May 2026 as Jewish American Heritage Month.

2. Proclamation Presentation by Mayor Jadwin Jewish American Heritage Month, May 2026

[2026-0089](#)

Mayoral Proclamation - National Jewish American Heritage Month May 2026

Mayor Jadwin thanked Councilmember McGregor for requesting that the proclamation recognizing Jewish American Heritage Month move earlier on the agenda. Mayor Jadwin then presented a proclamation recognizing May 2026 as Jewish American Heritage Month in the City of Gahanna. Mayor Jadwin stated that the recognition provided an opportunity to

reflect on the individuals and communities that had helped shape the American story as the nation approached its 250th anniversary. She noted that Jewish Americans had contributed to the nation for more than 370 years through leadership and service in science, medicine, education, business, law, public service, the arts, military service, and civic life. Mayor Jadwin clarified that the proclamation did not endorse or promote religious beliefs but instead recognized the heritage and contributions of Jewish Americans. She referenced the national observance established by President Jimmy Carter in 1980 and stated that the proclamation recognized the civic, cultural, educational, and economic contributions Jewish Americans had made to the nation and community. Mayor Jadwin stated that Jewish Americans in Gahanna continued to contribute as residents, educators, entrepreneurs, philanthropists, and civic leaders through support for schools, nonprofit organizations, charitable initiatives, and the local economy. She also stated that Jewish American Heritage Month served as a reminder that no individual should feel unwelcome or unsafe because of identity, background, or heritage. She referenced the City's December affirmation of dignity, belonging, inclusion, respect, and safety for all residents. Mayor Jadwin invited resident Jon Handler, who initially requested the recognition, and Dr. Jonathan Feibel, Board President of Jewish Columbus and an executive board member of Orthopedic One, as well as audience members and any Councilmembers, to the podium for presentation of the proclamation and a group photograph.

Jon Handler thanked City Council, the City Attorney, and Mayor Jadwin for the opportunity to speak. He thanked Mayor Jadwin for issuing the proclamation recognizing Jewish American Heritage Month and stated that the effort took approximately one year to complete. Mr. Handler stated that he believed a joint resolution and proclamation from Council would have made the process easier and expressed confusion regarding why Council did not issue a joint resolution. Mr. Handler stated that he viewed the situation as an educational moment and criticized Councilmembers Bowers, Weaver, and Jones for declining to participate in the group photograph associated with the proclamation. He stated that he believed their decision demonstrated a lack of support for the Jewish community in Gahanna and described the experience as reflective of challenges faced by Jewish residents. Mr. Handler stated that he felt ashamed and embarrassed by the actions of the Councilmembers who declined to participate in the photograph. He again thanked Mayor

Jadwin for issuing the proclamation and stated that he considered the recognition a positive moment for Gahanna.

Dr. Jonathan Feibel addressed Mayor Jadwin, Councilmembers, the City Attorney, and members of the Gahanna community and thanked them for the opportunity to speak. He introduced himself as the Board Chair of Jewish Columbus, a member of the executive committee of Orthopedic One, and someone directly involved in the decision to locate the organization in Gahanna. He stated that he spoke not only as someone accepting the proclamation, but also as someone who cared deeply about the City and its leadership. Dr. Feibel thanked Mayor Jadwin for issuing the proclamation recognizing Jewish American Heritage Month. He stated that her leadership carried significance at a time when anti-Semitic incidents had increased substantially, including a reported 42 percent increase in Central Ohio since October 7 and a national doubling in the following year. He stated that public allyship represented a necessary response rather than a symbolic gesture. Dr. Feibel stated that Jewish safety and belonging should never depend on political affiliation or whether the individual speaking out identified as Jewish. He stated that anti-Semitism existed across the political spectrum and required responses from across the political spectrum as well. He referenced Holocaust remembrance ceremonies at the Ohio Statehouse where Governor DeWine had spoken about the shared responsibility to confront anti-Semitism. He stated that one message from those commemorations remained with him: the work could not fall solely on Jewish individuals, and non-Jewish leaders needed to speak publicly and clearly when others questioned or diminished Jewish history, identity, and belonging. Dr. Feibel stated that Mayor Jadwin had demonstrated that leadership by using her office to affirm that Jewish Americans formed part of the story of the United States, Ohio, and communities such as Gahanna. He expressed sincere gratitude for her actions. Dr. Feibel stated that he wished gratitude represented the sole reason for his remarks, but he believed he needed to acknowledge that the process leading to the proclamation had overshadowed what should have served as a joyful and unifying recognition. He stated that, as he understood it, Council had considered and declined to issue its own recognition of Jewish American Heritage Month due to concerns that the recognition could appear to endorse religion or establish an inappropriate precedent. Dr. Feibel acknowledged the importance of the separation of church and state and described the principle as essential in a pluralistic

democracy. However, he stated that applying that concern in this instance reflected a misunderstanding of both Jewish American Heritage Month and Jewish identity. He stated that Jewish American Heritage Month did not seek endorsement of Judaism as a faith and did not concern religious doctrine, worship, or observance. Instead, he stated that the month recognized Jewish Americans as a people and acknowledged their history, culture, struggles, resilience, and contributions to American life. Dr. Feibel stated that for some Jewish individuals, faith remained central, while for others Jewish identity reflected cultural, ethnic, ancestral, historical, or communal ties. He stated that many Jewish Americans did not identify as religious, yet still identified as Jewish, carried Jewish history, participated in Jewish culture, and experienced anti-Semitism. He stated that reducing Jewish American Heritage Month to a religious recognition failed to reflect the full nature of Jewish identity. Dr. Feibel referenced Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt, appointed by President Biden as the United States Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, and stated that she had described Jewish identity as broader than religious practice alone and rooted in history, culture, peoplehood, memory, and pride. He stated that Jewish identity had never fit neatly into a single category and described it as a religion, a peoplehood, an ethnicity, a culture, a civilization, and a way of life. Dr. Feibel stated that Jewish American Heritage Month recognized those dimensions of Jewish identity and explained why communities across Central Ohio had recognized and celebrated the month without treating it as a religious endorsement. He stated that Columbus City Council, New Albany, Reynoldsburg, Bexley, Westerville, Upper Arlington, and the federal government had recognized the observance each May. He stated that Council could not conclude that such recognition violated the law. Dr. Feibel stated that treating the recognition as uniquely difficult, risky, or inappropriate in Gahanna communicated a message, whether intended or not. He stated that he did not seek to assign motives, but instead sought to speak honestly about the impact. He stated that when communities viewed other heritage months as civic recognitions while treating Jewish American Heritage Month as overly religious or complicated, Jewish residents and their allies could reasonably interpret that response as a sign that others misunderstood, minimized, or excluded Jewish identity from the public sphere. He stated that although Council may not have intended that message, the message carried significance in the current historical moment. Dr. Feibel stated that the proclamation represented something

more positive by affirming that Jewish Americans belonged within Gahanna's civic story, that Jewish history deserved recognition, and that Jewish contributions remained visible. He also stated that allyship required action during ordinary moments of public leadership, not only after tragedy. Dr. Feibel expressed hope that the proclamation would become more than a ceremonial act and instead create a learning opportunity and encourage further conversation. He stated that Jewish Columbus welcomed the opportunity to speak with any Councilmember seeking a better understanding of Jewish identity, Jewish American Heritage Month, or the significance of the recognition. He concluded by stating that Jewish American Heritage Month did not ask Gahanna to endorse a religion, but rather to recognize a people, and he stated that because of Mayor Jadwin's leadership, Gahanna had done so.

President Weaver thanked attendees and Mayor Jadwin for issuing the proclamation. He stated that Council colleagues would likely have additional comments. He said Council historically had not issued faith-based resolutions and noted disagreement on whether the recognition constituted a cultural or religious matter.

D. HEARING OF VISITORS:

Linda Hall, 168 Highmeadow Dr, Gahanna, OH, addressed Council and shared her history with the arts community in Gahanna. She stated that she and her family moved to Gahanna in 1989 and that she joined the Gahanna Area Art League, which formed in 1967. Ms. Hall described the organization's volunteer involvement in community events, including Lions Club parades, Kiwanis and Optimist Club events, flea markets, the historical society, and the Herb Festival. She stated that the organization also provided free art activities for children and art instruction before the school district established gifted and talented programming. Ms. Hall explained that the organization displayed artwork in City Hall for 19 years and later reserved November and December to exhibit the work of the Gahanna Art League. She noted that members of the organization also helped form the New Albany Arts Council. Ms. Hall encouraged Council to support the local arts council and stated that the Ohio Arts Council favored partnerships with municipal arts councils to administer state funding and support performing and visual arts programs. She highlighted local arts programming, including the Big Walnut Jazz Band, community chorus performances, musicals, and a planned orchestra performance at Headley Park. Ms. Hall described the Bright Blocks

project as the beginning of an art walk along the Big Walnut Trail and golf course property. She stated that Gahanna did not yet have a cultural arts center or recreation center and referenced the City's ten-year strategic plan and the 825 Tech Center Drive project as opportunities for future arts development. Ms. Hall stated that visual arts supported community engagement and lifelong learning. She described her own work as a textile artist and listed several regional galleries and venues that had displayed her artwork. She also noted that Grove City displayed artwork in its council chambers and expressed concern that Gahanna had not become part of the broader visual arts scene. Ms. Hall concluded by encouraging Council to support inclusive arts programming that engaged residents of all abilities.

Sarah Pagliaro, 116 Oklahoma Ave, Gahanna, OH, addressed Council and expressed appreciation for the Gahanna Area Arts Council and its annual Bright Blocks event. Ms. Pagliaro stated that she had participated in the event first as a beginner and later as a professional muralist. She described the event as her favorite annual activity and praised organizers for their communication and responsiveness to feedback. Ms. Pagliaro stated that participation in the event helped grow her illustration business, increased recognition of her work in the community, and created additional professional opportunities in her hometown. She also noted that the event allowed her to connect with other local artists and contributed to community pride through public murals displayed in parks and neighborhoods. Ms. Pagliaro encouraged continued support for the Gahanna Arts Council and additional community art events.

Larry Levine, 7881 Creek Hollow Rd, Blacklick, OH, addressed Council regarding the discussion surrounding Jewish American Heritage Month. Mr. Levine questioned why Councilmembers stated that they did not support the recognition because of concerns related to religion while, according to his understanding, the City had previously recognized Hindu Heritage Month.

Councilmember Bowers responded this was incorrect.

President Weaver reminded Mr. Levine that he had three minutes to speak and stated that Council typically did not respond to comments during public participation but would allow responses because Mr. Levine asked direct questions.

Mr. Levine stated that, as a longtime resident of Gahanna, he viewed Council's decision as an excuse to avoid approving the recognition. He stated that he felt embarrassed to live in a community where approving such a recognition did not appear straightforward. He argued that the recognition did not endorse a religion, but instead recognized a culture and a people who had contributed significantly to Gahanna. He expressed surprise regarding the situation and stated that although he had heard concerns existed, he believed the three Councilmembers who declined to participate should feel embarrassed for refusing to appear in support of the recognition. Mr. Levine also stated that he wanted additional information regarding the Hindu recognition issue because he had researched the matter several times.

E. CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Minutes - To Approve:

[2026-0085](#) Council Regular Minutes 2026-04-27

The minutes were approved on the Consent Agenda.

[2026-0086](#) Committee of the Whole Minutes 2026-04-27

The minutes were approved on the Consent Agenda.

2. Resolutions:

[RES-0013-2026](#) A JOINT RESOLUTION AND PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING MAY 2-8, 2026 AS "HERB'N RESTAURANT WEEK" IN THE CITY OF GAHANNA AND CELEBRATING THE CITY'S DESIGNATION AS THE HERB CAPITAL OF OHIO

The Resolution was adopted on the Consent Agenda.

3. Ordinances for Second Reading and Adoption:

[ORD-0013-2026](#) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH DECKER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY FOR THE 2026 SIDEWALK LOOKBACK PROGRAM (ST-1123/TR-CM-03)

Clerk VanMeter read the Ordinance by title. The Ordinance was adopted on the Consent Agenda.

[ORD-0014-2026](#) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO A

CONTRACT WITH DECKER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY FOR THE 2026 STREET AND SIDEWALK MAINTENANCE PROGRAM (ST-1122/TR-CM-01)

Clerk VanMeter read the Ordinance by title. The Ordinance was adopted on the Consent Agenda.

[ORD-0015-2026](#)

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CITY OF GAHANNA CODIFIED ORDINANCE SECTION 133.02 - PURCHASING PROCEDURES

Clerk VanMeter read the Ordinance by title. The Ordinance was adopted on the Consent Agenda.

[ORD-0017-2026](#)

AN ORDINANCE TO REPEAL ORD-0045-2021 RELATED TO TAX INCREMENT FINANCING FOR PROPERTY LOCATED IN THE CITY OF GAHANNA

Clerk VanMeter read the Ordinance by title. The Ordinance was adopted on the Consent Agenda.

End of Consent Agenda

A motion was made by Schnetzer, seconded by Renner, to Pass the Consent Agenda. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Bowers, Jones, McGregor, Padova, Renner, Schnetzer and Weaver

F. RESOLUTIONS:

[RES-0014-2026](#)

A JOINT RESOLUTION AND PROCLAMATION DESIGNATING MAY 2026 AS "PERINATAL MENTAL HEALTH MONTH" IN THE CITY OF GAHANNA

Councilmember Bowers stated that she previously expressed interest during Committee of the Whole discussions in recognizing Maternal Mental Health Month in May. She explained that Mayor Jadwin traditionally issued a proclamation for the observance and that this year they chose to address Perinatal Mental Health Month more broadly because mental health conditions, including postpartum anxiety and depression, affected fathers as well as mothers. Councilmember Bowers stated that she supported bringing the resolution forward to reaffirm the City's commitment to identifying needs, providing care, and increasing access to resources that foster healing and stability within the community. She noted that the City had taken significant steps in recent years to support mental health care for residents and recognized that young mothers and fathers had unique mental health needs. Councilmember Bowers stated that she did not have a presentation for the meeting but planned to invite mental health professionals to attend the May 18, 2026,

regular meeting to discuss the unique needs associated with perinatal mental health.

A motion was made by Bowers, seconded by Padova, that the Resolution be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Bowers, Jones, McGregor, Padova, Renner, Schnetzer and Weaver

G. ORDINANCES FOR INTRODUCTION / FIRST READING:

[ORD-0012-2026](#) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING A SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION - General Fund for Contract Services to Support Cultural and Artistic Programming

President Weaver introduced the Ordinance, and Clerk VanMeter read it by title.

[ORD-0018-2026](#) AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND VARIOUS SECTIONS OF THE CITY OF GAHANNA CODE, PART ELEVEN - ZONING, TO UPDATE AND CLARIFY CODE PROVISIONS, REINSTATE OMITTED STANDARDS, AND IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS OF ADOPTED PLANS

President Weaver introduced the Ordinance, and Clerk VanMeter read it by title.

H. CORRESPONDENCE AND ACTIONS:

1. Clerk

[2026-0087](#) Ohio Division of Liquor Control Notice to Legislative Authority Permit NEW 10015541-1 SOUL 2 GO EXPRESS, LLC 134 N HAMILTON RD, GAHANNA, OH 43230

Clerk VanMeter reported that the Ohio Division of Liquor Control submitted a notice for a new liquor permit application for Soul 2 Go Express LLC, located at 134 North Hamilton Road in Gahanna. He stated that he consulted with the Division of Police and confirmed that the Division had no objections to the permit application. Clerk VanMeter stated that, absent objections from Council, he would return the notice without objection.

President Weaver acknowledged that the Chief of Police indicated no objections and confirmed that Council raised no objections to the permit application.

2. Council – None.

I. REPRESENTATIVES:**1. Community Improvement Corporation (CIC) - Renner, Padova**

None.

2. Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) - Weaver

None.

3. Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) - Padova

Councilmember Padova reminded residents that Herb'n Restaurant Week was underway and encouraged the community to visit participating establishments. She also encouraged residents interested in volunteering for the Creekside Blues and Jazz Festival to contact Visit Gahanna for additional information.

4. School Board (SB) - Jones

Vice President Jones reminded residents of upcoming Board of Education meetings, including the Board workshop meeting on May 7, the Finance and Facilities meeting on May 19, and the regular Board meeting on May 21. She stated that all meetings would begin at 6:30 p.m. at Clark Hall. Vice President Jones also reminded the community that "Spread the Word Day" would take place that Friday as an opportunity for the entire GJPS community to celebrate inclusion and "minds of all kinds." She stated that the event would occur on the football field from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and would include adaptive sports activities. She added that attendees could contribute to the annual student collective art project and make a pledge to respect individuals of all abilities. Vice President Jones encouraged residents to contact the school district for additional information.

J. OFFICIAL REPORTS:**1. Mayor**

Mayor Jadwin reminded residents that prom would take place that Saturday and noted that Creekside Plaza and several local restaurants would likely experience increased activity because families often

gathered there for photographs before the event. Mayor Jadwin announced the launch of “Gohanna,” a new community shuttle service designed to help residents travel safely, conveniently, and independently. She stated that Council included the program in the prior year’s budget discussions and that the City successfully secured additional funding assistance from MORPC and the Federal Transit Administration through the Section 5310 grant program. She recognized Management Analyst Sean Bock and Senior Deputy Director Corey Wybensing for their assistance in obtaining the grant funding. Mayor Jadwin stated that the free ADA-accessible shuttle service would serve Gahanna residents age 65 and older, residents with disabilities, and caregivers. She explained that the program would provide transportation access to medical appointments, essential services, and everyday needs while promoting independence and quality of life. She stated that the program would launch on June 1, 2026, and that the City would post additional information on the City website prior to the launch date. Mayor Jadwin expressed appreciation to MORPC and the Federal Transit Administration for supporting the program through grant funding. She also stated that the service would improve accessibility and connectivity for senior residents within the community.

Mayor Jadwin reported that she attended the inaugural Bridge to Kindness luncheon presented by Ron Smith. She explained that the event brought together leaders from nonprofit and service organizations throughout the region to discuss collaboration and community impact. Mayor Jadwin stated that she delivered keynote remarks regarding partnerships between local governments and nonprofit organizations. Mayor Jadwin also stated that the Bridge to Kindness organization presented her with a foundation award recognizing collaborative efforts between the City and nonprofit organizations that supported residents through initiatives related to food access, mental health and wellness, and overall quality of life. She emphasized that the recognition reflected the collective work of City staff, community partners, and nonprofit organizations serving Gahanna residents. Mayor Jadwin thanked Ron Smith and congratulated the nonprofit organizations that participated in the event for their work supporting the community.

Mayor Jadwin noted that the City held its second Mental Health and Wellness Fair earlier that evening in partnership with Gahanna Lincoln High School. She thanked Gahanna Division of Police community liaison

officers Blair Thomas and Ann Jodon for organizing the event and continuing conversations related to mental health and wellness. Mayor Jadwin reminded residents that the annual shred and electronic recycling event would take place that Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in the City Hall parking lot. She stated that GRIN would accept food and monetary donations during the event and encouraged residents to support the organization's efforts to address food insecurity in the community. Mayor Jadwin concluded by thanking attendees for participating in the meeting and acknowledged the comments provided by Dr. Feibel and Jon Handler. She stated that public discussions were not always easy but emphasized the importance of civic dialogue and participation.

2. City Attorney

None.

K. COUNCIL COMMENT:

Councilmember Renner thanked Mayor Jadwin for recognizing May as Jewish American Heritage Month and stated that he viewed the recognition as connected to Council's prior affirmation of human dignity through Resolution 0060-2025. He noted that Vice President Jones authored the resolution and that he served as a co-author.

Councilmember Renner stated that human dignity represented a civic responsibility and called on the community to reject antisemitism, bigotry, hatred, and all forms of dehumanization. He stated that Jewish American Heritage Month provided an opportunity to honor the history, culture, contributions, and resilience of Jewish Americans. He also stated that antisemitism remained one of the oldest and most persistent forms of hatred and weakened the broader community in addition to harming those directly targeted. Councilmember Renner referenced the "Statue of Hope" at The James at Ohio State University, created by Holocaust survivor and artist Alfred Tibor, as a symbol of resilience, healing, and human dignity. He shared that his father had battled cancer and that he had become personally familiar with the statue during that experience. Councilmember Renner stated that the proclamation reaffirmed the importance of ensuring that Gahanna remained a community where individuals felt seen, valued, respected, and safe. Councilmember Renner also directed residents to information he posted on his Council Facebook page regarding rising electric rates. He stated that he

summarized several contributing factors and explained that electric rates had increased significantly since 2022 and 2023. He noted that he used ChatGPT to assist in creating an infographic that explained the complexity of rising electric rates and the challenges associated with infrastructure and energy sources. Councilmember Renner stated that he strongly supported renewable energy but acknowledged that the electrical grid faced significant infrastructure challenges. Councilmember Renner thanked Mayor Jadwin for announcing the new “Gohanna” transportation service and asked whether the vehicles were electric. Mayor Jadwin responded that the selected vendor did not use electric vehicles but stated that the City intended to continue pursuing electric transportation options in the future and had recently added two electric vehicles to the City fleet. Councilmember Renner stated that he appreciated the update.

Councilmember McGregor thanked her colleagues for allowing the Jewish American Heritage Month proclamation to move to the Presentations portion of the agenda. She stated that she recently learned about Haym Salomon, a Jewish immigrant during the American Revolution, helped finance the Continental Army by raising approximately \$650,000 and that he was never repaid before his death in 1785. Councilmember McGregor also shared a personal story involving her 14-year-old grandson, who asked his grandfather for information to help respond to antisemitic comments made by students at school. She stated that the conversation highlighted the presence of antisemitism among students and expressed appreciation for young people who sought to support and defend their classmates.

Councilmember Schnetzer thanked all individuals who addressed Council during the meeting and stated that participation in civic discourse required courage and remained important to the democratic process. He encouraged continued public engagement regardless of the topic being discussed. Councilmember Schnetzer also announced that registration for Gahanna Youth Football and Cheerleading opened on May 3. He noted that cheer registration typically filled quickly and that football registration generally filled more slowly. He referenced promotional billboards displayed around the community and stated that one featured player was his son’s friend and a member of the defensive team. Councilmember Schnetzer directed residents to the Gahanna Youth Football website and Facebook page for additional information.

Councilmember Padova thanked Councilmember Bowers for sponsoring the joint resolution and proclamation recognizing Perinatal Mental Health Month. She stated that the recognition was especially appropriate with Mother's Day approaching. Councilmember Padova encouraged residents experiencing challenges during motherhood to connect with the Gahanna Moms Network, which she described as a group of approximately 60 mothers who supported one another. She stated that the organization provided encouragement and reassurance for mothers experiencing similar situations. Councilmember Padova also announced that the Mother's Day Market at Collective Home Supply would take place on May 10 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. She stated that the market responded to community interest in additional shopping and market opportunities and noted that Collective Home Supply hosted quarterly markets. Councilmember Padova encouraged residents to attend the event with family and friends.

Councilmember Bowers thanked those who attended the meeting and echoed earlier comments expressing gratitude for the willingness of residents and officials to engage in difficult political and civic discourse. She stated that public meetings served as a place for difficult conversations and shared her perspective on the matter before Council. Councilmember Bowers stated that the nation faced a challenging period following the optimism of the latter half of the twentieth century, when many people believed progress remained inevitable. She stated that the previous decade had tested the democratic republic and constitutional system. She referenced the 2024 presidential election and stated that decades of political manipulation involving faith groups culminated in Project 2025 and the appointment of Christian nationalists to cabinet and influential governmental positions. She also referenced propaganda directed at American troops, the use of fundamentalist imagery by federal agencies, and social media posts depicting the president as Jesus of Nazareth. She stated that these developments increased the risk of violence, divisive rhetoric, and sectarian tensions. Councilmember Bowers referenced the 2019 Supreme Court case *American Legion v. American Humanist Association*, which involved the Bladensburg Cross on public land near Washington, D.C. She cited comments from Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who stated that the separation of church and state protected individual conscience in religious matters and prevented conflict when government aligned itself with one side of a religious

debate. Councilmember Bowers also referenced comments from Justice Stephen Breyer during his confirmation hearing, in which he discussed Thomas Jefferson's concept of a "wall" separating church and state. She quoted Justice Breyer's statements regarding the importance of maintaining separation in a nation composed of many religions and people, and his assertion that government could not favor one religion without disadvantaging others. Councilmember Bowers referenced author and legal commentator Dahlia Lithwick and an interview Lithwick conducted with Rachel Laser, President and Chief Executive Officer of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, published in *Slate* magazine in June 2024. She quoted Laser's remarks describing the separation of church and state as the antidote to Christian nationalism and as a constitutional safeguard protecting religious freedom and preventing religious privilege from influencing the law. She further quoted Laser's statement that opponents of church-state separation sought to dismantle those protections in order to advance their goals.

Councilmember Bowers stated that the current political environment had developed gradually and would require consistency, discipline, and unity to reverse. She stated that since taking office in 2020, she had attempted to model that discipline by maintaining secular oaths and invocations and by declining requests for legislation rooted in religious identity, including Hindu Heritage and Christian Family Month recognitions. Councilmember Bowers stated that although she respected Dr. Feibel's comments, she believed no community functioned as a monolith. She stated that other Jewish residents had expressed to her that, regardless of whether the intent centered on culture or religion, the issue remained inherently religious in nature and could not be separated from religion. She stated that introducing religion-based considerations, even under the guise of culture or another factor, created a slippery slope and raised legitimate concerns regarding the separation of church and state. Councilmember Bowers concluded by stating that her commitment to secularism did not diminish the need to protect the rights of individuals to practice their faiths free from discrimination and bigotry. She referenced fair housing laws, public opposition to anti-Semitism and bigotry, the City Charter's commitment to non-discrimination, and the importance of learning and listening. She stated that these actions upheld the protections guaranteed by the First Amendment and resisted the weaponization of sectarianism.

Vice President Jones thanked Mayor Jadwin for issuing the Jewish

American Heritage Month proclamation and thanked Councilmember Renner for referencing Council's prior human dignity resolution adopted in December. She stated that dignity, belonging, and respect for all individuals represented foundational values in her life, career, and public service. Vice President Jones stated that the prior human dignity resolution recognized Gahanna as a diverse community comprised of individuals from many cultures, ethnicities, religions, languages, and backgrounds. She stated that the absence of a Council resolution recognizing Jewish American Heritage Month did not alter her commitment to ensuring that Gahanna remained a community for all residents. Vice President Jones acknowledged the complexity and personal nature of the discussion and stated that she engaged in significant personal reflection and conversations with residents and colleagues before reaching her position. She thanked Jon Handler and Ginna Rinkov for helping her better understand the complexity of Jewish identity. Vice President Jones stated that, for her, the issue did not center on separation of church and state but rather on concerns about how expressions of support for one group might affect others. She stated that she recognized and respected the impact of those concerns on individuals present at the meeting and reaffirmed her commitment to ensuring dignity and safety for all residents. She encouraged continued conversations, learning, and understanding within the community. Vice President Jones reiterated her appreciation for everyone attending and engaging in difficult conversations.

President Weaver thanked attendees for participating in the meeting and thanked Dr. Feibel, Jon Handler, and Ms. Rinkov for meeting with Councilmembers and discussing the issue over several months. He stated that the issue involved many conversations and careful consideration. President Weaver stated that he could not separate faith from culture and that he believed legal concerns existed regarding a Council resolution recognizing Jewish American Heritage Month. He stated that Councilmembers discussed those concerns with the City Attorney and concluded that issuing such a resolution could establish precedent for future requests. President Weaver stated that his concerns focused on process and the implications of future requests rather than sentiment or intent. He stated that Council's prior resolution recognizing human dignity, which condemned antisemitism and other forms of hate, provided the appropriate framework for the community. President Weaver also clarified that Council had never adopted a Hindu Heritage

Month resolution, although Mayor Jadwin had previously issued a proclamation recognizing Hindu Heritage Month. He stated that a proposed recognition was removed from an agenda before publication because of concerns regarding precedent and the separation of church and state. President Weaver acknowledged that many residents felt disappointed and stated that he remained concerned about the precedent such actions could establish. He reiterated that he believed recognition of this type did not represent an appropriate role for Council. President Weaver also thanked everyone involved in Herb Day and noted that he personally observed the near sellout of plants despite arriving later than planned because of a family illness.

L. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Council, President Weaver adjourned the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

*APPROVED by the City Council, this
day of 2026.*

Trenton I. Weaver

Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council