



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Finance Committee

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

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

Jeremy A. VanMeter, Clerk of Council

Monday, October 28, 2024

City Hall, Council Chambers

Immediately following Committee of the Whole at 7:00 PM on October 28, 2024

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Councilmember Michael Schnetzer, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:29 p.m. The agenda was published on October 25, 2024. All members were present for the meeting. There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

B. DISCUSSIONS:

Human Resources, Information Technology, Finance, and Mayor's Court Budgets

[ORD-0065-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING APPROPRIATIONS FOR CURRENT EXPENSES AND OTHER EXPENDITURES OF THE CITY OF GAHANNA DURING THE FISCAL YEAR 2025

Chair Schnetzer introduced the discussion, noting this year's new approach to reviewing the budget in stages by department. The evening's focus would be on Human Resources, Information Technology, Finance, and Mayor's Court. He explained that pre-submitted questions from Council had been aggregated and provided to the Administration in advance to facilitate responses.

Senior Director Miranda Vollmer confirmed that these questions had been incorporated into the presentation slides, which would be organized by department. Vollmer indicated that the slides would highlight the questions as posed by Council, with answers prepared to be shown in sequence during the presentation. President Bowers proposed proceeding with the full presentation from the Administration.

General Questions

Senior Director Vollmer began by stating that the session would start with

general questions categorized under General Government. Department-specific questions would follow, and each relevant department would address its questions in turn. Vollmer noted that the evening's presentation included questions received through City Council from a school board member, which Director of Finance Joann Bury would address.

Director Bury presented the questions. She explained that two questions were derived from the October 14, 2024, minutes, based on her presentation that evening on the 2025 budget. Bury presented slides to address each question in turn, reading each question aloud before providing her responses. The first question related to projected revenue figures. The minutes from October 14 stated that the projected revenue for all funds would increase by \$10.2 million. However, the General Fund revenue was noted separately on the following page to increase by \$3.8 million. The question asked where the remaining \$6.4 million was allocated, given that the General Fund is the largest fund managed by the City. To clarify, Bury referenced slide 10 from her budget presentation, which represented all 49 funds of the City and displayed the \$10.2 million increase, accounting for debt proceeds. She indicated that this amount corresponded to an 11% increase. Moving to the next slide, she explained that slide 12 focused exclusively on the General Fund revenue, projected to increase by \$3.8 million, or 11%. Bury concluded that the remaining \$6.4 million was distributed across the other funds shown on the all-funds slide, thereby addressing the first question.

Director Bury proceeded to the second question, which appeared on page seven of the minutes under the section titled "Income Tax Calculation." The question inquired why only 1.5% was used in this calculation when the additional 1% from Issue 12 is allocated to dedicated funds. In response, Bury referred to slide 16 from her presentation, which showed the General Fund calculations at 1.5%. She clarified that the same assumptions and calculations applied to both the Special Revenue Funds and the Capital Fund. To further elaborate, she displayed slide 20, which included the 1% income tax across all four funds, thus addressing the second question. Bury confirmed that these explanations addressed the questions submitted by the school board member.

Senior Director Vollmer presented the next slide, which addressed the 2025 staffing request and projected costs for 2026, as previously requested by the Council. Vollmer explained that the chart displayed priority levels one and two, indicating how long each position was budgeted for. She noted that some positions were not budgeted for the full year due to anticipated hiring timelines. For example, the facility superintendent role was not expected to be filled until the summer, impacting its 2025 budget allocation. Vollmer clarified that the 2026 projected costs included all employer-paid expenses, such as health insurance and retirement, and assumed each employee would be hired at the midpoint of the pay scale, though this rate could vary. Additionally, family benefits were budgeted for each position, despite not all employees opting for them. Therefore, the actual costs could be less than the projected figures.

Councilmember Jones asked if the 2026 figures represented a full year.

Senior Director Vollmer confirmed this was correct. Councilmember Jones then inquired if the 2025 figures were based on time-to-hire considerations. Vollmer confirmed, explaining that 2025 budgeted amounts reflected the number of months for which each position was expected to be filled.

President Bowers asked for clarification, confirming that both Priority One and Priority Two positions were included in the budget. Vollmer confirmed. Bowers then asked if the “interns” line included MORPC interns from the current year. Vollmer confirmed, explaining that the line included both MORPC and non-MORPC interns, along with associated fees.

President Bowers further inquired if the intern line represented new positions or continued use of MORPC interns and whether it aggregated all interns. Vollmer confirmed it did. Bowers noted that some intern costs were already reflected in the 2024 budget, to which Vollmer affirmed. Vollmer added that departments requesting MORPC interns were budgeted specifically for those, while HR, for instance, had requested a spring semester intern for seasonal recruitment, resulting in a six-month budget for that role. Meanwhile, a MORPC intern was typically budgeted for a ten-week summer period.

President Bowers asked about the difference in intern costs from 2025 to 2026, inquiring if it was due to inflation. Vollmer confirmed it was an approximate 4% inflationary increase.

Chair Schnetzer questioned the accuracy of the top line in the chart, noting a discrepancy in the calculation, particularly concerning a communications technician position. Vollmer explained that this was a request to promote a Communications Technician I to a Communications Technician II for shift leadership purposes. She indicated that the 2026 projection likely represented the full rate of a Communications Technician II. However, she acknowledged the sizable increase appeared incorrect and committed to reviewing it for accuracy. Chair Schnetzer noted that the remaining figures seemed accurate, with the exception of the aforementioned discrepancy.

Senior Director Vollmer introduced the next slide, which began addressing questions under General Government, and invited Director Bury to proceed.

Director Bury presented the first question, which inquired about the necessary revenue growth or expenditure reduction required to maintain balance in the five-year projection chart over the Outlook period. Bury clarified that the chart represented a balanced outlook, meaning it did not exceed planned resources. Planned resources encompassed revenue and the unreserved fund balance, with the chart specifically focusing on revenue to determine when unreserved fund balance usage might be considered. She noted that, as currently projected, the budget remained balanced, and at the end of the five-year period, approximately seven months of unreserved fund balance was estimated to remain, which exceeded the two-month minimum required by policy. To provide context, Bury explained that she typically ran multiple scenarios, although the chart in the book represented the main projection. She stated that if revenue were to increase by 1% and expenditures decreased by 1%, the City would retain a nine-month

unreserved fund balance at the end of the five-year period and would not need to consider drawing on this balance until 2029.

Chair Schnetzer sought clarification, confirming that the chart was based on projections and that under a scenario with 1% higher revenue and 1% lower expenditures than the baseline, the fund balance would remain unaffected at the end of the period. He asked if this scenario represented 1% more than the base projection.

Director Bury affirmed, explaining that the baseline was the main projection, and if revenue increased by 1% while expenditures decreased by 1%, it would change the balance dynamics for the five-year period. She noted that she also ran scenarios with 1% less revenue and 1% more in expenditures to ensure all scenarios maintained balance, although the point at which unreserved fund balance usage might be requested varied.

Vice President Weaver asked a clarifying question regarding the consistency of revenue and expenditure percentages used in both the current projection and the previous question regarding 2025-26 hiring expectations. Director Bury confirmed that the chart's projections reflected the same revenue and expenditure modeling assumptions used in prior analyses. She explained that her approach included running additional scenarios to verify stability in various situations, such as if expenditures exceeded projections or if revenue fell short. This ensured a thorough assessment of the City's financial position over the next five years.

Vice President Weaver concluded by confirming that the projection accounted for all Priority One and Priority Two positions. Director Bury affirmed that this was correct.

Director Bury addressed the next question, which concerned page 32 of the budget book and asked about the projected decline in local government fund revenue for 2025 and beyond. Bury explained that the chart provided some background on this decline. She noted that, based on 2024 actual revenue figures, the City was unlikely to meet the planned revenue target for the year. In the state's biennium budget for local government funds, a slight increase in the percentage allocation was introduced. However, the state also reclassified certain revenue sources, which were previously considered part of general revenues used as the base for the calculation and earmarked them for other purposes.

The intended outcome, Bury explained, was to offset the reduced base with a higher percentage. However, the amount of revenue diverted was greater than the increase could cover. As a result, 2024 revenue was estimated to be approximately \$1 million, short of the initially projected \$1.1 million. Bury clarified that the original projection included an estimate based on the slight percentage increase, without full knowledge of how the diversion of general revenue would impact the calculation. Now, with a clearer understanding, she projected that 2025 to 2029 local government fund revenue would remain close to the 2024 figure of \$1 million. She stated that she would continue monitoring the next biennium budget to determine if any general revenue was

restored, potentially impacting future projections positively or negatively.

Chair Schnetzer summarized by noting that, in layman's terms, the state applied a slightly higher percentage to a smaller revenue base. Director Bury confirmed, stating, "Exactly."

Director Bury addressed a question regarding page 43 of the budget book, which requested an explanation for the estimated year-over-year decline in Water Fund revenue charges. She clarified that when assembling the financial statements, she combined water and water capital, as well as sewer and sewer capital, into single funds, namely a Water Fund and a Sewer Fund. Bury explained that the Water Capital Fund fluctuates based on ongoing projects within the City. Certain infrastructure projects require tap-ins or larger meter sizes, which involve specific fees allocated to the Water Capital Fund for those purposes. The decline in Water Fund revenue was attributed to fewer projects anticipated in 2025 compared to 2024, leading to reduced activity in the Water Capital Fund.

Director Bury then moved to a question on page 73, regarding the impact of employee turnover on 2024 expenditures, particularly in terms of vacancies or delays between employee departures and new hires. The question also asked whether these factors were included in the 2025 budget request. Bury responded that the answer was partial; the City can only budget based on known factors and does not always have advance notice of employee departures. For known departures, the budget includes succession planning. The projection also considers factors like time to hire, the number of positions requested, and HR capacity, resulting in partial funding for certain positions in 2025. For example, if a position is expected to be vacated in June, the budget might plan for hiring a replacement in July or August, accounting for HR's hiring timeline.

President Bowers confirmed there was currently one director vacancy (economic development). Bowers further inquired if there was an anticipated hire date and whether the role would continue to be filled by contract services or if there were plans to hire a permanent replacement.

Mayor Jadwin responded, stating that the City was actively recruiting for the position, although it has been challenging to fill. She highlighted that the City had experienced turnover in this role, with three economic development directors in the past four years. Mayor Jadwin affirmed her commitment to creating a supportive environment where an economic development director could thrive, noting the City's significant economic development successes in recent years. She emphasized the importance of hiring someone skilled and experienced to manage upcoming projects and City challenges. The Mayor expressed her hope that the position would be filled by the end of the year, given the critical projects approaching.

President Bowers asked if the position had been budgeted for a full year in 2025. Senior Director Vollmer confirmed that it had been.

Director Bury addressed a question from page 12 of the budget book

regarding new service mandates or major projects driving the increase in personnel from the 2022 actual budget to the 2025 budget. Bury explained that the majority of this growth occurred from 2022 to 2023, as the City emerged from the pandemic and navigated the impact of the "Great Resignation." Many positions remained vacant in 2021 and 2022 as the City cautiously assessed its recovery. By the end of 2022, the City's recovery was largely complete, which allowed for more staffing requests in the 2023 budget. Senior Director Vollmer then addressed the question of new services and mandates, noting that 2023 saw a larger increase in personnel due to these factors and the filling of previously vacant roles. She invited questions on the specific projects listed.

Chair Schnetzer asked if the trend in personnel figures shown was primarily a function of timing, suggesting that if the timeline extended back to 2019 (pre-COVID), the personnel count might rise and then dip in 2021 and 2022. Director Bury explained that in 2019, the City was focused on passing Issue 12, a levy aimed at increasing revenue. As the levy passed in 2019, the City began assessing staffing needs but did not pursue many new hires due to the pandemic. By 2023, the City was able to fully evaluate its staffing needs and move forward with a plan to address shortages. Vollmer added that part of the personnel cost increase also stemmed from implementing the compensation program for unclassified personnel beginning in 2023.

President Bowers asked about the increase in capital improvement projects, noting the inclusion of parks, recreation, and engineering initiatives, including the street tree program under Parks and Recreation. Vollmer confirmed, and Bowers inquired further about the City Arborist position, which existed prior to the program's expansion. Bowers sought clarification on additional staffing added for the street tree program. Vollmer offered to follow up, referencing a planned update from Director Ferrell's team on the program's expansion. Senior Director Kevin Schultz briefly added that the arborist role was upgraded from a foreperson to a supervisor, with the former position backfilled, increasing resources for the program. He noted the street tree program's separate listing under non-capital projects.

President Bowers then asked about the sidewalk program, confirming that it had also required increased staffing. Schultz confirmed, explaining that sidewalk improvements were classified under capital projects alongside Parks and Recreation and Engineering.

Chair Schnetzer observed that while some budgeted items, such as public safety and capital improvements, were self-explanatory, he saw an opportunity to clarify the "Citywide Initiatives" category for public benefit. Vollmer explained that citywide initiatives include projects impacting multiple departments, such as the Parks Master Plan, Our Gahanna Strategic and Economic Development Plan, the Comprehensive Transportation and Mobility Plan, and compensation programs. Schultz added examples of such initiatives, including Chapter 9 code updates, OpenGov asset management, risk and safety programs, and the Active Transportation Plan.

President Bowers expressed interest in understanding how these citywide

plans and initiatives related to staffing needs, specifically whether staffing was required for implementation or for managing the projects. Schultz confirmed that staffing was necessary for both, as City resources were needed to oversee consultants and manage project execution. For example, in a capital project like Academy Park, City staff are required to oversee contractors and ensure plan adherence. He highlighted that each strategic plan, from parks and recreation to transportation, included implementation schedules necessitating dedicated resources.

Chair Schnetzer humorously noted that the "Thoroughfare Plan" was easier to pronounce than the "Comprehensive Transportation and Mobility Plan."

Councilmember Jones asked where funding for consultants associated with these plans was budgeted. Director Bury confirmed that consultant fees were categorized under Contract Services.

Mayor's Court Budget

Senior Director Vollmer presented an overview slide, clarifying that it covered General Fund expenditures by department, specifically focusing on Mayor's Court. She outlined the format for each department's presentation, which included slides on 2024 accomplishments, 2025 priorities, department expenses, revenues, staffing, capital, and any questions directed toward the departments. Vollmer encouraged feedback on the format, noting that it could be adjusted if necessary. Vollmer emphasized that all information provided was available in the individual department narratives within the budget book but had been summarized here for clarity and accessibility. She noted that the accomplishments and priorities listed were selected highlights from each department.

For Mayor's Court's 2024 achievements, Vollmer reported progress on the e-ticketing initiative, developed in collaboration with the Division of Police and the IT department. Currently, 70% of officers were using e-ticketing, which had led to significant reductions in data entry.

A question had been submitted regarding the e-citation capabilities, found on page 65, asking if there was a progress update and if any cost changes were anticipated with full implementation. Vollmer responded that, with 70% of officers using e-ticketing, no additional costs were expected as all necessary technology had already been purchased. New cruisers equipped with e-ticketing capabilities were being introduced, while existing cruisers needing the technology were funded through the 2024 budget.

Looking at the 2025 priorities, Mayor's Court aimed to continue collaborations with the City of New Albany and the Division of Police to fully implement e-ticketing. Additionally, Director Parker and her team were focused on ensuring a smooth transition of court records at 825 through the digitization of many records.

Vollmer then directed attention to two slides on Mayor's Court expenditures and revenues, inviting any questions Councilmembers might have on these

specific budget elements.

Human Resources Budget

Senior Director Vollmer presented the 2024 accomplishments of the Human Resources (HR) team, highlighting several significant achievements. The HR team successfully hired 16 full-time unclassified employees, three part-time unclassified employees, six full-time classified (union) employees, and 166 seasonal employees-the largest seasonal hiring class in six years. Additionally, the HR team collaborated with Parks and Recreation to streamline the seasonal hiring process. They also hired two Communications Technicians, with two more hires approved, along with five police officers, two police sergeants, and four interns. The team launched a Learning Management System (LMS), hosted 12 employee engagement activities, and facilitated 16 wellness programs.

For 2025, HR's priorities include establishing a city-wide training program, revamping the onboarding process through technology, launching an onboarding academy, implementing employee engagement survey recommendations, and evaluating employee health benefits and wellness programs.

In response to a question regarding budget items for ongoing or new consultant-led projects, Vollmer clarified that while HR does work with consultants, none are currently performing specific projects, aside from those related to union contract negotiations. She noted that funds for union negotiations had been moved to the HR budget from the law budget for efficiency. Additionally, the City continued to use insurance broker services through NFP, separate from the consortium.

President Bowers inquired if there were additional anticipated professional services in the contract services category. Vollmer offered to provide a detailed list of the \$365,000 allocated.

President Bowers then commended the HR department and HR Manager Nolan for their achievements, acknowledging the department's hard work, improvements in processes, and dedication. She also commended Director Parker and the Mayor's Court team for their accomplishments.

Senior Director Vollmer mentioned that HR had no revenue lines and moved on to submitted questions. The first question addressed whether the addition of a training coordinator should reside in HR rather than Finance. Vollmer explained that, following the consultant's recommendation, the role was housed under the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) within Finance. This arrangement ensured centralized training support for various departments, including police and HR, with funding shared between the Division of Police and Finance.

The next question addressed succession planning, especially in light of future retirements. Vollmer noted that for known retirements, such as a long-time finance employee set to retire, HR could realign duties and open new

positions as needed. To support succession planning, the city budgeted for professional development programs, such as management development, emerging leader programs, and partnerships with organizations like MORPC. Additionally, the City offered tuition reimbursement and funding for certifications.

Regarding the new training program, another question asked about the focus of learning objectives. Vollmer responded that HR's preliminary plan included a structured onboarding program for new hires, guiding them through their first year with a mix of compliance, development, wellness, and workplace culture training. Ongoing training would address compliance, development, wellness, and equity and inclusion.

In response to turnover trends, Vollmer presented a slide depicting voluntary turnover from 2020 to 2024, showing a 5% turnover rate. To date, six employees had left for promotional opportunities, and three for career changes, totaling nine voluntary departures.

President Bowers asked about the placement of the training coordinator role within the organizational structure, noting it was unclear in the charts. Vollmer explained that the training coordinator would report through the risk and safety administrator, up to Senior Deputy Director Wybensing within the Finance department.

Councilmember Jones asked if the budget accounted for turnover trends, specifically the 5% turnover rate observed over the past two years. Director Bury clarified that the budget accounted for specific known turnovers but did not incorporate turnover trends into the personnel budget, focusing instead on individual positions. However, turnover trends informed projections for future years beyond 2025.

Vollmer added that Director Bury would include salary and benefit savings projections for 2024 in the upcoming quarterly report.

Finance Department Budget:

Senior Director Vollmer presented the Finance Department's 2024 accomplishments, noting the maintenance of the City's Double-A1 rating with Moody's in February, the successful issuance of bonds for the 825 project, and receipt of the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) awards for both the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) and the budget book. For 2025, Finance's priorities included issuing a Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR), monitoring the accounting system by entering capital assets, implementing a report builder for financial transparency, and working with the executive team on the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

A question was raised regarding a substantial year-over-year decline in contract services for Finance, specifically on page 75 of the budget book. Vollmer explained that this decline was primarily related to one-time expenses in 2024, captured in the Admin and Ops Division. She outlined the main drivers for the 2024 budget, including a staffing study, the ongoing strategic

plan, an increased assessment from the Board of Elections, and a risk insurance pool assessment payment of \$200,000. For 2025, the only new addition was a \$100,000 Community Grant Program.

President Bowers sought clarification on whether the staffing study and other listed items, such as the strategic plan and Board of Elections fees, were complete and fully paid. Director Bury confirmed that the staffing study, Board of Elections fees, and property taxes for 825 Tech Center Drive were complete. However, funds for the strategic plan and certain studies were encumbered under open purchase orders and would roll over to the following year. Director Schultz noted that unused funds for the Sustainability Plan would revert to the original fund, as no purchase order had been initiated.

Bowers then confirmed that the Sustainability Plan funds were not requested again for 2025, with Schultz explaining that any new additions would be explicitly listed for transparency. Bowers noted the 2025 request for \$2.3 million in contract services, requesting a detailed breakdown similar to the HR budget. Director Bury agreed to provide this.

Councilmember Jones clarified the nature of contract services, asking if it included both one-time and ongoing consultants. Bury confirmed that contract services encompassed all outsourced professional services, including recurring contracts like those for Franklin County Public Health and Regional Income Tax Agency (RITA).

Chair Schnetzer inquired if the decline in contract services was expected to recur, noting historical figures for reference. Bury explained that some costs, such as RITA and county fees, were linked to revenue collection and could fluctuate based on actual collections. While some expenses were unique, others, like risk insurance assessments, would not be repeated. She estimated that an annual budget around \$2 million might be a reasonable baseline going forward.

Chair Schnetzer asked about the property tax for 825 Tech Center Drive, specifically whether the payment was delayed. Bury confirmed that the City would receive a refund due to the tax exemption, which would either reduce expenditures for the current year or be recorded as additional revenue if received in a future year.

Chair Schnetzer inquired about the source of funding for the 2025 Community Grant Program, previously funded by ARPA. Vollmer clarified that the grant program would now be funded by the General Fund tax dollars. Schnetzer expressed concerns about using tax dollars and noted he would revisit the issue in future discussions.

President Bowers suggested that, as the Council was still in the fact-finding stage, it might be helpful to receive input on the Community Grant Program, specifically regarding the number of grant recipients and a general summary of its impact on the community. Senior Director Vollmer indicated that such a presentation had previously been provided.

Senior Deputy Director Corey Wybensinger gave a brief overview of the program's history. The Community Grant Program began in 2023, funded by ARPA federal dollars. In its first year, the program awarded \$50,000 across nine recipients, and in 2024, it expanded to \$100,000 across 15 recipients. For 2025, the department proposed a similar program with up to \$100,000 in funding sourced from the General Fund. The program has been well-received by Gahanna-based nonprofits, providing support for community engagement and resource development.

President Bowers recalled that some grant funds facilitated matching contributions from other organizations, allowing nonprofits to bring additional funds into Gahanna. Wybensinger confirmed this, noting that while matching funds were not required, many nonprofits used the City's funds to attract further support. He cited Gahanna Residents In Need (GRIN) as an example, where City funds helped GRIN secure additional donations for a food locker project at the high school and their main location.

Councilmember Padova inquired about the program's follow-up process to ensure funds were used appropriately. Wybensinger explained that the grants analyst was actively closing out 2023 projects and monitoring 2024 projects, which included a mix of quick-turnaround and longer-term projects requiring permits or scheduled events. The ARPA funds must be obligated by December 31, 2024, and expended by December 31, 2026, allowing time for project completion and oversight.

Mayor Jadwin added that the Community Grant Program exemplifies the ongoing management required for citywide initiatives. Staff effort is needed to create, implement, and monitor the program, which includes application management, committee organization, fund distribution, and usage tracking. This program, as listed among citywide initiatives, demonstrates the personnel demands associated with sustaining community programs.

President Bowers proposed that a future Finance Committee meeting might include an analysis of the program's return on investment (ROI), accounting for both earmarked funds and staff resources, to assess the program's overall impact on the community. Wybensinger noted that while some projects have tangible outcomes, quantifying the ROI in financial terms may be challenging for programs focused on community betterment. He referenced projects such as the Gahanna Ages and Abilities partnership, where quantifiable financial return may be less straightforward, but the impact on community engagement and wellness is significant. He acknowledged that some ROI data might be obtained from nonprofit partners who can quantify their outcomes.

Chair Schnetzer clarified that, to date, no City tax dollars had been spent on the grant program, with all awards issued using federal ARPA funds. Wybensinger confirmed this. While staff salaries are City-funded, the grants themselves have been federally funded.

Senior Director Vollmer proceeded to present the Finance Department's revenue slide. There were no further questions from Council.

Information Technology Department Budget

Senior Director Vollmer introduced the IT Department, noting that it included both staffing and capital expenses. She highlighted key 2024 achievements for Director Carter and her team, including the implementation of advanced reporting and detection tools on endpoints as part of the City's cybersecurity initiative, weekly cyber hygiene scanning through CISA partnerships, and completion of the City Works asset management system implementation.

For 2025, IT priorities include supporting technology needs for the new 825 Tech Center Drive, consolidating duplicative technology platforms to streamline services, and ongoing work with the Division of Police on the Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) and Records Management System (RMS) project.

Vollmer then reviewed IT expenditures, noting a \$900,000 allocation for contract services. She explained that the increase was largely due to new software agreements, such as Microsoft cloud services and other city-wide platforms, including the learning management system, applicant tracking system, and OpenGov. These city-wide technologies are budgeted under IT due to their cross-departmental use. The department also allocated funds for security enhancements, including penetration testing.

Chair Schnetzer asked for clarification on the question regarding salaries and benefits, and Vollmer confirmed that this would be addressed in an upcoming slide.

Next, Vollmer responded to a question on page 79 of the budget book about whether the 2025 budget request would support a successful transition to 825 Tech Center Drive. She affirmed that most major expenses for the move were included in the capital budget, to be covered by Senior Director Schultz. Any additional needs not currently in the budget would be addressed as they arise.

A question on page 80 regarding the \$280,000 increase in salaries and benefits was addressed by Director Bury. She explained that in the 2024 budget, a second IT support specialist position was initially requested but replaced with a CAD administrator role, which later became vacant. Ordinance 0035-2024 allowed for this CAD administrator role to be reallocated, fully funding the IT support specialist position instead. Consequently, the increase in 2025 reflects a full year of funding for the IT support specialist and the addition of a systems analyst. Bury also noted an error in the salary and benefits projection module within the Munis system, which inflated the reported increase. This discrepancy would be corrected in future reports, and while there is an increase, it is not as high as initially reflected.

President Bowers clarified that the \$280,000 figure was not entirely accurate due to the Munis system error, and Vollmer and Bury confirmed that the final corrected amount would reflect a lower increase. Vollmer added that the CAD administrator role had previously been split between IT and police, but the IT

support specialist role now appears fully under IT as per the budget changes in Ordinance 0035-2024.

Senior Director Vollmer briefly revisited the IT Department's staffing request, noting that the proposal for a new Systems Analyst was classified as a Priority 2. She directed attention to the organizational chart on the next slide, indicating where the Systems Analyst role would be placed within the department's structure. Vollmer offered to answer any additional questions but noted that, with no further inquiries, Senior Director Schultz would proceed to discuss the capital budget.

2025 Capital Requests - 9.0 Technology Program

Senior Director Schultz presented the 2025 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for the IT Department, noting the inclusion of a technology program within the capital budget, which he indicated on the slides for clarity. Schultz highlighted that the technology program's funding, labeled as "9.0" within the CIP, provides an overview of the capital requests specifically dedicated to IT. Schultz explained that the IT capital budget focuses on three main areas: fiber optic infrastructure, IT infrastructure, and system applications. He began with fiber optic infrastructure, noting that the City manages 21 miles of fiber optic cable, connecting City facilities, public safety facilities, and school buildings. This network also supports partnerships with outside agencies, such as Whitehall, Bexley, and New Albany.

Schultz then explained the reallocation of prior-year funds for fiber optic expansion, totaling approximately \$1.1 million. Following best practices, funds from projects not yet executed in 2024 would be returned and reallocated in the 2025 budget. The updated fiber optic budget request for 2025 was \$763,000, down \$360,000 from the previous request due to identified double-counting errors.

Chair Schnetzer asked if Council would see this capital item again in a later review. Schultz clarified that, while this specific capital allocation would not return for review unless requested, Councilmembers could submit additional questions as needed.

Senior Director Vollmer noted that moving forward, department presentations would address capital and staffing needs concurrently, aligning with each department's achievements and priorities. Councilmembers were encouraged to review department-specific capital items during their respective presentations to streamline the process.

Schultz then outlined the IT infrastructure budget, which included a request to reallocate \$300,000 from the 2024 networking equipment budget due to delays related to the upcoming move to 825 Tech Center Drive. Additional 2025 requests for IT infrastructure included \$525,000 for networking equipment upgrades, \$60,000 for servers, and \$260,000 for storage equipment, totaling \$1.145 million.

For system applications, Schultz presented a 2025 request of \$190,000,

allocated toward essential upgrades and life cycle maintenance for the 911 system and a \$40,000 allocation for the Live Scan fingerprint system, which required replacement as it neared end-of-life. This equipment would be installed at the 825 Tech Center Drive.

The presentation concluded with Schultz inviting questions on the IT capital budget, clarifying that all items, including reallocated funds, were sourced from the capital fund.

President Bowers sought clarification on the capital budget format in the CIP document, specifically looking at page 115, which details the list of projects. She referenced the line item for “fiber optic network expansion and redundancy” and asked if the \$263,000 listed represented the current request.

Senior Director Schultz clarified that the \$263,000 was not part of the new ask for 2025 but rather an amendment. This amount was part of the funds being reallocated from previous years, and Schultz indicated that the department was still refining the presentation of these reallocated funds within the budget document.

President Bowers asked why the project had not progressed in 2024. Schultz explained that the fiber project was still in the planning phase and lacked sufficient information to move forward. He noted that the City was working on getting detailed quotes for projects, including enhancing fiber connectivity to 825 Tech Center Drive, expanding trunk capacity on Morrison Road, and addressing the fiber infrastructure in the current City Hall building. As each project’s requirements became clearer, he would seek approval from the CIP Advisory Committee to allocate portions of the \$763,000 reallocated funds accordingly. Any unspent funds at year-end would revert to the original fund source.

Senior Director Schultz outlined the CIP process as a proactive budgeting measure to enhance transparency with Council, the CIP Advisory Committee, and department directors. This approach allowed departments to request capital funding for specific projects when more concrete planning and quotes were available.

President Bowers inquired about the fiber optic infrastructure’s public benefits, specifically whether it still serves as an economic development driver, as originally promoted. Schultz responded that while fiber optic technology is over 20 years old, it remains a valuable asset for economic development. However, the City faces constraints that limit its capacity for private sector use, and these limitations are governed by agreements with the Community Improvement Corporation (CIC), which manages private sector access to the network. Bowers inquired on whether the administration aimed to expand private sector use of the fiber optic network. Schultz clarified that the CIC, not the City, oversees agreements related to private sector access. He added that modern businesses often require different services than those currently available on the City’s fiber network, presenting further challenges.

President Bowers asked if newer technology might offer an alternative to

fiber, given its age. Schultz confirmed that fiber remains top-tier for data transmission, widely used even by private providers, and remains an essential technology despite its age. He stressed that current limitations are contractual, not technological.

In response to Bowers' question about alternatives if the \$763,000 expansion request were not funded, Schultz explained that leasing fiber from a private provider would be prohibitively expensive and would constrain the City's network capabilities. He likened the expansion to increasing sewer capacity-upgrading the network to support additional connections. He underscored the importance of projects like expanding trunk capacity on Morrison Road and adding lateral capacity to key City facilities to meet critical infrastructure needs.

President Bowers further inquired if school district users paid fees for fiber access. Schultz confirmed that public partners, such as the district, operate under specific agreements that stipulate fees. These agreements are subject to revision based on factors like construction changes or new facility connections, and any changes would return to Council for approval. However, fees paid by public entities do not fully cover the capital investment required. Bowers asked if CIC revenue from private sector connections was publicly reported, and Schultz responded that he did not track CIC revenue but noted that it might be available in the CIC Treasurer's report.

Chair Schnetzer acknowledged the continued presence of some Citizens Academy members, recognizing their dedication in attending the session, which had now lasted over two hours. He asked if there were any further questions from Council regarding IT capital projects.

President Bowers raised a final question concerning the IT infrastructure request for \$825,000, asking if this amount had been part of the 825 Tech Center Drive project budget. Senior Director Schultz clarified that it was not, explaining that core switches originally set for refresh in the current City Hall were instead reserved for installation at the new location. This budget also included Wi-Fi units and additional access layer switches needed to meet the expanded technological demands at 825 Tech Center Drive. Schultz further explained that while the security and AV networks had their own dedicated switches, the main building IT network required separate access layer switches, resulting in a missed allocation for the 825 Project.

President Bowers requested that the access layer switches and Wi-Fi units be included in the final 825 Tech Center Drive budget overview for clarity. Schultz confirmed this, noting that these were the only items where project scope alignment between City and contractors had led to oversight.

Chair Schnetzer asked for clarification on how the CIP budget would be structured in the final ordinance, given the reallocation process discussed. Director Bury indicated that reallocations might come back as a supplemental appropriation in the first quarter of the following year to allow more time for finalization and avoid prematurely returning funds still in progress. This approach would ensure a cleaner break between the 2025 budget and

carryover allocations from 2024.

Chair Schnetzer confirmed that reallocations would likely show as a variance in future updates if supplemental allocations were significant. Bury noted that the reallocation process would vary, depending on each department's readiness for project execution, with departments such as Parks and Recreation and Engineering potentially needing more flexibility due to complex project requirements.

As the meeting drew to a close, Schnetzer reviewed the upcoming agenda. Next week's meeting would focus on Parks and Recreation, covering both operational and capital budget items. He encouraged Councilmembers to review the capital projects section on page 115 of the budget book in preparation and inquired about Council's preference on presentation format.

Councilmember Padova supported continuing the current format, where questions submitted in advance allowed staff to address them directly within the presentation. This approach, she noted, provided useful context and clarity on complex topics. Chair Schnetzer concurred, and Councilmembers agreed to maintain this approach.

Senior Director Vollmer confirmed she would prioritize responses to any additional questions that arose, organizing them at the beginning of the next presentation. Chair Schnetzer requested that questions for the upcoming Parks and Recreation discussion be submitted by 9:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 30, 2024, allowing time for staff to prepare responses.

Recommendation: Held in Committee; Further discussion scheduled 11/4/2024.

C. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Finance Committee, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

*APPROVED by the Finance Committee, this
day of 2024.*

Michael Schnetzer