



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Finance Committee

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

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

Jeremy A. VanMeter, Clerk of Council

Monday, October 27, 2025

City Hall, Council Chambers

Immediately following Committee of the Whole at 7:00 PM on October 27, 2025

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Immediately following the conclusion of the Committee of the Whole, Councilmember Stephen A. Renner, Chair, called the Finance Committee to order at 8:12 p.m., October 27, 2025. The agenda was published on October 24, 2025. All members were present for the meeting. There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

B. DISCUSSIONS:

FY 2026 Capital Budget Request Questions

[ORD-0043-2025](#) AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING THE 2026-2030 CITY OF GAHANNA CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN, SUPERSEDING ALL PRIOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLANS, AND PROVIDING FOR FUTURE SUNSET

Finance Committee Chair Stephen Renner invited Senior Director Kevin Schultz to begin the staff presentation. Senior Director Schultz explained the presentation would be informal. Schultz noted Council received the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) at the September 22, 2025, presentation. He elaborated that staff responded to Council questions on the CIP document as well as 2026 budget requests at the earlier Budget Workshop held on October 23, 2025. Schultz voiced a goal of showing deference to Council's time, aiming to make his presentation brief. He invited further inquiries from Councilmembers regarding the CIP or 2026 budget requests. Schultz also shared that he would not circulate a new CIP document until all revision items were addressed. He explained that the CIP document was approximately 185 pages long, included 16-17 files, and took six hours to combine, representing a significant investment of time and effort.

Chair Renner invited fellow committee members to voice their inquiries.

Councilmember McGregor referenced anticipated shade structure installations for the parks. McGregor requested staff coordinate the installation of shade structures and shade trees, maximizing the natural beauty of the trees and mitigating the need for shade structures, as the trees mature.

Councilmember Padova referenced an email from staff regarding aquatic facilities. Padova sought to verify the status of the Gahanna Swimming Pool (GSP), separate from the Hunters Ridge Swimming Pool (HRSP). Padova sought confirmation from staff that the GSP would be added as a project under assessment, in the Priority Three phase. Schultz confirmed Padova's summary. Padova asked for clarity on a timeframe for the GSP updates, noting the facility was nearing the end of its usable lifespan, with the need to make significant reinvestment in the facility, sooner rather than later, to maintain services. Padova asked staff to explain why the project was identified as a Priority Three "Could Do" instead of a Priority Two "Should Do," which reduces future operation and maintenance costs and rehabilitates or replaces an obsolete public facility. Schultz acknowledged Padova's inquiry, responding that staff preferred to comprehensively address initiatives at GSP through the Aquatics Master Plan. Schultz observed the Aquatics Master Plan is not complete or fully vetted at this time. He elaborated on considerations of relining the front pool at GSP, questioning whether relining or other more substantial remediation were most appropriate. Schultz qualified staff's evaluation, characterizing that relining is not suitable for the site. He used this example to underscore a need for further in-depth considerations of all aspects of remediation at the GSP site. Schultz noted rough estimates of a budget for \$30,000,000.00 for the Aquatics Master Plan: \$10,000,000.00 for HRSP and \$20,000,000.00 for GSP. He explained that part of the budgeted \$90,000.00 assessment in 2026 funds is intended to evaluate whether the proposed improvements from the Aquatics Master Plan are possible on the GSP site. Schultz highlighted several site concerns, including geotechnical and floodplain considerations, among other circumstances. He explained that while detailed plans for the GSP are not included in the documents provided to Council, the initiative is one that staff will bring forward in future conversations, with a proposal. Schultz elaborated that the future discussion will also address how much water the city needs and can support. He explained that an evaluation revealed Gahanna has more water than other communities of similar size, providing services through the GSP, HRSP, and a splashpad, among other services. Schultz reiterated that the significant budget and scope of the anticipated project required thoughtful consideration. He committed to addressing how initiatives are incorporated into city-planned projects in 2026. Padova thanked Schultz. She explained her membership on the Aquatics Steering Committee provided her with important insights into the discussion; however, she noted concern that she was unaware of how or if that same information was conveyed to her City Council colleagues. Padova asked, in the interest of her colleagues working from the same information, that the same information be shared with all of the Councilmembers. Schultz agreed, noting the difficulty in scheduling updates while balancing multiple impactful projects of significant scope, including Creekside, the budget, the Aquatics Master Plan, and the new City Hall Civic Center. Illustrating his point, Schultz noted he was not able to provide Council with an update on the new

City Hall Civic Center in three months. Schultz observed that the impact of the volume of projects, from a human resources standpoint, required some things to go to the back burner, apologizing that the Aquatics Master Plan was one of them. Padova shared she drove by the new City Hall Civic Center construction site, earlier in the day, stating it looked good, thanking Schultz for his work on that project. Padova asserted her intention was to make sure that the investment of work and time put into developing the Aquatics Master Plan by staff and community members is properly utilized and moves forward, "seeing the light of day." Padova reiterated her commitment to advocate for the project. Schultz assured Padova that the Aquatics Master Plan was never far from his mind, joking that the Director of Parks and Recreation, Stephanie Ferrell, would not allow him to forget the important initiative.

President Bowers piggybacked off Padova's inquiry regarding the \$90,000.00 site assessment identified in the CIP request. Bowers requested that staff share the Aquatics Master Plan with Council ahead of time, with or without a presentation, for context. Schultz confirmed. Bowers thanked Schultz.

Councilmember McGregor shared that the Royal Gardens Path was removed. She inquired if the path could be replaced before the anticipated Christmas event mentioned by Mayor Jadwin. McGregor described the Royal Gardens Path project as minor, estimated at \$8,500.00. She inquired if staff could include the project within another anticipated asphalt project earlier in the year, favorably aligning with the scheduled event. Schultz acknowledged McGregor, describing other enhancements scheduled at the Royal Gardens site. Improvements include the roof at the gazebo (complete), the surface of the gazebo, updating the sidewalks to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, reinstalling a portion of the Royal Gardens Path for the gazebo, and a temporary path to the convenience parking behind AutoZone. Schultz shared staff are looking at the event from a park-and-ride standpoint, carefully considering liability concerns when dropping citizens off at a private parking lot. He explained staff is reviewing complex circumstances of the site to gain better understanding for the best plan of action. A temporary path will be utilized to support the Parks and Recreation Christmas event, with partial replacement a future date. Schultz mentioned lights will be hung in the trees at the park to enhance the event.

Vice President Weaver thanked Schultz for responding to questions Weaver emailed the director regarding his budget inquiries, per staff request. Schultz acknowledged Weaver. Weaver referenced PK-29-03, a possible Clark State to Theori Avenue to North Hamilton trail, sharing his understanding that the county engineer's office was in discussions with city staff. Weaver inquired if there was a potential timeline for when additional information may become available. Schultz did not believe a conversation had happened between staff and the county engineer's office regarding a feasibility study; elaborating it was on the to-do list. Schultz asserted there was a portion of the referenced path in Jefferson Township associated with a LinkUs project. Weaver thanked Schultz for his comments, moving on to another inquiry. Weaver described an earlier discussion with Schultz regarding entryway signage, as helpful. Weaver requested Schultz elaborate on the topic for the broader audience. Schultz explained that staff is comprehensively reviewing citywide signage

elements, including primary gateways, secondary locations, medallion signage, and wayfinding signage. Schultz estimated staff were close to selecting a formal design. He elaborated on staff's caution in developing a cohesive and thoughtful branding approach to citywide signage. Schultz suggested that in the next 12-13 months, members of the public will see efforts take shape across the city. He stated he will share plans with Council as they become finalized.

Councilmember Schnetzer asked Schultz for clarification on a few documents to help reconcile information and provide enlightenment for future plans. Schnetzer referenced the 2026 Capital Budget Preliminary Request table and the CIP book, specifically a project titled FA-20-1401, the Creekside Flood Mitigation and Plaza Improvements, noting an asterisk on the table with no value, and in the CIP book, Schnetzer observed there is a value of \$23.25 million associated with 2026. Schultz held up a piece of paper with type on it, asking Schnetzer if it was the referenced table, to the best of Schnetzer's knowledge. Schultz explained that for the 2026 request, staff is requesting \$19.487 million, as presented in the budget workshop last week. He explained the document referenced by Schnetzer was slightly outdated, with the \$19.487 million figure being more up to date, stating the amount is \$19.5 million. Schnetzer requested clarification if that was the total amount being requested. Schultz stated, as of that day, staff was not requesting any allocations for Creekside because, at the time, staff does not know what the final funding package will be for that project. He anticipates staff will come back to Council early in the first quarter, in the spring of 2026, knowing what that funding package will be, to do the \$25 million public project represented in Council's outline. Schultz drew a correlation between the Aquatics Master Plan and the anticipated Creekside work. Schultz evaluated that staff are further along on the Creekside Project with preliminary design with good construction estimates and so forth. He described the Aquatics Master Plan as conceptual and not fully vetted. He described funding strategies, working with estimated values, and incorporating flexibility to accommodate unknown variables related to variances between preliminary and final development plans. Schultz affirmed that staff will come forward with a funding request for the Creekside project, including considerations for private funding and possible state dollars and grant awards. Some of the mistakes and questions inquired about from the September presentation related to estimates based on anticipated debt service, but now errors are corrected, with staff currently asking for no funding. Schnetzer described the explanation as helpful, summarizing that at this time staff is asking for the \$19.5 million figure, with the understanding that staff will soon return with a much larger request for funding for the Creekside project. Schultz confirmed. Schnetzer referenced the "Big Nine" list mentioned at an earlier point in discussions. Schultz noted that 5 of the 9 items on the Big Nine list, are fully funded through the CIP over time. Schultz referenced a priority mentioned in an email from Mr. Weaver, that future considerations, such as the Big Walnut Trail, were included in the CIP, assuring Council that they are. Schultz elaborated that Director of Finance Joann Bury does not allow CIP projects to outpace their funding. He explained staff's responsibility to maintain funds balanced in the positive, not in the negative.

Following up on Schnetzer's question, President Bowers asked if staff could provide Council with a maximum cash contribution figure anticipated for the Creekside improvement project. Bowers observed Director Bury shaking her head from the audience. Schultz described the request as difficult to fulfill without understanding the full scope of the project and funding needs. Director Bury walked to the podium, elaborating on the difficulty of reporting such an estimate, without yet identifying what staff would request. She explained that staff had yet to identify how resources would be allocated. Bury noted staff have a large book full of projects requiring planning and financial considerations, explaining that such conversations must continue into the first quarter of 2026. Bowers observed that staff might be anticipating later questions, clarifying her interest to understand what budget amount was asked of Council at the time. Bowers asserted that the amount of roughly \$23 million would not come forward as a request for a supplemental appropriation, elaborating that it could not. Bowers speculated that there could be a very small cash contribution, if any. Director Bury replied staff could not provide such an estimate at that time, with grant funding decisions pending. Bury shared the scope would be based on upcoming conversations about funding possibilities and the will of Council. These conversations will determine whether work will focus on flood mitigation or incorporate the whole project. Schultz reiterated the total construction estimate of about \$23 million, noting that value engineering was not complete, along with other variables like a possible Tax Increment Financing (TIF) resource and a private funding question. Schultz asserted staff's belief that the budget was sound, noting the difficulty in describing the precise funding picture at the time. Bowers acknowledged the response, clarifying that she was not requesting an exact figure, but a maximum figure to help the Council frame the bigger picture when evaluating the budget, as part of their role. Bury suggested Council look to the fund balance policy, specifically the unreserved fund balance and Council's tolerance for how low it might be taken, as a guide to a maximum. Bowers thanked Bury, stating the answer was helpful. As a follow-up, Bowers noted an earlier email to Schultz regarding breaking the project down. She observed that the entirety of the Creekside Reimagined project is currently identified as a Priority One project, while recognizing there are different tiers within the project. She expressed her view that multiple priority tiers may apply to the Creekside Plaza components, while also recognizing the need to consider the project in totality. Schultz agreed the document may become out of date as information changes. He shared that staff typically works under the assumption that all allocated dollars will be spent, though that is not always the case. Schultz recalled presenting the phases of the project, each with its own estimated cost, that sum to approximately \$23 million. He added that staff intends to bring the entire project forward because of its merits. Schultz explained that deferring elements, such as the lower bowl area, would make them unlikely to occur in the future. While the upper plaza is the easiest portion to phase, stretching construction over multiple years could place the area in a near-constant construction cycle. Schultz stated that, consistent with his prior presentation, future materials will present the project in five phases so Council can understand the components and how they fit together. Bowers thanked Schultz for his response, noting she was not sure that information was all included via email. She stated her appreciation to maintain the integrity of the recognition, creating alignment through the conversation

that night.

Seeing no further questions, Chairman Renner reminded colleagues of the budget calendar. Senior Director Vollmer transmitted the Public Safety budget request via email. Questions are due to Chairman Renner by Thursday October 30, 2025, for forwarding to the administration. The Department of Public Safety presentation is scheduled for Monday, November 3, 2025. The full budget book is expected Friday, October 31, 2025.

Recommendation: Second Reading/Adoption (with Amendment) on 11/3/2025.

C. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Finance Committee, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:39 p.m.

Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

APPROVED by the Finance Committee, this
day of 2025.

Stephen A. Renner