



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Charter Review

200 S. Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

Ethan Barnhardt, Chair
Carrin Wester, Vice Chair
Jamie Belisle
Edward A. Hill, Jr.
Richard Maxwell
Raymond J. Mularski
Karen Reynolds

Jeremy A. VanMeter, Clerk of Council

Thursday, March 12, 2026

6:30 PM

Council Chambers, City Hall

A. CALL TO ORDER: Pledge of Allegiance & Roll Call.

Chair Barnhardt called the regular meeting of the City of Gahanna Charter Review Commission to order on March 12, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. and led members in the Pledge of Allegiance. The agenda was published on March 6, 2026.

Present 7 - Ethan Barnhardt, Jamie Belisle, Edward A. Hill Jr., Richard Maxwell, Raymond J. Mularski, Karen Reynolds, and Carrin Wester

B. ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA.

None.

C. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES.

[2026-0053](#)

Charter Review Commission Minutes 2026-02-26

A motion was made by Wester, seconded by Hill, that the Minutes be Approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Barnhardt, Belisle, Hill, Maxwell, Mularski, Reynolds and Wester

D. PUBLIC COMMENT.

Chair Barnhardt opened public comment for visitors who wished to address the Commission. He reminded attendees that speakers had to complete a speaker slip and that the Commission limited comments to three minutes unless the Commission extended the time to ten minutes. Hearing no requests to speak, Chair Barnhardt closed public comment.

E. UNFINISHED BUSINESS.

1. Workplan and Prioritization Framework

[2026-0043](#)

City of Gahanna Charter Review Commission Process Architecture - Draft Received via Chair Barnhardt

Chair Barnhardt introduced unfinished business and continued the discussion on the proposed work plan and prioritization framework. He reminded the Commission that the framework would guide its evaluation of potential charter amendment proposals after the proposal-gathering phase ended. He stated that the revised draft added a scoring criterion for strategic plan alignment at Commissioner Hill's suggestion and included additional context from the previous meeting on how the Commission should consider and review amendments. He invited feedback before entertaining a motion to adopt the framework.

Commissioner Mularski recommended that the Commission not wait until the end of the process to address all issues at once. He said that trying to finalize multiple items in the last two meetings would create difficulty for the Commission and the City Attorney.

Vice Chair Wester asked whether the framework would allow the Commission to begin evaluating proposed amendments as early as April. Chair Barnhardt explained that the Commission first needed to complete its public engagement meetings, including presentations from the administration, board and commission members, City Councilmembers, and members of the public. He said that after the Commission gathered the full range of ideas, it would apply the matrix and begin deliberation. He added that each meeting would continue to include an opportunity for public comment. Chair Barnhardt explained that after the public engagement phase, the Commission would catalog the submitted ideas, use the prioritization matrix to distinguish housekeeping items from more substantive proposals, and determine whether proposals warranted further input, education, drafting, or tabling. He said that the Commission could likely begin serious deliberation at its second meeting in April.

Commissioners discussed whether the final three meetings would provide enough time to prioritize proposals, debate each issue, and develop draft language. Chair Barnhardt said that the proposed timeline reflected his recommendation but that he remained open to additional

input. He asked City Attorney Tamilarasan whether the proposed schedule would create a problem for drafting. City Attorney Tamilarasan said that if the Commission completed deliberation and prioritization on April 23 and identified the items that should advance to drafting, she could provide draft language by May 7. She later added that drafting would occur after the April 23 and May 7 meetings, that the Commission could fine-tune language on May 21, and that she could prepare a final written draft for Council by June 4. She clarified that the Commission would need to finalize everything by May 21, although it could still make final language adjustments at that meeting.

Vice Chair Wester discussed the possibility of adding meetings if necessary. She noted that the Commission could schedule additional meetings with proper public notice if more deliberation became necessary and agreed that the Commission should not delay analysis longer than necessary.

Commissioner Belisle said that the timeline seemed doable. She stated that it felt inappropriate to begin deliberation and prioritization before hearing from all invited participants, adding that beginning in April seemed appropriate.

City Attorney Tamilarasan stated that the process had always contemplated discussion, questions, answers, and feedback during presentations, so the Commission would not remain silent on issues until the end of April. Chair Barnhardt agreed and encouraged commissioners to use the presentation phase to ask questions and gather context that would help them during deliberations. Commissioner Belisle complimented the addition of the strategic plan criterion to the framework.

A motion was made by Belisle, seconded by Hill, that the City of Gahanna Charter Review Commission Process Architecture (Updated 03.04.2026) be Approved and Filed. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 6 - Barnhardt, Belisle, Hill, Maxwell, Reynolds and Wester

No: 1 - Mularski

2. Upcoming Meeting Calendar Dates

Chair Barnhardt then reviewed the upcoming meeting calendar and invited guests. He stated that stakeholder engagement remained an

important part of the Commission's process and said that he wanted to remain intentional about whom the Commission invited and when. He noted that City Councilmembers and board and commission members would share ideas at the March 26 and April 9 meetings. He identified the March 26 invitees as Councilmember Schnetzer, Ken Shepard of the Parks and Recreation Board, Heyna Deepa Patel of the Community Reinvestment Area Housing Council, and Sarah Pollyea, a member of the Planning Commission and Property Appeals Board. He identified Councilmember Bowers and Heyna Deepa Patel as scheduled participants for April 9. Chair Barnhardt said the Commission would continue to monitor the schedule and invited commissioners to suggest additional guests.

3. Public Engagement Process Discussion

Chair Barnhardt followed up on a discussion of public engagement. He reported that Director Vollmer had contacted him about filming several videos, that he had recruited a few people to participate, and that he would share contact information soon. He thanked city staff for the social media posts that had already promoted the Charter Review Commission and invited any additional ideas to strengthen public engagement. He said the process appeared to be on a good track.

F. NEW BUSINESS.

1. Presentation from Mayor Jadwin and Staff

Chair Barnhardt opened new business and introduced the administration's presentation on potential charter amendment ideas. He stated that the presentation marked the beginning of the Commission's intensive public engagement phase and encouraged commissioners to listen carefully and ask questions that would help them understand the background, rationale, and context of the ideas presented. He reminded the Commission that the goal during this phase was to gather information and perspectives rather than evaluate proposals. He then turned the floor over to Senior Director of Administrative Services Miranda Vollmer.

Senior Director Vollmer thanked the Chair and the Commission for the invitation. She introduced herself as the Senior Director who oversaw the internal side of the City, including Human Resources, Information Technology, and Mayor's Court. She introduced Planning Director

Michael Blackford and noted that Mayor Jadwin would also offer comments. She identified Senior Director Kevin Schultz as the leader of the operational side of the City, including Parks and Recreation, Planning, Public Service, and Engineering, and introduced Senior Deputy Director Corey Wybensing. She stated that the administration would answer questions about the City's organizational structure and noted that the strategic plan included a broad overview of the City's three branches of government and the alignment of departments.

Senior Director Vollmer stated that the administration had several recommendations to present and said that she had provided the PowerPoint to Clerk VanMeter for the Commission members, which would also be attached to the record. She explained that the recommendations aligned with Goal Two of the *Our Gahanna* Strategic Plan, which focused on providing high-quality municipal services that were effective, collaborative, and responsive. She said the recommendations aligned with strategies to connect the strategic plan with the charter review process, regularly review and update City codes and regulations, ensure transparency and responsiveness throughout City government, and establish internal guidance, policies, and procedures that remained modern and compliant.

Senior Director Vollmer presented the administration's first recommendation. She said the administration proposed adding language to Article III, Section 3.04 to require the Mayor to prepare and submit a strategic plan to Council, provide the public an opportunity to comment on the plan, and issue an annual report on progress toward the plan's goals and objectives. She stated that the draft language would also require the City to update the plan as needed and submit updates to Council for review, public comment, and adoption. She added that draft redline language would be provided to Clerk VanMeter. Director Vollmer also referenced example language derived from the City of Bexley.

Senior Director Vollmer then described a cleanup recommendation in Article IV, Section 4.13, regarding public notice. She said the City was completing the new Gahanna Civic Center and that the current charter language requiring postings in the municipal building no longer reflected best government practices. She said the amendment would remove the building-posting requirement while recognizing that the City already

posted notices through other means, including the City's website.

Senior Director Vollmer next discussed proposed cleanup to Article V. She explained that the 2021 charter amendments had authorized the Mayor to create departments, but the existing language in Section 5.01 still listed departments in a way that no longer matched the City's structure. She gave the examples of Planning and Economic Development, as well as Public Service and Engineering, which now operated as separate departments even though the charter language still grouped them together. She said the proposed edits to Sections 5.01 and 5.02 would better define administrative functions and the process for creating departments. She also said the administration recommended removing Sections 5.04 through 5.11 because the qualifications language for department directors had been moved into Section 5.02 and the existing structure conflicted with the organizational chart. She characterized the changes as cleanup intended to make the charter read more clearly.

Senior Director Vollmer then presented the final recommendation, which involved deleting Article XII in its entirety and removing the Board of Zoning and Building Appeals (BZBA). She stated that the BZBA did not participate in land entitlement decisions and that its irregular appeals and meetings did not align with best practices. She explained that the case counts shown on the chart reflected filings from 2019 to the present, but not all filed cases were actually heard because some were withdrawn, resolved, or removed. She stated that the BZBA's infrequent meetings made it difficult for members to develop and maintain the expertise needed to interpret the City's complex zoning ordinances. She said that appeals would fit better in the courts and noted that Planning Director Blackford could explain how Gahanna's structure differed from other communities.

Planning Director Blackford stated that Gahanna's BZBA operated very differently from similar boards in other communities. He said that Planning Commission members who worked in planning departments across the region had confirmed that point. He explained that Gahanna's BZBA primarily heard appeals from the Planning Commission, which made it unique. He said that he had reviewed ten communities in the region and found that Gahanna was the only city that operated in that manner. He stated that most cases shown on the chart involved Planning

Commission appeals. He also explained that most other communities used their BZBAs more actively because those bodies reviewed variances, whereas Gahanna did not. He said that Gahanna's Planning Commission handled development applications in a more efficient way because it did not separate variances from other applications. He concluded that the Planning Commission's existing structure made the BZBA unnecessary and noted that previous charter changes had already reduced the BZBA's duties over time.

Mayor Jadwin thanked the Commissioners for serving on the Charter Review Commission and emphasized the importance of the Commission's work. She then described the role of the executive or administrative branch of the City's government. She stated that the charter created a structure based on clear responsibility and accountability to residents. She explained that the Mayor served as the chief executive officer, while Council oversaw the budget and adopted legislation. She said that she and her administrative team carried out policy and managed the City's day-to-day operations. She explained that the charter authorized her to appoint department heads, administrative staff, and members of boards and commissions, and she noted that the department heads were professionals with extensive education and work experience in their respective fields. She stated that the City had ten operational departments, along with a communications division within the Mayor's Office because the Mayor served as the official spokesperson for the City. She said that she oversaw operations, contracts, and official documents and that Senior Directors Vollmer and Schultz helped oversee the many projects underway across departments.

Mayor Jadwin stated that she delivered an annual State of the City address to update residents and Council on community progress, completed work, and upcoming work. She added that she attended Council meetings and provided information on administrative matters while Council retained legislative authority. She then noted that over the previous year, Council, the administration, residents, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and other stakeholders had worked together to shape the City's future vision through the strategic plan and economic development strategy known as Our Gahanna. She said that the process created a plan built by the people for the people and that the plan would guide the administration's work for the next ten years. She described the relationship between Council and the administration as a partnership

between separate organizations that allowed the City to operate efficiently and serve residents well.

Mayor Jadwin noted that Senior Director Vollmer had referenced a proposed charter change that would add strategic planning language to Article III. She stated that she had spoken with Mayor Kessler of Bexley about that provision and that he was willing to speak to the Commission about how the requirement worked in Bexley if the Commission wished to hear from him.

Chair Barnhardt thanked the administration and opened the floor for commissioner questions.

Vice Chair Wester said that she generally supported streamlining government and eliminating unnecessary meetings but had several questions about the BZBA. She first confirmed that BZBA was a paid commission. Vice Chair Wester then asked whether the administration's recommendation would eliminate that cost by sending appeals directly to Common Pleas court. City Attorney Tamilarasan clarified that appeals would go to Franklin County courts and could originate in either Environmental Court or the Court of Common Pleas. Vice Chair Wester then asked whether the BZBA's compensation constituted the only direct cost to the City aside from staff time and whether the board typically held only an annual organizational meeting when no appeals were filed. Director Blackford confirmed that understanding. Vice Chair Wester then confirmed that the chart presented showed filed cases rather than cases that the BZBA actually heard. Senior Director Vollmer agreed and stated that the number of heard cases was even lower than the number of filed cases. Vice Chair Wester next asked Planning Director Blackford whether all communities he reviewed in Franklin County used a different process. Planning Director Blackford said that he reviewed twelve communities, including Columbus, Dublin, Westerville, Worthington, Upper Arlington, New Albany, Hilliard, Whitehall, Bexley, Powell, Pickerington, and Grove City, and that none operated the same way as Gahanna. He noted that Upper Arlington had no BZBA at all, which established precedent for removing the board. He added that other communities' BZBAs functioned more like planning commissions because they handled duties that Gahanna's Planning Commission already handled. Vice Chair Wester summarized that Gahanna's Planning Commission already exercised the necessary jurisdiction, so

the City did not need another body. Director Blackford agreed.

Commissioner Hill asked whether an applicant currently paid a fee to bring a matter to the BZBA. Clerk VanMeter responded that the filing fee was \$200. Commissioner Hill asked whether applicants would bear the additional cost of court fees if appeals moved from the BZBA to the courts. Director Blackford confirmed that applicants would be responsible for those costs and noted that appeals of BZBA rulings already proceeded to court under the current system. Commissioner Hill then asked whether staff could provide the number of cases the BZBA had actually heard, as opposed to the number filed. Senior Director Vollmer speaker stated that staff could work with the Clerk to provide that information. Commissioner Hill said that the information would help the Commission better understand whether another structure would make more sense.

Vice Chair Wester asked whether the proposed strategic plan requirement would duplicate the charter requirement for the annual State of the City address in Section 3.04(C), or whether the administration intended to place the strategic plan reporting in that same section. Mayor Jadwin responded that the strategic plan requirement would remain a separate obligation, but she acknowledged that the reporting mechanisms could overlap. She stated that the City would not create two separate reports and instead would incorporate strategic plan reporting into the State of the City address. She said that the strategic plan would ensure that the City's work reflected the community's vision and would provide guidance for projects and operations. She added that the reporting mechanism could likely fit within the State of the City process. Vice Chair Wester then asked whether the strategic plan reporting should follow the same first-quarter timing as the State of the City requirement. Mayor Jadwin replied that flexibility might help because preparing the State of the City during the first quarter could prove challenging given the timing of the budget cycle, annual meetings, and the work required to gather data. She said that the administration had not yet considered tying the strategic plan reporting to that exact schedule, but she appreciated the suggestion. Vice Chair Wester responded that she was not committed to that idea and noted that the Bexley example appeared to require only an annual report without a specific timeframe.

Commissioner Hill asked about the term of the strategic plan itself and

whether the proposed language contemplated an annual revision, a three-year plan, a five-year plan, or a ten-year plan. Mayor Jadwin explained that Bexley's plan appeared to operate on a multi-year schedule while updates occurred annually. She said that the City would maintain a strategic plan over several years and provide annual updates, rather than recreate the entire plan every year. Commissioner Hill acknowledged that strategic plans required significant investment and suggested that the charter language clarify that the City would provide annual updates rather than require a new strategic plan every year. Mayor Jadwin agreed.

Chair Barnhardt said that he would prefer more regular updates to the strategic plan itself, perhaps every five years, so that the City would return to the community for renewed input and revisions while still allowing updates as circumstances required. He asked whether the administration had considered a more specific timeframe for a full refresh instead of leaving the language at "as needed." Mayor Jadwin responded that she had not yet discussed that issue with Senior Director Vollmer, who had led the Our Gahanna plan, but she said that a requirement to refresh the plan every five to seven years might make sense if the charter also preserved flexibility for extraordinary circumstances. She pointed to the pandemic in 2020, which forced the City to delay a planned refresh of the Go Forward Gahanna plan. She said that any timing requirement should account for such circumstances. Chair Barnhardt agreed.

Commissioner Belisle asked whether the charter should require a re-evaluation committee to meet every five years to determine whether the City should continue with the existing plan or require updates. Mayor Jadwin said that she would not place that level of detail in the charter. She stated that the decision should come from a collaborative discussion between the administration and Council based on operational and budgetary conditions, and she said that the City's separate branches of government should work together on those matters.

Chair Barnhardt observed that including a strategic plan requirement in a charter appeared to be more the exception than the rule among communities and asked Mayor Jadwin what benefit Gahanna would gain from including it. Mayor Jadwin responded that she had discussed the issue at length with Mayor Kessler of Bexley and believed that a

charter-based strategic plan would provide consistency and a defined framework for City operations. She stated that turnover in staff, Council, and elected officials made continuity important and that a strategic plan requirement would provide that continuity.

Vice Chair Wester asked for a ballpark estimate of the cost of a strategic plan and noted that the Commission should consider the financial impact of charter changes during prioritization. Mayor Jadwin deferred to Senior Director Miranda Vollmer. Senior Director Vollmer stated that strategic plans could range from approximately \$100,000 for an update to well over \$250,000 for a more extensive effort. She said that the City spent nearly \$35,000 to \$40,000 on public engagement alone for the current plan and that a full rewrite every five years would not necessarily represent the best use of taxpayer dollars. She explained that the current plan covered ten years and that a future refresh in five years could involve review and community engagement without requiring a complete rewrite. She also noted that different types of strategic plans existed, including comprehensive plans that incorporated strategic planning. She cautioned that rigid timelines could create difficulties and reiterated that strategic planning represented a significant expense, especially after including staff costs. Mayor Jadwin added that inflation would increase those costs further.

Chair Barnhardt asked whether building strategic plan updates into the City's regular work plan would likely reduce costs over time because the City could update the plan incrementally rather than start from scratch each time. Mayor Jadwin replied that the City adopted the Go Forward Gahanna plan in 2015 and had intended to refresh it in 2020 after voters approved Issue 12 in 2019, but the pandemic delayed that effort. She explained that when the City developed Our Gahanna, ten years had passed since the adoption of Go Forward Gahanna. She said that the City would likely undertake a larger refresh approximately every ten years, while smaller mid-cycle adjustments would require less effort and lower cost.

Commissioner Mularski then shifted the discussion to the proposed Article V cleanup. He said that the recommendation to "better define the administrative functions of the city" in Section 5.01 seemed, on its face, to do little more than list the departments already named in the charter, and he asked what the administration meant by "better define." Senior

Director Vollmer responded that she had been working on the redline language and had not yet distributed it. She explained that the proposed revision would state that the administrative functions of City departments included finance, human resources, information technology, court services, public service, engineering, planning, parks and recreation, economic development, public safety, and emergency management, along with any other departments created under Section 5.02. She stated that the 2021 charter amendment gave the Mayor authority to create departments, but the language in Section 5.01 still grouped some now-separate departments together, such as Planning and Economic Development and Public Service and Engineering. She said that the proposed language would continue the 2021 cleanup by focusing on functions rather than listing departments in a way that conflicted with the current organizational chart. She also explained that the later sections of Article V still described departments that no longer reflected the City's present structure. Commissioner Mularski asked whether the proposal would call them administrative functions rather than departments. Senior Director Vollmer confirmed. Mayor Jadwin added that the 2021 amendment aimed to provide flexibility to create departments based on operational needs. She explained that the City had adjusted its organizational structure while continuing to perform the same functions and that the current proposal simply completed the cleanup that should have accompanied the 2021 change. She said that the revision would ensure that the charter preserved essential functions while allowing the City flexibility to adjust its structure based on staffing, function, and alignment.

Commissioner Hill said that he supported the concept but asked where definitions of departments would exist if the charter removed them as specifically named departments. Mayor Jadwin asked whether he meant the departments or the functions. Commissioner Hill clarified that he meant the departments. Mayor Jadwin replied that the charter would still preserve the functions without fixing them to a specific department title. She gave the example that Finance and Human Resources could operate within a single department, as she had seen in private practice. She said that the important point was to preserve the functions rather than the titles. Commissioner Hill said that explanation made sense. Senior Director Vollmer added that the existing definition language found in later sections of Article V could be moved into Section 5.01, which would preserve the descriptions of those functions.

Commissioner Belisle asked whether the proposal would eliminate Sections 5.05 through 5.14 entirely, since those sections listed departments in detail. Senior Director Vollmer replied that the proposal would remove those specific department titles, but she noted that the City might move some of the definitional language into Section 5.01. She stated that the title “department of” created limitations and produced conflicts with the organizational chart. She also noted that the administration intended to retain the public safety provisions. Vollmer explained that Section 5.12 defined the Department of Public Safety and the Divisions of Police and Fire and established administrative rules for those divisions. She said that the City needed to keep that language because the township currently provided fire service and the charter had to preserve language for a potential future City fire department if needed. Mayor Jadwin suggested that the cleanup should likely stop at Section 5.10.

Vice Chair Wester summarized the proposal as an administrative change that would eliminate the formal title “department of” while modernizing the charter to reflect the way the City’s organization changed over time through the annual budget, staffing decisions, and project needs. She asked whether anyone saw a downside to that approach. Mayor Jadwin said that neither she nor her team had identified any downside.

Commissioner Belisle then asked City Attorney Tamilarasan whether state law or the Ohio Revised Code required the charter to use language specific to a particular department. City Attorney Tamilarasan replied that the City had full discretion in the construction and creation of its charter under home rule.

Chair Barnhardt then summarized the discussion. He stated that the prior Charter Review Commission gave the Mayor authority to create and eliminate departments, but the Charter still named specific departments, which created a conflict between the Mayor’s authority and the charter’s text. He said that the proposed amendment would clean up that conflict. He also said that the charter should continue to preserve key functions and definitions so that the public could see that the City maintained qualified leadership and core administrative functions while still giving the Mayor flexibility to organize departments efficiently. He said that he

understood that to be the intent of the proposal and described it as a strong idea.

City Attorney Tamilarasan then offered comments on both the strategic plan proposal and the BZBA proposal. She said that the exact language would matter greatly. On the strategic plan, she cautioned that language stating that the Mayor “shall cause” a strategic plan to be created could force the City to recreate a plan even though it had already invested significant time and resources in the current one. She recommended language that acknowledged the plan already in existence and required the City to review it. She also noted that other sections of the City’s code already used periodic review requirements and suggested that the charter could require the City to assess the plan’s viability at specified intervals rather than require a complete recreation every five years. She explained that such language would avoid forcing the City to restart the process from scratch when an update would suffice. Senior Director Vollmer agreed and said that while the City commonly referred to the current plan as a ten-year plan, the document itself did not state a firm expiration date. City Attorney Tamilarasan then turned to the BZBA proposal. She stated that the charter officially gave the BZBA jurisdiction over exceptions to ordinances, resolutions, and regulations related to zoning, building, and landscaping throughout the City. She distinguished that authority from the Planning Commission’s role, which addressed variances under Chapter 11. She asked Planning Director Blackford to confirm that limitation. Planning Director Blackford confirmed that the Planning Commission’s variance authority extended only to Chapter 11. City Attorney Tamilarasan explained that building code and other issues related to zoning, building, and landscaping could theoretically originate in the BZBA. She said that, to her recollection, the City had not recently received originating filings before the BZBA that had not already gone through the Planning Commission. However, she emphasized that the charter language gave the BZBA broader authority than simply hearing Planning Commission appeals. She therefore recommended that, if the Commission removed the BZBA, it should consider broadening the Planning Commission’s scope to address those additional matters and should evaluate the impact of eliminating that board entirely.

Vice Chair Wester asked a follow-up question about the BZBA proposal and asked whether an appeal of a code violation issued through code enforcement would go directly to the BZBA. City Attorney Tamilarasan

clarified that code violations went through Mayor's Court as criminal matters and that appeals from Mayor's Court would proceed to Franklin County Municipal Court. She explained that the BZBA's role involved a different situation: a person could ask for an exception from a zoning, building, or landscaping regulation on the ground that the code should not apply to that person under particular circumstances. She said that the BZBA could hear that type of request first. Vice Chair Wester asked whether the BZBA would conduct the first hearing on such an exception request. City Attorney Tamilarasan said that it would. She added that, unlike zoning variances, the charter did not provide detailed criteria or standards for those BZBA exception requests. She explained that the charter simply authorized the BZBA to hear and decide appeals for exceptions to ordinances, resolutions, and regulations related to zoning, building, and landscaping. Vice Chair Wester then asked for an example of a building-code issue that someone might appeal by arguing that the code should not apply. Planning Director Blackford explained that Chapter 13 of the codified ordinances contained Gahanna-specific building code provisions and that the state building code already included its own variance procedures. He said that nearly all building-code requirements existed in the state building code rather than in Chapter 13, which explained why he had not seen a single building-code issue go to the BZBA during his twelve years with the City. He noted one rare case from around 2014 involving code enforcement and a zoning provision that went to the BZBA. He explained that such a case would arise when staff administered the code and a person disagreed with staff's interpretation or application. He described that structure as somewhat unusual but not entirely unique. He also stated that the Planning Commission would serve as a more appropriate body for those rare appeals because the commission heard development cases and had greater familiarity with the City's codes and processes. He said that the City could incorporate that authority into the Planning Commission's duties without materially affecting its meeting schedule.

Chair Barnhardt summarized by stating that the City could move the BZBA's limited authority over those rare matters to the Planning Commission. Planning Director Blackford agreed.

Commissioner Hill then asked whether that change would keep those matters from going to a court or another outside body by allowing the Planning Commission to hear them instead. City Attorney Tamilarasan

said that, if the City removed the BZBA without giving the Planning Commission that added authority, those narrow exception requests would have no forum at all. She explained that such requests did not challenge the City's application of existing law in a way that would fit a standard appeal. Instead, they asked for an exception to the law itself. She also noted that appeals to Franklin County under Ohio Revised Code Chapter 2506 addressed final determinations by the City and required the courts to enforce the City's code as written. She said that if the charter did not provide a body with authority to grant an exception or variance, the person would have no standing to seek one anywhere.

Chair Barnhardt raised a separate issue about public notice. Drawing on his past experience as an assistant city clerk in another jurisdiction, he said that he supported modernizing the charter's public notice provisions but recalled references elsewhere in City code that required notice in a newspaper. He suggested that the Commission should review those references as part of any broader modernization effort. Clerk VanMeter stated that the charter itself contained at least one newspaper notice requirement. He added that one or more Councilmembers would likely address that subject at future meetings and confirmed that City codes also contained additional public notice requirements that warranted review. Chair Barnhardt said that he viewed that as a natural next step if the Commission decided to modernize public notice language. Chair Barnhardt then asked for any further discussion or questions.

Commissioner Mularski raised a separate question for Mayor Jadwin about Section 3.05. He noted that the section allowed the Mayor to approve or disapprove the whole or part of a resolution or ordinance appropriating money, but otherwise required the Mayor's approval or disapproval shall be addressed to the entire resolution or ordinance. He said that the language appeared to allow a line-item veto only for appropriations and supplemental appropriations and asked for the Mayor's thoughts, while acknowledging that he did not expect an immediate answer. Mayor Jadwin responded that she would need to review that section more closely because she had not previously examined it as a possible recommendation. She asked City Attorney Tamilarasan to confirm whether Commissioner Mularski referred to the second paragraph of Section 3.05 and asked Commissioner Mularski whether he read that language to limit line-item veto authority to financial items. City Attorney Tamilarasan confirmed that interpretation and stated

that the language allowed a partial veto only for appropriations. She said that the Mayor would otherwise have to veto an entire ordinance or resolution. Mayor Jadwin said that she would examine the issue further and return to the Commission at a later meeting. Commissioner Mularski said that he did not intend to ambush her. Mayor Jadwin thanked him for raising the point and said that she appreciated his close reading of the charter.

Vice Chair Wester then asked Chair Barnhardt a process question while the discussion remained fresh. She asked whether the proposed cleanup regarding “department” versus “function” should qualify as an administrative matter under the Commission’s recently adopted matrix and two-track process, rather than a matter requiring the full prioritization framework. Chair Barnhardt said that the issue would ultimately require group consensus, but he stated that his inclination was to treat it as administrative because the prior charter amendment had already expressed an intent to give the Mayor flexibility over administrative structure. He added that the Commission could decide to manage it differently if the group wished. Vice Chair Wester said that she agreed and viewed the proposal as a clear example of streamlining language to align with the City’s function. Commissioner Belisle agreed that the issue seemed administrative.

2. Proposal Inventory Review

[2026-0050](#)

Draft Charter Amendment Proposals for Charter Review Commission 2026

Chair Barnhardt then moved the meeting to a discussion of the proposal inventory review. He said that he added the item to the agenda so the Commission could ensure that all potential charter amendment ideas under consideration appeared in a public location where members and the public could review them. He requested that staff upload the PowerPoint presented by the City that evening into the shared drive because he believed those recommendations should remain part of the record. He then summarized the proposals already in the Legistar file, including Commissioner Mularski’s submission regarding primaries, Vice Chair Wester’s submissions regarding residency requirements and office qualifications, and the Planning NEXT strategic plan requirement. He asked whether the list captured all proposals received to date.

Clerk VanMeter noted that the proposal file also included an addition from President of Council Trenton Weaver. Chair Barnhardt said that he wanted to discuss that item briefly because, at the previous meeting, the Commission had discussed using the drive primarily for proposals. He said that he was not sure whether Mr. Weaver's communication should count as a proposal or as commentary. He asked the group how it wanted Clerk VanMeter to manage emails and comments related to proposals in the library.

Vice Chair Wester said that she understood the drive to serve as the place where the Commission housed proposed amendments. She said that she expected the Commission to reduce items discussed at meetings to writing and place them in the drive, but she viewed the Weaver submission as more of a public comment than a proposal because it did not suggest amendment language or state how the charter should read.

Commissioner Belisle said that transparency favored including everything but asked whether the City could separate amendments from public comments in different folders.

Commissioner Maxwell stated that President Weaver's proposal seemed like an opinion, and inquired as to whether it could be put into proposal form. Commissioner Belisle asked whether that approach would require the public to submit comments in proposal form. Commissioner Maxwell said no and clarified that the concern related only to the particular email under discussion.

Commissioner Mularski said that the Weaver email raised concerns because it came from the President of City Council to the Clerk of Council and did not directly address the Charter Review Commission or instruct anyone to present it to the Commission.

Vice Chair Wester said that the City could still disclose the message as a public record but questioned whether the Commission should place every piece of correspondence in its proposal drive. She emphasized support for transparency and noted that all meetings were already archived on YouTube and that emails remained available through public records requests.

Chair Barnhardt summarized the issue by asking what the Commission wanted to do with commentary received by email.

Commissioner Hill recommended differentiating between amendments and comments and asked whether the City could create separate folders for those categories so the files remained clear and organized. City Attorney Tamarasan cautioned the Commission against drawing too sharp a line between proposals and comments because, in her view, proposals could come in many forms, including concepts, redlines, presentations, and recommendations. She said that overlap would naturally occur during public input from City groups and stakeholders. She also said that her reading of Mr. Weaver's email suggested that he recommended streamlining the charter's conflict-of-interest categories to address current and future conflicts by using broader language that would allow state law to define what constituted a conflict. She noted that the charter's conflict language could prove more restrictive than state law and that the email appeared to address the same area that Vice Chair Wester had questioned earlier. Vice Chair Wester responded that Mr. Weaver planned to appear before the Commission at a later point, so the Commission could allow him to explain his own position directly.

Vice Chair Wester said that she also found the email difficult to interpret because it referred to statements made at a prior meeting, to her proposed amendment, and to additional matters that neither she nor Chair Barnhardt had yet raised. She agreed that the Commission should avoid spending excessive time categorizing emails. She reiterated that the drive should make it easy for the public to see the amendments under consideration and said that she had not realized that staff would place other correspondence in the drive without further discussion.

Commissioner Mularski asked whether an item had to be addressed to the Commission to qualify for placement in the drive and pointed out that the Weaver email was not addressed to the Commission at all. Clerk VanMeter said that the email used the subject line "Charter Review Suggestion" and that staff therefore interpreted it as something to share with the Charter Review Commission. He added that staff could create a separate Legistar file for correspondence and keep those materials there until the Commission wanted to move something into the proposal file.

Chair Barnhardt said that he liked that approach. He stated that he favored transparency and believed that any correspondence offering substantive input on a potential amendment should remain accessible to the public, regardless of who sent it. He proposed keeping one folder for actual proposals and another for correspondence that offered substantive input on those proposals.

Commissioner Belisle noted that, at the previous meeting, the Commission had suggested that the public and others should send communications to the Clerk rather than directly to the Commission, which could explain why Mr. Weaver sent the email to the Clerk.

Chair Barnhardt then asked whether the Commission felt comfortable using two folders, one for correspondence and one for actual proposals or ideas for proposals. Vice Chair Wester Voiced her agreement. Chair Barnhardt directed Clerk VanMeter to manage the drive that way going forward.

G. CORRESPONDENCE AND ACTIONS.

[2026-0061](#)

Charter Review Commission Correspondence Received via Clerk

H. POLL MEMBERS FOR COMMENT.

Chair Barnhardt then polled commissioners for comment and for any additional agenda items they wanted added to the next meeting.

Commissioner Reynolds asked when the Commission would receive the redline charter changes that the administration had referenced and whether staff would send them by email. Senior Director Miranda Vollmer responded that she would provide them to Clerk Van Meter as soon as possible, likely early the following week and before the next meeting. Commissioner Reynolds thanked her.

Commissioner Mularski asked City Attorney Tamarasan to review Section 10.03, which stated that the City Attorney shall prepare all contracts. He observed that the City no longer operated that way in practice and suggested that the Charter might more accurately require the City Attorney to review all contracts rather than prepare all of them. He asked the City Attorney to consider better wording for that section. City Attorney Tamarasan agreed to do so.

Chair Barnhardt then thanked everyone who attended and praised the Commission's work.

I. **ADJOURNMENT.**

With no further business before the Charter Review Commission, Chair Barnhardt adjourned the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

*APPROVED by the Charter Review, this
day of 2026.*

Ethan Barnhardt