



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, November 24, 2025

City Hall, Council Chambers

Immediately following Committee of the Whole at 7:00 PM on November 24, 2025

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Councilmember Stephen A. Renner, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:16 p.m. The agenda was published on November 21, 2025. Councilmember Schnetzer was absent from the meeting. All other members were present. There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

B. DISCUSSIONS:

Budget Presentations/Questions - Engineering, Public Service, Council Office, Law

[ORD-0049-2025](#) AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING APPROPRIATIONS FOR CURRENT EXPENSES AND OTHER EXPENDITURES OF THE CITY OF GAHANNA DURING THE FISCAL YEAR 2026

Introduction

Senior Director of Administrative Services Miranda Vollmer stated that the evening's agenda included presentations from Clerk VanMeter, City Attorney Tamilarasan, and then Public Service and Engineering. She explained that council questions would follow Clerk VanMeter's presentation and that questions for the administration would come at the end.

Council Office

Clerk of Council Jeremy VanMeter thanked Council for the opportunity to present the Council Office Department's priorities for 2026. He directed

attention to the screen, noting three main bullet points he intended to highlight for added context for viewers and those watching later. He first discussed enhancing onboarding and development for Council, boards, and commissions. He noted that his office, like all departments, would transition to the new state-of-the-art facility at 825 Tech Center Drive. Because his office worked with nearly 50 legislative members across Council and various boards and commissions, he explained that newly appointed and returning members would need to acclimate to the new technology, updated facilities, meeting spaces, and building access and security protocols. VanMeter reported that the office had set aside funding for professional development for board and commission members, which would allow them to attend local conferences, trainings, and webinars relevant to their roles. He stated that his office had already identified opportunities to share with members in the coming year. He also noted that the Charter Review Commission would be a major undertaking in 2026, meeting from January through June. VanMeter explained that the office had prepared extensively for this work and credited MORPC Intern Nathan Graves for developing a comprehensive roadmap that documented past commissions, summarized amendments, and outlined operational steps needed for the 2026 process. VanMeter stated that this positioned the office well to support an efficient and well-organized session. He added that the budget included funding for legal advertising because the *Daily Reporter*, the city's primary outlet for legal notices, had announced earlier in the day that it would cease operations. He said legal advertising in the *Columbus Dispatch* was costly, so the budget accounted for those statutory requirements. He also shared plans to use the city's existing communications infrastructure to increase public engagement with the Charter Review Commission and noted that meetings would be livestreamed to ensure transparency.

VanMeter then moved to the second bullet point, modernizing and strengthening the city's records program through the exploration of artificial intelligence tools, but said he would return to that topic later because it related to a submitted question.

VanMeter reviewed the third bullet point, expanding inclusive community engagement and digital communication. He introduced the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and explained that his office focused on improving digital accessibility by making online content perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust for people of all abilities. He stated that Management Analyst Jessica Hilts had begun a WCAG compliance checklist specific to the office's documents and digital content and that he had requested next steps, including tools, free or paid, that could support compliance. These steps would include screenshots and examples showing where current content needed improvement. VanMeter noted that although

the office already provided HTML versions of agendas and minutes online, most legislative materials remained in PDFs, Word files, or Excel sheets. He emphasized the importance of understanding current capabilities and identifying additional tools needed to meet WCAG standards. He also observed that this work aligned with the recently adopted Our Gahanna Strategic Plan under the goal of connecting the community by promoting accessibility, belonging, active living, and shared experiences. He reported that community engagement efforts would also include local partnerships with Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools staff and the historical society to strengthen connections through archival materials. He noted that the office had already begun planning presentations for the following year to highlight the city's history.

VanMeter then moved to the submitted questions. Before addressing the first question, he referenced the budget narrative on page 59 and read the section describing the growing number of public records requests and the need for expanded capacity. The narrative emphasized the importance of timely responses, managing complex reviews of exemptions and redactions, keeping pace with evolving case law, and strengthening expertise through targeted training. He then addressed Question 1 regarding targeted training in public records management. He stated that targeted training was occurring, especially on fundamentals such as records retention and disposal. He explained that each city department designated a records liaison who worked with the records coordinator, Deputy Clerk Sophia McGuire, to apply the Records Commission's management manual. He outlined the manual's content, which included public and exempt records, life-cycle requirements, naming conventions, improvements to RC-2 retention schedule descriptions, proper storage, security, file formats, and required forms. VanMeter reported that this foundational training was ongoing within departments. He stated that the greater need involved advanced training on complex areas such as exemptions, redactions, and changing case law. He explained that the office had set aside professional development funding for advanced public records courses offered through IIMC, NAGARA, and consulting firms. He said the office could also host workshops led by in-house counsel or external legal experts. While the funding existed, he noted that capacity presented a challenge because workloads continued to rise and state-level changes required continual onboarding and retraining. He stressed that managing public records required active participation from all staff and was not the responsibility of a single person. He then provided context regarding the rising number of public records requests. He stated that although he had reported increases each budget cycle, the raw number did not fully reflect workload because requests varied widely in complexity and time required. He gave examples including simple police incident reports, body-worn camera footage requiring days of review and redaction, older legislation requiring retrieval from

microfilm or off-site storage, and multi-year email requests involving thousands of records and multi-department coordination. VanMeter stated that these examples illustrated how widely requests could vary and how they significantly impacted workload. He noted the office believed AI (artificial intelligence) could help in certain scenarios, which led into Question 2.

For Question 2, regarding modernization and AI tools for indexing, redaction, and search, VanMeter stated that no funding had yet been identified because the office remained in an information-gathering stage. He explained that, while staff were highly capable, time and resources were limited, making it important to understand how AI could support the work. He reported that the office was actively learning about available options and that they had hosted a one-day academy for the Ohio Municipal Clerks Association the previous week. The sessions focused on records retention in the age of AI, AI in local government, and practical concerns, with speakers from Ohio State, the Ohio Attorney General's Office, and private firms. He emphasized the need to evaluate the broader information-governance environment across the city, working with senior leadership, the Law Department, IT, and the Records Commission to determine whether existing systems already offered capabilities that could be leveraged. He cited a recent example: adding a feature in NextRequest that redirected users searching terms such as "traffic," "crash," or "accident" to the State of Ohio's online crash portal. He reported that the alert had been viewed 661 times in the past month and likely reduced unnecessary requests to the Police Department. He noted that this represented a low-cost, high-impact improvement and that the office sought more opportunities like it. He also discussed the emerging concern of AI-generated public records requests, explaining that it was now feasible for someone to automate large volumes of requests without human involvement. He said this raised significant questions about how AI could affect records operations. He emphasized that the office needed to evaluate both how AI could assist internally and how AI could be used externally in ways that affected the work. VanMeter concluded by stating that only after coordination with internal stakeholders and subject-matter experts would the office determine whether a funding request was warranted. He described the situation as "building the bicycle while riding it," noting that the office continued improving systems and governance while simultaneously handling increasing numbers of complex, real-time public records requests. He welcomed follow-up questions.

Law Department

City Attorney Tamilarasan stated that her office's priorities for 2026 largely carried over from 2025, so she did not prepare a slide deck. She explained that her office would continue reviewing and ensuring internal consistency

and compliance, managing outside litigation, staffing and prosecuting all traffic and misdemeanor offenses within the city, and advising all boards, commissions, and city entities. She noted that these responsibilities remained the same for her office. She reported that she had not received any specific questions about her budget. She pointed out that the chart reflected a decrease in salaries and benefits, which resulted from staff insurance and benefit selections and did not represent any substantive change in salaries or staffing. She stated that she had no new budget requests for the upcoming year aside from modest increases for contract staff who supported Mayor's Court and provided paralegal and administrative assistance to her and to Assistant City Attorney Matt Roth. She added that she anticipated some material cost increases associated with the move to 825 Tech Center Drive. She concluded by stating that everything remained consistent with the prior year. There were no additional questions or comments from Council.

Public Service

Director of Public Service Shawn Anverse presented the 2026 priorities for the Public Service Department. He began by describing the development of the new Facilities Maintenance Division. With the opening of 825 Tech Center Drive, he noted that the division would assume responsibility for maintaining the building at the highest level. He reported that the division currently included a superintendent, two Maintenance Worker IIs, and responsibility for the 825 campus. He reminded Council that the division also maintained the Service Garage, the Parks Garage, the Creekside parking garage, the Fleet Building, and, even after the move, the current municipal complex, the Police Department, and the Senior Center. He stated that those facilities would still require inspections and other ongoing responsibilities. He then reviewed enhancements to the department's operations and maintenance programs. He stated that the department would expand ongoing programs, including street sweeping and sign replacement. He reported that the department would transition to completing additional concrete flatwork and pavement markings. He explained that snow and ice operations would shift from six dump truck routes to seven to shrink route size and improve coverage. He added that the department would continue work on the lead and copper program, remove all unknowns, and continue in-house leak detection efforts. He stated that the department would maintain its partnership with Mifflin Township for fire hydrant flushing and the fire hydrant replacement program.

Director Anverse also detailed the department's commitment to maintaining a proactive fleet maintenance program. He stated that the department maintained more than 400 pieces of equipment with four mechanics. He described a "dry run" process completed each fall before the snow and ice season, during which staff prepared all equipment and made necessary

repairs to avoid issues during snow events. He noted that the department had used this practice in the previous year and would continue it in 2026. He outlined the final priority, ensuring safe and controlled movement of vehicles and pedestrians throughout the traffic system. He stated that the department would complete two full intersection replacements, install six new video detection units, and complete in-house pavement markings for crosswalks and stop bars in both residential and high-traffic areas. He concluded his presentation.

Senior Director Vollmer stated that one question had been submitted for Public Service and that Senior Director Kevin Schultz would address it after the Engineering priorities.

President Bowers asked a follow-up question about the locations of the intersection rebuilds. Director Anverse stated that the first intersection was Agler Road and Imperial Drive. He stated that the second intersection involved the Hamilton Road, Lincoln High School area at Gary Lee Drive, explaining that it was a school project and that Public Service would oversee the inspection. He clarified that “complete rebuilds” included cabinets, traffic signals, wiring, and all associated components.

President Bowers asked whether either intersection involved a realignment. Director Anverse stated that the Gary Lee Drive project included a realignment. Mayor Jadwin asked for clarification to ensure the discussion referred to traffic control systems rather than roadway reconstruction. Director Anverse confirmed that the work involved traffic systems only. President Bowers commented that the project involved retiming. Senior Director Schultz explained that the work involved control devices such as signal heads, traffic cabinets, and the internal components that changed signals from green to yellow to red.

Councilmember Jones asked for confirmation of the first intersection mentioned. Director Anverse repeated that it was Agler Road and Imperial Drive.

Engineering

Senior Director of Operations Kevin Schultz presented the engineering priorities for 2026. He stated that he reorganized the priorities into four major sectors within the Engineering Department: transportation and mobility, utilities, right-of-way administration, and private development. He began with transportation and mobility. He reported that the department would continue work on the Comprehensive Transportation and Mobility Plan, which would return to Council during the first half of 2026 for additional presentations and

updates, similar to the Strategic Plan process. He explained that once the plan was adopted, the department would incorporate many of its recommendations into the Capital Improvement Plan for future funding. He stated that the plan included improving accessibility throughout Gahanna's public spaces through implementation of the Active Transportation Plan and coordination with the ADA Transition Plan. He noted that the Active Transportation Plan served as one of the guiding documents used by consultants and the engineering team to inform the comprehensive plan. Schultz then described efforts to evaluate and optimize signal timing across the entire traffic network, including timing durations, pedestrian delays, and coordination. He explained that this work would occur across all 40 to 41 signalized intersections in the city, not just along Hamilton Road and Granville Street, although those were major corridors. He noted that the installation of a new signal on Hamilton Road near the new high school would require appropriate timing and sequencing as traffic patterns changed.

Schultz discussed several joint and multi-year projects involving other jurisdictions. He stated that one of the largest was the I-270 bridge project over Hamilton Road, managed and funded by ODOT, with the city participating in coordination and support. He noted other ODOT projects, including the Wynne Ridge bridge replacement and the Urban Paving Project, scheduled for 2026 or 2027, which would repave Hamilton Road from the city's southern limit to Granville Street and then east to Lincoln Circle. He explained that the City of Columbus managed Morse Road west of Hamilton Road, with Gahanna responsible for only six feet of right-of-way. He stated that when Columbus repaved the corridor, Gahanna participated proportionally, but Columbus ran the contract.

Schultz noted collaboration with the school district on several projects, including installation of the new traffic signal mentioned earlier and sewer projects serving the high school and Middle School East. He also described impacts from Columbia Gas when the company installed a high-pressure gas main across the city. He stated that such work consumed staff resources, and although the city coordinated with the utility, the department had limited ability to influence the scope. He next addressed the utilities sector and introduced Senior Utility Engineer Holly Boyer, who had joined the team in early September. He stated that she was working to understand the department's utility responsibilities and that the department continued preparing projects such as the Taylor Road Waterline Project, scheduled to come before Council at the December 8, 2025 Committee of the Whole meeting for a contract award. He also referenced ongoing design work for the Farm Creek Sanitary Lift Station. He emphasized that most work in the utilities sector involved capital projects rather than operating responsibilities.

Schultz stated that the department continued work on code revisions to Chapters 9 and 11, including stormwater components housed in zoning code sections. He noted that this effort aligned with the process improvement work presented the prior week by Director of Planning Michael Blackford, who addressed how the city, rather than a single department, could reshape permitting practices for both private development and city projects. He added that the department would continue exploring alternative project delivery methods to improve efficiency.

Submitted Questions

Senior Director Schultz then addressed the submitted question regarding how the department would accomplish its list of priorities. He explained that although some items appeared to be competing priorities, the department organized responsibilities among staff. He noted that the department included a Senior Utility Engineer, a Senior Transportation and Mobility Engineer, two staff members who administered right-of-way matters, and personnel who handled private development work. He stated that the department operated in a healthy staffing position and continued to progress through its workload. He stated that he challenged staff to develop a more fully prepared Capital Improvement Plan for the following year to help sequence and prioritize projects more logically. He emphasized that every project, whether managed by ODOT or the city, required city staff involvement. He concluded by stating that the department remained aware of staff impacts and continued to balance resources accordingly.

Schultz addressed the second submitted question related to the Oklahoma Avenue Parks and Service Garage complex located north of Friendship Park. He stated that earlier in the year staff met to evaluate the viability of redeveloping that property. He explained that the parcel was small for the city's need for more than ten acres and that much of it sat in the floodplain, which created significant problems during 50- to 100-year storm events. He stated that the facility master planning effort required continued evaluation of the site to determine whether it could be used. He noted that the capital budget included \$100,000 for facility-related work, which could be used to assess whether the site could support the service complex or to evaluate options for the current property. He explained that many city-owned parcels faced similar challenges because they were either active parkland or located in flood zones or floodways. Schultz stated that identifying a suitable site for a combined parks and service complex remained a priority. He then concluded his formal remarks.

Vice President Weaver asked whether the \$100,000 allocation would fund a consultant, design work, or another activity. Schultz responded that it could

support all those needs, including refined flood mapping, geotechnical work, site planning, or evaluation of access. He noted that the city owned property on Granville Street that bordered Friendship Park, and analysis would consider how that might influence future planning. He described ongoing discussions with staff about short-term improvements at the Oklahoma site, including options to protect expensive equipment such as snowplows by placing them under cover. Vice President Weaver summarized that the amount was intended for general exploration of solutions. Schultz confirmed that understanding.

Councilwoman Padova asked which site the department was evaluating that sat in the flood zone. Schultz stated that it was the Oklahoma Avenue complex.

President Bowers thanked staff for bringing the discussion forward. She stated that in early 2022, Council discussed the need for a new facilities complex and that the city had spent three years attempting to identify suitable parcels within city boundaries. She said that because that search had been exhausted, she believed the city should ensure that the existing site supported effective operations. She stated that she wanted to express that view and hear further feedback. Schultz responded that the city had evaluated multiple parcels and sometimes entered active negotiations. He explained that when private development pressure emerged on a parcel, the city discontinued its discussions because private development was preferred over a non-taxable city use. He stated that this situation had occurred more than once. He added that land immediately adjacent to the city, consisting of ten to twelve acres, might provide opportunities depending on economic development considerations. He said that although the ideal scenario involved placing all facility operations on one site, the city might eventually need to consider dispersing functions across multiple locations. President Bowers stated that she had not realized the city had access to any ten or twelve-acre parcels. She said she was familiar only with five or six-acre parcels.

Chairman Renner asked whether the city intended to reach a resolution in 2026 and provide a recommendation about whether to build in place or relocate. He stated that the conversation needed to move forward and asked whether the city planned to act on the Oklahoma site or pursue another location. Schultz stated that the Oklahoma site would not solve the city's needs. He said that converting parkland to a service complex was not the preferred option but acknowledged that difficult conversations might be necessary because the city managed more than 800 acres of parkland, much of which could not support facility development. He stated that the city should aim to make significant progress in 2026 and develop short-term recommendations for protecting equipment at the Oklahoma site. He said that

he could not guarantee a complete solution within twelve months but believed the city could make substantial progress.

Senior Director Vollmer added that the city had made numerous improvements to employee working conditions at the Oklahoma site, including new bathrooms, a nursing mothers' room, new offices, paint, tables, and equipment. Schultz stated that some older lockers formerly used by the Police Department would be repurposed to support a more formal locker room in the facility, which aligned with the improvements Senior Director Vollmer mentioned. He noted that the service garage offered a comfortable break room used by staff coming in from long hours in cold weather, though he stated that the parks garage was not as comfortable.

Mayor Jadwin stated that the overall goal was to unite Parks, Service, and Fleet operations in one facility to improve efficiency and team culture. She explained that the Service Department and Parks Division operated at Oklahoma, while the Fleet Garage operated near Science Boulevard and Tech Center Drive. She stated that staff transported vehicles and equipment back and forth for repairs. She said the city continued exploring locations within or adjacent to Gahanna and had held workshop discussions in early 2022. She noted that police and the service complex ranked as the top facility priorities at that time. She stated that the focus shifted to 825 when the opportunity emerged and that the city was four to five months from occupying that building. She emphasized that the service complex remained a priority and that the city needed evaluations to determine whether the Oklahoma site could support new construction given floodplain and floodway constraints.

President Bowers asked whether this discussion would continue as part of next year's Capital Improvement Plan. Mayor Jadwin confirmed that it would.

Vice President Weaver asked a follow-up question related to the existing service complex. He noted that the budget book stated that bringing the current complex up to a minimum standard would exceed one million dollars. He stated that he remembered the 2022 presentations and asked what that work would involve and whether the city would need to complete it regardless of future facility plans, as he wanted to ensure staff had adequate facilities. Senior Director Schultz responded that the sentence in the budget book should have been removed because it was outdated. He stated that he did not know its exact age. He used the salt barn as an example, explaining that it sat in the middle of the floodplain, where it should not be located. He stated that relocating the salt barn on the same property would have unknown costs, and determining the size and cost of a new equipment barn would also require evaluation. He noted that the original estimate may have been reasonable at the time, possibly when he presented the facility workshop findings, but

construction costs had increased significantly due to inflation. He stated that the noted figure of one million dollars, or the reference to twelve million dollars to build new, no longer aligned with current costs. He said the city would obtain a more accurate estimate through the planned use of the \$100,000 allocated for facility evaluation if the city decided to complete improvements at the Oklahoma site. Vice President Weaver thanked him and stated that he looked forward to continuing the discussion in the coming year.

Councilmember McGregor asked how much acreage the addition of 181 Granville would provide. Schultz stated that the parcel sat between the bank and the dry cleaner and measured about three-quarters of an acre, close to one acre. He said that while it did not add significant acreage, it provided a wide connection that could offer improved ingress and egress to the Oklahoma site. He noted that the parcel backed up to the city's property and that this connection was one reason staff began evaluating the site. He estimated that adding the parcel would bring the total acreage to approximately eight and a half to nine and a half acres.

Councilmember McGregor then asked about engineering work on Johnstown Road and Ridenour Road in anticipation of new apartments. Schultz stated that the Westside Utility Project included transportation improvements from James Road to Goshen Lane. He said the project covered improvements at James, Old Ridenour, Stygler Road, and Goshen as part of its scope.

Councilmember Jones asked how many acres would be needed for the ideal, or "dream," facility. Schultz stated that the need was between ten and twelve acres. He noted that New Albany's facility sat on approximately nine acres, with six and a half to seven acres used for hard surfaces and building space. He explained that Gahanna needed additional space to accommodate functions not present in other cities' facilities, including bringing the Fleet Division under the same roof. He stated that this requirement supported the need for ten to twelve acres.

Director of Finance Joann Bury then addressed the remaining questions, which related to changes in contract services. She stated that the decrease in Public Service's General Fund contract services resulted from shifting the landscaping contract from Public Service to Parks and Recreation. She explained that Council would see a corresponding increase in the Parks and Recreation budget. She then stated that the next two items reflected expected increases in sanitary service costs from the City of Columbus, noting that the city anticipated a 10 percent increase in those charges.

Chairman Renner asked for questions or comments and, hearing none, moved forward.

Senior Director Vollmer stated the next meeting was scheduled for December 1, 2025, which would include the first reading of the budget and the public hearing, along with general budget questions. She asked that Council submit questions by Friday at noon or by the end of the day, despite the holiday week. She also requested that any recommendations for budget changes or removals be discussed at the December 1 meeting. Vollmer said this schedule would give Director Bury and the Finance team more than two days to make updates before returning the budget to Council for the December 15, 2025, meeting. She stated that the evening's meeting concluded the departmental updates and priorities.

Chairman Renner thanked everyone. He asked colleagues to send questions to him on Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday morning, noting that it was Thanksgiving week. The members agreed.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 12/1/2025 with Public Hearing; Second Reading/Adoption on Regular Agenda on 12/15/2025.

C. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Finance Committee, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:11 p.m.

Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

APPROVED by the Finance Committee, this
day of 2025.

Stephen A. Renner