



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Committee of the Whole

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

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

Jeremy A. VanMeter, Clerk of Council

Monday, February 24, 2025

7:00 PM

City Hall, Council Chambers

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Gahanna City Council met for Committee of the Whole on Monday, February 24, 2025, in Council Chambers. Vice President of Council Trenton I. Weaver, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The agenda was published on February 21, 2025. All members were present for the meeting. There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

B. ITEMS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE:

[ORD-0004-2025](#)

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS; WAIVING SECOND READING - Various Funds for Capital Improvement Projects

Director of Finance Joann Bury provided an update on supplemental appropriations related to the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). She explained that, as discussed during the budget process and with the Capital Improvement Advisory Committee, the city's new procurement policy and capital improvement plan replaced the old process of automatically encumbering and rolling over appropriated capital funds. Instead, under the new policy, the city now evaluates unspent appropriations before requesting reappropriation, ensuring greater transparency in financial operations. She requested supplemental appropriations to reappropriate funding for previously approved capital projects in 2024, for capital projects in 2025.

Councilmember Schnetzer asked for confirmation that this request was part of the Capital Improvement Advisory Committee's process, where unspent funds return and are then reappropriated in the following year. Bury confirmed that this was correct and added that there is a three-year limitation on

projects. If a project shows no movement within three years, the committee conducts a more in-depth review to determine if reappropriation is necessary. Schnetzer clarified for the record that these were projects previously approved by Council in 2024, ensuring that no new projects were being introduced through this process. Bury confirmed that all projects were approved in 2024 and that the request was for reappropriation of those funds.

Vice President Weaver asked for an explanation of the request for waiver of a second reading. Bury stated that since these projects were already appropriated and vetted in 2024, the Finance Department did not believe a second reading was necessary.

President Bowers inquired whether there was a specific deadline for appropriating the funding. Bury responded that appropriations must be in place before the bid process begins to avoid delays in project execution.

Senior Director of Operations Kevin Schultz provided additional context, explaining that while not all projects would be delayed, certain projects-such as Price Road improvements and traffic control systems-could be impacted. He noted that traffic cabinets, for example, require a 20-25 week lead time, meaning that funding must be secured before orders can be placed. He emphasized that having appropriations ready in advance allowed the city to queue multiple intersections for reconstruction, similar to the work completed at Stygler Road and State Route 62. Weaver thanked Bury and Schultz for their explanations and reiterated his general concern about waiving second readings.

President Bowers inquired about the Price Road project, requesting a brief summary of its scope and current status. Schultz recalled that the detailed presentation on the project was provided during the budget process, but he summarized that the city had previously bid out the project in 2023. The initial bids came back significantly over budget, leading the city to rework bid documents for better construction feasibility. He stated that the project was now ready to be rebid in the coming weeks. Bowers confirmed that the project was intended to create a facility for the Parks and Recreation Department to host youth programming, summer camps, and other recreational activities. Schultz agreed and added that the project included interior renovations of the existing home, the construction of two parking lots (one on the east and one on the west side of the property), and trail improvements. The trails would be connected to the Big Walnut Trail and adjacent city-owned parkland. Bowers reaffirmed that the trail improvements were designed to enhance connectivity to existing public parklands.

Councilmember McGregor asked about sewer capacity improvements for

Gahanna Lincoln High School, specifically why the city was responsible for funding the sewer upgrade instead of the school district. Schultz clarified that the sewer improvement project was designed to increase capacity for the entire district, not just the high school. The project involved relocating and upsizing the sewer line running under the BP gas station property. Instead of running the sewer line beneath BP, it would now be rerouted to the southern BP property line. Regarding the school's portion of the project, Schultz explained that the district was handling sewer improvements on its own property, but the city's portion involved wider infrastructure improvements to accommodate future capacity needs throughout the area.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading with Waiver of Second Reading & Adoption on Regular Agenda on 3/3/2025.

C. ITEMS FROM THE CITY ATTORNEY:

[ORD-0002-2025](#) AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CODE OF ORDINANCES, CITY OF GAHANNA, OHIO TO PROVIDE AMENDMENTS TO GENERAL OFFENSES GAHANNA CITY CODE SECTIONS 533.03, 533.04, 533.05, 537.02, 537.021, 545.07; TO PROVIDE FOR PENALTIES; TO PROVIDE FOR CODIFICATION; TO PROVIDE FOR SEVERABILITY; TO REPEAL CONFLICTING ORDINANCES; TO PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE DATE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES, WAIVING SECOND READING

City Attorney Tamilarasan introduced ordinances to amend the General Offenses Code and the Traffic Code to align with recent state law changes. She explained that all amendments directly mirrored changes in state law, with the most substantive update being an increase in penalties for OVI (operating a vehicle impaired) offenses. Other changes included minor updates across various sections of the code. Tamilarasan requested a waiver of the second reading to ensure the ordinance would take effect on April 9, 2025, the same date as the state law changes. She noted that the redlined updates from the city's codifier were received only recently, and she had expedited the process to align with the state's timeline. If the ordinance followed the standard process with a second reading and a 30-day waiting period, the city's code would not be updated in time for the April 9 implementation. By waiving the second reading, the ordinance would become effective on April 9, ensuring consistency with state law.

Councilmember McGregor asked why the ordinance was not being passed through a second reading followed by an emergency measure, rather than waiving the second reading. Tamilarasan explained that an emergency measure would make the ordinance effective immediately, which would result in the city's code becoming more restrictive than state law before April 9. To avoid any legal or enforcement inconsistencies, she preferred that the

ordinance take effect exactly on April 9, aligning with the state's timeline. She emphasized the importance of avoiding a situation where the city's code became more restrictive than state law before the official changes took effect at the state level.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading with Waiver of Second Reading & Adoption on Regular Agenda on 3/3/2025.

[ORD-0003-2025](#)

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CODE OF ORDINANCES, CITY OF GAHANNA, OHIO TO PROVIDE AMENDMENTS TO TRAFFIC GAHANNA CITY CODE SECTIONS 303.01, 303.081, 303.10, 333.01, 333.07, 335.04, 335.11; 337.26; TO PROVIDE FOR PENALTIES; TO PROVIDE FOR CODIFICATION; TO PROVIDE FOR SEVERABILITY; TO REPEAL CONFLICTING ORDINANCES; TO PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE DATE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES, WAIVING SECOND READING

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading with Waiver of Second Reading & Adoption on Regular Agenda on 3/3/2025.

[RES-0005-2025](#)

A RESOLUTION DETERMINING THE PROJECTED TOTAL POPULATION AND SELECTION OF SUCCESSOR MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR THE GAHANNA NEW COMMUNITY AUTHORITY

City Attorney Tamilarasan introduced a resolution regarding the projected total population and the selection of successor members for the Board of Trustees of the Gahanna New Community Authority (NCA). She explained that when the NCA was established through a resolution passed in 2024, it included a requirement to determine a method for selecting successor trustees within one year. After discussion and consultation with Jacquelin Lewis from Bricker Graydon, who serves as counsel for the NCA, it was proposed that successor trustees be appointed rather than elected. Tamilarasan explained that the election process for trustees is similar to that of a homeowners' association (HOA) rather than a Board of Elections-administered election, making it cumbersome and inefficient. To streamline appointments and ensure a more effective selection process, appointing successor trustees was determined to be the more appropriate method. She clarified that the alternative selection method of appointment is authorized under the Ohio Revised Code, and the resolution includes the necessary findings to support this decision. She also noted that a revised redline version of the resolution had been circulated, but the changes were not substantive, primarily consisting of language cleanup and the removal of redundancies to make the resolution clearer.

Councilmember Schnetzer asked whether any surrounding communities use the alternative appointment method rather than elections. Tamilarasan confirmed that all surrounding communities use the appointment method and

that no local communities conduct elections for NCA trustees.

President Bowers asked whether the resolution included a requirement that trustees ultimately be residents of the community governed by the NCA, as this had been her initial understanding. Tamilarasan clarified that while it was best practice to seek residents to serve on the board, it was not a requirement under the Ohio Revised Code or the proposed resolution. She explained that if there were not enough interested residents, the city would have the flexibility to maintain current trustees in their positions. Bowers suggested that the resolution be structured to reflect the intended preference for residents of the district to serve as trustees, even if it was not a strict requirement. She noted that this would help ensure that future councils uphold the intent of having local representation within the NCA. Tamilarasan agreed to consult with Jacquelin Lewis to confirm that such language could be included and stated that she would prepare and circulate a new redline version of the resolution before the next Council meeting. Bowers inquired about the timeline for adopting the resolution. Tamilarasan stated that the resolution must be passed within one year of the original resolution, which was adopted on March 18, 2024. Since a resolution takes effect immediately, the goal was to adopt it by March 18, 2025. Bowers confirmed that as long as the resolution was adopted by the March 17, 2025, Council meeting, the city would remain on track to meet the deadline. She thanked the City Attorney for her work on the resolution.

Recommendation: Held in Committee; Further Discussion scheduled 3/10/2025.

D. ITEMS FROM COUNCILMEMBERS:

Councilmembers Schnetzer and Weaver:

[RES-0006-2025](#) A JOINT RESOLUTION AND PROCLAMATION ADVOCATING FOR LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND CALLING ON CONGRESS TO MAINTAIN THE TAX-EXEMPT STATUS OF MUNICIPAL BONDS

Vice President Weaver thanked and acknowledged those who had provided comments at previous meetings or engaged in advocacy on the issue. He emphasized that the resolution served as one form of advocacy and noted that it was introduced following a general discussion in the Committee of the Whole several weeks prior. Weaver also mentioned that during the previous Council meeting, he had noted in the correspondence and actions section of the agenda that both the Ohio Municipal League and the National League of Cities were aware of the issue and were advocating for it as well. He expressed appreciation for the collective effort.

Councilmember Schnetzer expressed his appreciation for Weaver's leadership on the matter.

Councilmember McGregor inquired about the next steps after passing the resolution, specifically asking whether it would simply be passed or if it would be sent to representatives or other relevant entities. Vice President Weaver confirmed that the general discussion from prior meetings had established that the resolution would be sent to Ohio's members of Congress in both the House and Senate, including the two Ohio representatives serving on the House Ways and Means Committee. Additionally, it would be sent to the Ohio Municipal League. Mayor Jadwin agreed and suggested that, since the resolution was a joint proclamation, a cover letter from both Council leadership and the Mayor should accompany it when it is forwarded.

Recommendation: Introduction/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 3/3/2025.

Councilmembers Bowers and Padova:

[RES-0007-2025](#) A JOINT RESOLUTION AND PROCLAMATION DESIGNATING MARCH 2025, AS "WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH" IN THE CITY OF GAHANNA

President Bowers introduced a resolution to recognize Women's History Month, continuing the practice from previous years. She thanked the Council Office staff for their assistance in preparing the recognition and noted that the resolution was intended to be straightforward. She confirmed that the Mayor had reviewed the resolution and that she and Councilmember Padova had also reviewed it. Bowers suggested London Studer as a potential recipient for this year's recognition. She highlighted Studer's achievements as a graduate of Gahanna Lincoln High School and her role in breaking barriers for female participation in baseball. Studer competed internationally on a competitive women's baseball team and is recognized for her exceptional fastball. Bowers expressed enthusiasm for honoring Studer through the Women's History Month recognition and invited discussion or questions from Council.

Vice President Trenton Weaver expressed appreciation for the efforts put into the recognition.

Recommendation: Introduction/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 3/3/2025.

Councilmember Bowers: Discussion of Elected Official Salaries

[2025-0045](#) Memo to Council re Elected Official Salaries 02.21.2025

President Bowers acknowledged the sensitivity of the discussion regarding elected official compensation and emphasized that all members of Council share the sentiment that service before self is the guiding principle of their

work. She expressed appreciation for the sacrifices made by both current and past members of Council in their dedication to serving the community. Bowers provided background on why the discussion was being brought forward and reviewed the history of pay ordinances for elected officials in Gahanna. She referenced the attached memo she had submitted (See file 2025-0045), outlining key points step by step. She noted that Gahanna has historically been undercapitalized, leading to deferred maintenance, capital projects, and salary adjustments that have remained artificially low to the detriment of the city. In recent years, the city has conducted a comprehensive review of employee compensation and salary studies to align with market conditions and ensure the ability to attract and retain talent. However, elected official compensation also requires periodic review. As mandated by the city charter, the responsibility for setting salaries rests with the Council. Bowers reiterated that under the city charter, salaries must remain in effect from term to term, meaning that any adjustments would not take effect until the start of the next term following an election. She outlined the effective dates for any potential adjustments if an ordinance were to be adopted:

Mayor: January 2, 2028

City Attorney: January 3, 2028 (due to an exception in the charter when the start date falls on a Sunday)

Council At-Large Members: January 2, 2028

Council Ward Members: January 2, 2026

Council Salaries History

President Bowers provided historical context regarding Council salaries, beginning with a review of past ordinances. She noted that in 1999, Council passed an ordinance increasing salaries from \$600 per month to \$800 per month, equating to \$9,600 per year, effective January 2, 2000. Prior to that, an ordinance was passed in 1995 that raised Council salaries from \$400 per month to \$600 per month, effective January 2, 1996. In that instance, salaries increased by \$200 per month over two consecutive terms. Since then, the only adjustment to Council salaries occurred in 2006, when an ordinance was passed to supplement the Council President's salary by an additional \$100 per month, effective January 2, 2008. Bowers emphasized that since that time, there have been no further adjustments to Council salaries. She reiterated that, with the exception of the Council President's stipend increase, Council salaries have remained unchanged for 26 years.

City Attorney's Salary History

President Bowers provided a historical overview of the City Attorney's salary. She noted that the last adjustment was made by ordinance in 2019, with an

effective date of January 2, 2020. Prior to that adjustment, the City Attorney's salary was \$65,500. At the time, the ordinance allowed for a graduated increase over multiple years. Bowers expressed doubt on this approach but deferred to the City Attorney's judgment on whether it aligned with the charter's requirement that salaries remain fixed from term to term. She stated that the current salary of the City Attorney is \$80,765, which became effective January 2, 2023.

Mayor's Salary History

President Bowers provided an overview of the Mayor's salary history. She stated that the last ordinance setting the Mayor's salary was adopted on July 5, 2011, with an effective date of January 2, 2012. However, this ordinance did not change the salary but instead maintained the existing salary set in 2006. As a result, the last actual adjustment to the Mayor's salary occurred in 2006, meaning it has remained unchanged for 20 years. Bowers noted that while the salary was reviewed in 2011, no changes were made at that time. She emphasized that both the Mayor and City Attorney positions are considered full-time roles. Additionally, the Mayor is restricted in the types of outside activities they can engage in while serving, whereas the City Attorney is permitted to maintain a private law practice under the City Charter. However, City Code Section 143.03 still requires the City Attorney's position to be full-time, with the last salary adjustment taking effect on January 2, 2020.

President Bowers referenced research conducted by Senior Director Miranda Vollmer a few years ago regarding municipal salaries, which was compiled with the assistance of Clemans Nelson. The research indicated that senior directors, department heads, and other city staff were significantly underpaid, contributing to a high turnover rate within the city government. Bowers pointed to a table included in the memo on page two, which outlined mid-range five-year hourly rates for various senior positions. These rates were used to calculate annualized salaries for comparative purposes. She noted that all city directors currently earn more than the Mayor, with senior directors, the senior deputy director, the director of public safety, and the chief of police all earning significantly higher salaries than the Mayor's current salary. Additionally, she highlighted that the Assistant City Attorney, who serves at the discretion of the City Attorney, earns an estimated \$97,676.80 at the mid-range salary level. This amount is \$17,000 more than the current salary of the City Attorney.

Elected Official Compensation Surveys

President Bowers provided a summary of elected official compensation comparisons using various surveys and studies from across the region. She

referenced the 2023 Ohio Municipal League (OML) City Salary Survey, as well as the 2024 Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) Salary Survey, which offers an in-depth analysis of pay across the region, not just for elected officials but also as a percentage of total city revenue. Additionally, with the assistance of Clemans Nelson, Bowers included a salary report from July 10, 2024, which provides further comparisons. She also included research on cities with populations above and below 10,000, focusing on council and committee meeting frequencies to identify communities with similar population sizes and governance structures. From these various sources, Bowers compiled what she considered reasonable salary comparisons based on city size, charter status, and suburban proximity to a major metropolitan area. She emphasized that the selected communities were chosen because they were charter cities rather than statutory cities, making them more comparable to Gahanna. Bowers highlighted a salary range chart for mayors from comparable communities. She also noted a recent Columbus Dispatch article covering regional mayor salaries. However, she pointed out discrepancies in some of the research, citing Hilliard as an example, where both the mayor and city manager were listed at \$212,000 per year. She explained that this was likely an error, as Hilliard had recently transitioned from a mayor-led government to a city manager form of government, which may have caused data misinterpretation.

Regarding City Attorney compensation, Bowers stated that finding comparable data was difficult, as the majority of similar cities appoint a law director rather than electing a City Attorney. Due to this inconsistency, she did not include a comparative chart for City Attorney salaries.

Finally, Bowers referenced a chart on page four detailing City Council salaries. She noted that finding comparable councils was challenging because relatively few cities in Ohio have a strong mayor form of government, are suburban to a major metropolitan area, and maintain a similar city council structure. She ensured that the selected communities had a similar meeting frequency, pointing out that many councils across the state meet less frequently than Gahanna's four meetings per month, not including advisory committee meetings and appointments to external boards such as the Community Improvement Corporation (CIC).

Ohio Public Employees Retirements System (OPERS) Health Benefit Eligibility

President Bowers continued the report on elected official compensation, referencing the Ohio Public Employee Retirement System (OPERS) healthcare eligibility threshold. She noted that Councilmember McGregor had raised this issue two and a half years ago, emphasizing the importance of

ensuring that councilmembers' salaries meet the minimum threshold for OPERS healthcare eligibility. According to the identified reference point, an individual participating in OPERS must earn a minimum monthly gross salary of at least \$1,000 to qualify for healthcare eligibility at the time of retirement. While this amount is higher than the pension service credit requirement, it ensures that councilmembers can count their service toward healthcare eligibility, which is increasingly difficult to secure.

State Auditor Faber White Paper on Elected Official Compensation

President Bowers also referenced a white paper released by Ohio Auditor of State Keith Faber, which provides research on elected official compensation. She noted that while comparing salaries to those of other municipalities is one important metric, it does not fully capture the economic impact on public officials. The auditor's report included the following key findings: 1) The rate of inflation from December 2018 to December 2023 was 22.1% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics); 2) If inflation averages 2% per year, the total rate of inflation from December 2018 to December 2028 would be 34.8%; and 3) Failing to adjust salaries at least in line with inflation rates results in a reduction of real wages over time. The report also highlighted regional comparisons and suggested the need for additional data, including private sector pay for similar positions. Bowers noted that this broader analysis helped inform her proposal for City Attorney compensation, as comparable Prosecuting Attorneys across Ohio earn between the low-100s to mid-100s, while private sector in-house counsel salaries range from \$110,000 to \$170,000 annually. She acknowledged the complexity of the discussion but emphasized the importance of ensuring fair compensation to attract and retain talent while ensuring that elected office is accessible to individuals of diverse economic backgrounds.

Regarding next steps, Bowers stated that there was no fixed timeline for any proposed salary changes and that the Council could deliberate at their own pace, seek additional feedback, or request more data points. However, if the Council wished to implement a salary adjustment for City Councilmembers effective January 2, 2026, the ordinance would need to be passed before the August candidate filing deadline. She concluded by encouraging further discussion and deliberation on the topic, with plans to bring the matter back to the Committee of the Whole in two weeks.

Discussion on the Elected Official Compensation Research and Proposal

Councilmember Jones inquired about the methodology used for salary comparisons, specifically asking whether any private sector equivalents for

mayoral compensation had been identified. She noted that prosecuting attorneys were used as a comparison for the city attorney's salary and wanted to understand whether there was an analogous private sector position for the mayor. President Bowers responded that Chief Executive Officer (CEO) salaries might be the closest private-sector comparison, but she did not believe that was a direct or appropriate parallel. Instead, she explained that she focused on senior director pay and other top non-elected positions within the city since those salaries had already been benchmarked against public sector standards and, to a certain extent, private sector competition for talent. She reiterated that the mayor's position in Gahanna is a full-time role, emphasizing the significant time commitment required. While acknowledging policy differences with Mayor Jadwin, she acknowledged the considerable time Mayor Jadwin puts into the role and emphasized that ensuring future mayors can dedicate 40-60 hours per week or more to the job necessitates treating the position as a full-time role with appropriate compensation.

Councilmember Renner expressed appreciation for the depth of research and data compilation in President Bowers' memo, stating that it was one of the most well-prepared pieces of work he had seen on Council. However, he shared fundamental disagreements with the underlying premise of the discussion. Renner acknowledged the importance of competitive salaries for city employees such as content managers and specialists, as the city seeks to attract and retain top-tier talent. However, he did not believe that salary adjustments should be a factor in attracting candidates for elected office, asserting that public service operates under a different standard than professional employment. He further expressed concern about the broader political and economic climate, noting that government institutions are under scrutiny, and residents are experiencing economic pressures. Given these factors, he struggled with the idea of approving salary adjustments at this moment, even if they would only take effect for future officials. Renner reiterated that his stance was not a criticism of his colleagues or their efforts, but rather a personal conviction that now was not the right time for such changes. He stated that he could not support the proposal, as he did not feel that he had yet fulfilled all of his commitments to the residents of Gahanna. He concluded by welcoming further discussion from his colleagues on the matter.

Mayor Jadwin expressed appreciation for the time and effort President Bowers put into compiling the materials for the discussion. However, she expressed a strong opposition to increasing the mayor's salary. She emphasized that she was not involved in bringing this proposal forward and acknowledged that President Bowers was passionate about the issue. The Mayor stated that she was fully aware of the salary when she ran for office, both in her first and second terms, and that she did not seek the position for

financial gain but rather for the privilege of serving the community. She highlighted that public service is a conscious choice and that she, like many others in government, could earn significantly more in the private sector but chose to work in the public sector for its intrinsic rewards. Jadwin disagreed with the assertion that raising salaries is necessary to attract highly qualified candidates, pointing to the history of skilled and dedicated individuals who have served Gahanna. She shared a personal perspective, citing her father's lifelong devotion to public service, which shaped her philosophy. Her focus as mayor, she stated, should be on moving forward initiatives that enhance city services and improve residents' quality of life rather than on increasing elected officials' salaries. She also clarified that the salary figures listed in the memo represented midpoint salary ranges for city directors, not their actual current salaries, noting that only the Chief of Police and Assistant City Attorney are currently at or above the midpoint. The majority of city directors, she stated, earn significantly less than their counterparts in comparable municipalities, in some cases \$20,000 to \$40,000 less. Jadwin concluded by reiterating her firm opposition to increasing the mayor's salary and stated that she would not support such a change now or in the future. President Bowers thanked the mayor for her comments and clarified that she had never suggested that Gahanna lacked high-quality elected officials. She emphasized that she respected the contributions of past and present officials and noted that her language regarding attracting and retaining talent was paraphrased from Auditor Keith Faber's report. She also shared her own background in public service, including her family's history of elected and unelected service and her previous work as a contract public defender.

Councilmember Jones acknowledged that discussing salaries in a public forum was inherently difficult, especially given the ongoing conversations in the community and on social media regarding this issue. She emphasized the importance of transparency and ensuring that Councilmembers ask the right questions before making decisions. Jones requested clarification on the total additional cost of implementing the proposed salary increases. She stated that her preliminary calculations estimated the increase would amount to approximately \$80,000 per year, but she wanted confirmation of that figure. She also raised a concern that had been expressed by residents: if the city increases elected officials' salaries, what would be lost? She noted that many residents perceive this proposal as a trade-off, believing that funding for other city priorities might be reduced to accommodate salary increases. She emphasized the need for an open conversation about the financial impact to address these concerns. President Bowers agreed and requested Director Bury's assistance in calculating the full financial impact of the proposed changes, including any potential increases in benefits and OPERS contributions. She also addressed a misconception circulating among residents that these increases would lead to a tax hike, stating unequivocally

that there was no connection between this proposal and any potential tax increase.

Councilmember McGregor commented on another misconception, noting that some residents believed the current tax increase was intended to last for 40 years when, in fact, the original projection was that it would sustain the city for 20 years. She acknowledged that memories fade over time, but she wanted to ensure that the correct information was being communicated to the public.

Councilmember Schnetzer began by commending those who compiled the data for the discussion, stating that it was a rare occasion when he felt there might be too much data. He acknowledged the significant effort by President Bowers and the Council Office in assembling the information. However, he admitted that due to personal commitments over the weekend, including family obligations and caring for a sick child, he had not been able to fully review the materials as he would have liked. He noted the complexity of comparing City Attorney and Mayor salaries, given the varied governance structures among municipalities, and suggested that a future committee meeting might be necessary for a deeper dive. Regarding Council salaries, he conducted his own analysis using data from the Gahanna +10,000/-10,000 population range, which included Franklin County municipalities such as Hilliard, Grove City, Westerville, Whitehall, and Reynoldsburg, as well as municipalities outside Franklin County, including Stow, North Ridgeville, North Olmsted, and North Royalton. While unfamiliar with some of the non-Franklin County cities, he focused his comparison primarily on the local municipalities. Schnetzer calculated Council salaries on a per-resident basis, finding that in Franklin County, excluding Gahanna, the average was approximately 30 cents per resident, while Gahanna's rate was 27 cents per resident. He also considered variations in services provided by each municipality, such as fire departments and water services, which Gahanna does not directly manage. Additionally, he differentiated between city manager-led governments (Hilliard, Westerville) and strong mayor-led governments (Grove City, Whitehall, Reynoldsburg), concluding that, based on his calculations, Gahanna's current Council salaries were generally in line with Franklin County peers that operate under a similar governance model.

Councilmember Padova thanked President Bowers for compiling the materials and emphasized the importance of making the discussion accessible to residents, especially those who might only see the topic discussed on social media without full context. She also appreciated Schnetzer's detailed analysis, which helped clarify the comparison. Padova suggested that further discussion was needed, particularly on breaking down the salaries separately for the mayor, city attorney, and councilmembers, rather than discussing them as a single issue. She expressed discomfort

discussing Council salaries while actively serving on Council, but stated that she did not want that discomfort to prevent necessary adjustments for future officials. She shared an anecdote about discussing the City Attorney's salary with friends from outside Gahanna, who were shocked to learn that the Assistant City Attorney currently earns more than the elected City Attorney. She said this outside perspective underscored how unusual the situation was. Padova acknowledged that while no one seeks public office solely for the salary, it was important to fairly compensate those who dedicate full-time hours to these roles. She concluded that while it was an honor to serve, fair compensation should be aligned with the responsibilities of the job, just as it is for city employees working in administrative roles.

Councilmember McGregor provided historical context, recalling that when Council salaries were increased to \$9,600 per year in 1999, there was significant public backlash, with news articles criticizing the decision. At the time, it was considered a huge increase, and the perception was that Councilmembers were being paid too much. She noted that despite that controversy, Council salaries had remained stagnant for 26 years, and that it had taken this long for Gahanna's compensation to fall behind its peer cities.

President Bowers responded to McGregor's comments, noting that she had reviewed prior legislation regarding elected official salaries but found no supporting documents or records of substantive discussion in the meeting minutes. She pointed out that all past salary ordinances had been approved unanimously, but without extensive documentation explaining how those figures had been determined.

Councilmember Schnetzer provided additional historical context regarding past salary adjustments, noting that former Councilmember McAlister led the effort to increase the Council President's salary higher than other councilmembers. However, Schnetzer acknowledged that he was not present for those meetings and was relying on secondhand information. He estimated that this change occurred between 2006 and 2008. Regarding the City Attorney's salary, Schnetzer recalled being involved in prior discussions, noting that the role had previously been considered part-time with a salary in the \$60,000 range before it was increased and classified as a full-time position. He emphasized that legal demands on the office continue to grow, given today's litigious environment. However, he admitted that he had not been able to review all of the data in detail and would need more time to assess.

Vice President Weaver expressed gratitude to President Bowers and the Clerk's Office for the comprehensive research and memo, as well as to organizations like the Ohio Municipal League (OML) and the Mid-Ohio

Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) for their supporting data. He stated that public service is an honor and agreed with Councilmember Renner's assertion that government is under siege. He acknowledged that working in the private sector offers higher salaries but commended those who choose public service despite financial sacrifices. Weaver cited a line from President Bowers' memo that resonated with him: "Compensation should not be the reason we serve, but it shouldn't be a barrier to serving." He emphasized that Gahanna's elected City Attorney model is unique, as many communities contract out legal services. Having a City Attorney who is from the community and directly accountable to residents is rare and valuable. He agreed with Schnetzer's point that legal demands are substantial and growing. On Council salaries, Weaver acknowledged the discomfort in discussing compensation while serving but reiterated that Charter prohibits elected officials from voting on their own salaries. Any adjustments would only take effect for future terms. Regarding the Mayor's salary, Weaver stated that Gahanna's pay is below that of peer communities with strong mayor forms of government. He pointed out that in cities with a city manager structure, managers often earn more than Gahanna's current mayoral salary. Weaver supported bringing the discussion back to Committee for further review, particularly as some Councilmembers requested additional data. He asked the body whether there was a consensus to revisit the topic in two weeks. Several members nodded in agreement, and Weaver requested that the Clerk schedule the item for the next Committee meeting.

Councilmember Jones asked for clarification on the specific information needed for the next discussion. Vice President Weaver acknowledged that Councilmember Schnetzer had conducted a more structured analysis and suggested that Finance Director Bury be included in the discussion to provide formal financial projections. Director Bury confirmed she understood the request and that two weeks was sufficient time to compile the necessary data. With no further discussion, it was agreed that the topic would return to Committee in two weeks for further deliberation.

Recommendation: Held in Committee; Further Discussion scheduled 3/10/2025.

[ORD-0005-2025](#)

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND SECTION 131.07 OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF GAHANNA, RELATIVE TO THE MAYOR'S SALARY, EFFECTIVE JANUARY 2, 2028

Recommendation: Held in Committee; Further Discussion scheduled 3/10/2025.

[ORD-0006-2025](#)

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND SECTION 143.04 OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF GAHANNA, RELATIVE TO THE CITY ATTORNEY'S SALARY, EFFECTIVE JANUARY 3, 2028

Recommendation: Held in Committee; Further Discussion scheduled 3/10/2025.

[ORD-0007-2025](#) AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND SECTION 121.03 OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF GAHANNA, RELATIVE TO THE COUNCIL'S SALARY, EFFECTIVE JANUARY 2, 2026 FOR WARD MEMBERS, AND JANUARY 2, 2028 FOR AT-LARGE MEMBERS

Recommendation: Held in Committee; Further Discussion scheduled 3/10/2025.

E. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Committee of the Whole, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:08 p.m.

Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

*APPROVED by the Committee of the Whole, this
day of 2025.*

Trenton I. Weaver