



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

City Council - Special

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

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

Jeremy A. VanMeter, Clerk of Council

Monday, July 20, 2026

6:00 PM

City Hall, Committee Room

Our Gahanna Strategic Plan Workshop

A. CALL TO ORDER: Roll Call

Gahanna City Council met in Special Session on Monday, July 20, 2026, in the Committee Room. President of Council Trenton I. Weaver called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The agenda was published on Friday, July 17, 2026.

Present 7 - Jamille Jones, Nancy R. McGregor, Merisa K. Bowers, Stephen A. Renner, Michael Schnetzer, Kaylee Padova, and Trenton I. Weaver

B. WORKSHOP:

[2026-0143](#)

Our Gahanna Strategic Plan Workshop Agenda - Facilitated by planningNEXT

Ms. Sarah Bongiorno, planningNEXT, stated that the City remained in the alignment year for implementation of the Strategic Plan. She explained that staff had focused on institutionalizing the plan within City processes by updating forms and narratives, ensuring staff understood the plan, coordinating implementation with the City's schedule, establishing regular review intervals, setting priorities, and outlining implementation timelines. She reviewed the June meetings with department directors and supervisors, where staff discussed what departments should do more of, less of, and differently. She emphasized that the Strategic Plan covered a 10-year period and that the City would not accomplish every objective within the first two years. She stated that the City now sought Council's input and would continue refining priorities through the budget process.

Ms. Bongiorno summarized the top priorities identified for the coming year. She noted significant overlap among responses and highlighted Creekside, including walkability, pedestrian safety, and streetscape design, as the most frequently identified priority. She also identified regional identity and placemaking, strengthening neighborhoods and trail connections, the Comprehensive Transportation and Mobility Plan, economic development and attracting companies, housing, aging housing stock, resiliency, and sustainability as priorities. She identified long-term priorities that included drinking water independence, continued investment in housing, a recreation center and aquatics facility, stronger collaboration between the administration and Council, strengthening Gahanna's regional position, and capitalizing on the new airport terminal by positioning Gahanna as a regional gateway. Ms. Bongiorno stated that survey respondents wanted Council and the community to understand how the Strategic Plan would guide future decisions and how other City plans would inform both the Strategic Plan and the budget process. She said respondents also expressed concerns about prioritization.

Councilmember Bowers asked how frequently Creekside appeared in the responses. Ms. Bongiorno replied that Creekside appeared in five of the six responses and that housing and neighborhoods also appeared consistently throughout the discussions. Ms. Bongiorno described the department workshops and explained that staff discussed departmental responsibilities, opportunities to improve efficiency, work that departments should increase or reduce, and potential new initiatives. She stated that departments engaged fully in the discussions and carefully evaluated how they performed their work.

Councilmember Bowers asked whether Council Office staff participated in the exercise. Ms. Bongiorno confirmed that they had. Ms. Bailey Morlan, planningNEXT, stated that the Council Office identified opportunities to place greater emphasis on performance metrics, highlight Strategic Plan connections within legislation, expand public education about Council materials, improve workflows, standardize agendas, and provide quarterly reports.

Vice President Jones asked about the purpose of the exercise. Ms. Bongiorno explained that Council could complete a similar exercise by evaluating its own work as a legislative body.

Councilmember Bowers asked how Council should use the information moving forward. Ms. Bongiorno stated that the information would support citywide prioritization and clarify how every department contributed to the Strategic Plan. She explained that departments would receive summaries that staff would incorporate into budget templates. She noted that departments would include varying levels of detail while maintaining alignment with the Strategic Plan. Councilmember Bowers stated that structural changes, including Council representation on the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), had strengthened the capital budgeting process by improving project prioritization and tracking. She added that the process had helped compensate for the absence of Council subcommittees and suggested continuing to focus on both the CIP and the Community Improvement Corporation.

Vice President Jones stated that departmental discussions should clearly identify how proposed work supported the Strategic Plan so Council could reach decisions more efficiently. She said staff should explain the purpose behind legislation by connecting it to Strategic Plan objectives and suggested that Council begin using the Strategic Plan's language more consistently. Ms. Bongiorno agreed and stated that institutionalizing the Strategic Plan meant consistently tying reports and recommendations back to the plan's objectives and strategies.

Councilmember Schnetzer stated that residents who actively engaged with the City generally recognized that the City managed projects effectively, while less engaged residents often believed the City operated inefficiently. He expressed interest in improving communication about the reasons behind City decisions. Ms. Bongiorno responded that the Strategic Plan resulted from extensive community engagement rather than Council direction and stated that Council could reference the community-driven process when responding to questions. She expressed confidence that consistent communication would help residents understand the City's priorities over time.

Councilmember Schnetzer shared an example involving a resident who questioned why the City funded street sweeping instead of sidewalk repairs. He explained that staffing limitations, funding restrictions, and separate funding sources affected those decisions and stated that the City should communicate those distinctions more proactively. Ms.

Bongiorno stated that integrating the Strategic Plan into the budget process would help staff explain those distinctions more effectively.

Councilmember Bowers observed that the Parks and Recreation Department had begun incorporating Strategic Plan language into its communications, which helped explain departmental priorities.

Councilmember Schnetzer agreed that repetition would reinforce the message. Senior Director of Administrative Services Miranda Vollmer stated that departments had started incorporating the City's values and Strategic Plan messaging into communications, including Parks and Recreation Month. Ms. Bongiorno agreed and stated that departments should continue referencing the Strategic Plan and incorporate it into annual reporting to help the community understand the City's overall framework.

Councilmember Padova suggested placing Strategic Plan messaging on road construction signs and social media, similar to previous Issue 12 communications.

Vice President Jones discussed the importance of strengthening collaboration between Council and the administration and asked how Council could help bring the Strategic Plan to life through its work.

Councilmember Bowers emphasized the importance of orienting future Council members to the Strategic Plan in order to maintain continuity. Ms. Bongiorno noted that other communities had successfully maintained continuity despite regular Council turnover. Councilmember Bowers stated that prospective Council candidates often watched Council meetings and that regularly using Strategic Plan language would increase familiarity and public trust.

President Weaver asked how the City would integrate the Strategic Plan with other long-term plans beyond the first budget year. Ms. Bongiorno explained that the current budget would focus on the immediate year while department discussions also considered five-year priorities. President Weaver noted that the Capital Improvement Program already included a five-year outlook and asked whether operational priorities could follow a similar model. Ms. Bongiorno stated that Creekside and communication initiatives demonstrated how operational priorities could follow structured timelines similar to the Capital Improvement Program.

Councilmember Bowers suggested categorizing Creekside strategies into short, intermediate, and long-term priorities rather than attempting to complete all strategies within one year. She also recommended identifying measurable outcomes for strategies that lacked specific deliverables. Ms. Bongiorno stated that departments needed flexibility to determine implementation details while maintaining alignment with the Strategic Plan. She added that the Strategic Plan should serve as the City's "north star" by aligning future initiatives and maintaining continuity. Councilmember Bowers suggested holding a future discussion about Council's role in communication, outreach, transparency, and Strategic Plan implementation beyond the annual budget process, particularly under Goal 2 regarding community engagement.

Ms. Bongiorno introduced Ms. Julie Colley, planningNEXT, to lead the discussion regarding Creekside. Ms. Colley stated that administration had discussed Creekside capital projects and operating budget priorities for the next one to five years. She stated that administration recognized Creekside as the heart of the community and had identified flood mitigation, the plaza, and private redevelopment as immediate priorities. She asked Council what additional Creekside priorities should guide future budgets.

Councilmember Bowers stated that future planning should connect the entire Creekside district rather than focusing only on the plaza. Vice President Jones agreed and stated that planning should include Mill Street, Granville Street, and the surrounding district rather than only three buildings. Councilmember Bowers stated that the City should continue investing throughout the district over one, five, and ten-year timeframes.

Ms. Colley referenced the City's transportation and mobility planning efforts. Senior Director Vollmer stated that the Transportation and Mobility Plan had not yet been completed and noted that staff had presented information to boards during June 2024. Ms. Bongiorno stated that walkability, safety, pedestrian improvements, and active transportation aligned closely with the Strategic Plan.

President Weaver discussed residents living along Clark State Road who could see Creekside but lacked sidewalks or trails. He noted that schoolchildren often walked along drainage ditches because no

sidewalks existed. Councilmember Schnetzer added that similar conditions existed along Johnstown Road and suggested that bicycle trails could reduce vehicle trips. Ms. Bongiorno stated that those examples demonstrated how the Strategic Plan could help prioritize sidewalk and trail improvements that supported Creekside.

Councilmember McGregor stated that parking would remain an important issue because many visitors did not live within walking distance. She also expressed concern about parking capacity and wayfinding as redevelopment reduced existing public parking.

Councilmember Bowers discussed opportunities to strengthen community organization partnerships and leverage funding to improve building facades. She noted that the Gahanna Area Chamber of Commerce had begun offering a grant program. Councilmember Padova clarified that the Chamber's grant program focused primarily on business marketing. Councilmember Bowers also emphasized continued engagement with community stakeholders.

Councilmember Padova shared her experience walking to the library with a stroller along Granville Street and stated that traffic conditions discouraged walking. She suggested exploring rush-hour parking, additional buffers between pedestrians and traffic, and traffic-calming measures to improve walkability. She noted that some sections lacked trees or landscaped buffers.

Vice President Jones discussed the difficulty pedestrians experienced crossing Granville Street during Creekside events and noted that many attendees crossed outside designated crosswalks. Ms. Bongiorno referenced traffic calming.

Councilmember Padova stated that improving walkability would make Creekside more attractive for businesses. Ms. Bongiorno agreed and stated that visible improvements would encourage redevelopment. Vice President Jones stated that communication and public education would help encourage residents to walk or bike more often instead of driving.

Ms. Colley discussed communication efforts and explained that administration planned to provide both annual and quarterly updates. She stated that annual budget documents would tie projects, staffing

requests, accomplishments, and future priorities directly to the Strategic Plan. She also stated that administration intended to prepare annual reports combining financial information, Strategic Plan progress, departmental accomplishments, and Capital Improvement Program updates. She explained that administration also planned to implement dashboard software that would provide Council with quarterly performance metrics, including police activity, housing permits, and other key indicators. She asked Council what additional information it wanted included.

Ms. Bongiorno stated that dashboards should accommodate a wide range of performance metrics, including economic development, housing, investment, and return on investment. Ms. Colley asked Council members to share any additional dashboard requests with the Clerk for future consideration.

Vice President Jones suggested using simple visual indicators, such as checkmarks or progress thermometers, to show project status in a way that residents could easily understand. Ms. Vollmer stated that staff could provide examples from other cities and counties.

Councilmember Bowers suggested establishing legislative processes that would support the Strategic Plan over time, including ordinances that would promote continuity.

C. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Council, President Weaver adjourned the special meeting at 6:56 p.m.

Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

*APPROVED by the City Council - Special, this
day of 2026.*

Trenton I. Weaver

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