



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

Tuesday, November 12, 2024

7:00 PM

City Hall, Council Chambers

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Vice President of Council Trenton I. Weaver, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. The agenda was published on November 8, 2024. Councilmember Nancy McGregor was absent. All other members were present for the meeting.

B. ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA:

President Bowers introduced a request to bring back to the night's agenda *Ordinance No. 0066-2024: An Ordinance Authorizing the Mayor to Enter into Agreement with Pod Design for Academy Park Improvements.*

Vice President Weaver confirmed this worked for staff. With no objections, the item was added to the agenda under *Items from the Senior Director of Operations.*

C. ITEMS FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION:

Ordinances 0070-2024 through 0084-2024 were discussed in aggregate.

Discussion:

Vice President Weaver invited Planning Director Michael Blackford to present on the 15 ordinances related to zoning code revisions. Director Blackford described that revisions to the zoning code were on the code adopted by City Council on April 1, 2024. The code update process is moving into the implementation phase, where staff assesses its effectiveness and adjusts accordingly. These changes are mostly minor and fall into two categories: language that was in the previous zoning code and needs to be carried forward, and revisions to new code language.

Key updates include:

Accessory Structures: Changes to allow accessory structures like sheds

and gazebos in residential areas to be placed 5 feet from property lines, instead of the previous 10 feet.

Signage: Clarification that temporary sign permits are not required for properties zoned for Conservation or Restricted Institutional use, like parks or religious buildings.

Fencing: Updates to fencing regulations, particularly for corner lots and floodplain areas, were carried over from the old code.

Floodplain Regulations: New language mirrors Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) guidelines, with no substantial changes.

Variance Process: Changes include clearer guidelines for granting variances. Variances should only be granted when the request meets the minimum necessary criteria and when there is a practical difficulty that justifies the request.

Zoning Uses: Minor changes, especially in the Innovation and Manufacturing District (south of Taylor Road), now allowing uses like animal care (kennels) and family care (daycares) that were previously restricted.

Alternative Energy: New language permits ground-mounted solar panels in all zoning districts, including side and rear yards, and allows panels up to 10 feet high.

Building Materials: Metal is now allowed as a primary building facade, after successful approval of previous metal building proposals.

Overall, these updates mostly carry forward useful language from the past and make minor adjustments rather than introducing new zoning categories or significant changes. The goal is to improve functionality for both the City staff and the community.

Vice President Weaver thanked Director Blackford for the presentation, observing that the ordinances would be slated for a public hearing on December 2, 2024. Vice President Weaver invited discussion on the ordinances, suggesting comments on the ordinances in aggregate and not individually evaluating them.

Councilmember Renner acknowledged the exhaustive nature of staff's review, thanking Director Blackford for the work and for the inclusion of ground-based solar.

President Bowers echoed Councilman Renner's thanks on the ground-based solar. President Bowers continued, asking a clarifying question on wall signs, under chapter 1111, section H, involving murals on a private structure. Bowers inquired if there were criteria and a review process that outline the

designation for private art and the determination where the City may designate a wall sign as a *public art mural* as long as the language is non-commercial. Director Blackford acknowledged the language was familiar and explained that the code language allows for an internal mechanism, not establishing code, stating staff has not been approached to set something up at this time to make that determination. President Bowers asked staff to identify this as something to address from a process perspective for the next round of reviews. President Bowers noted there are existing private murals in the community that she anticipates may be identified for a refresh in the future. Director Blackford agreed with President Bowers.

Vice President Weaver identified Ordinance No. 0083-2024, including revisions to penalties, inquiring if City Attorney Tamarasan had a chance to review this item. Director Blackford apologized for not clarifying that the language came from the City Attorney's office. Ms. Tamarasan confirmed that the proposed language changes were reviewed by the City Attorney's office. The recommended update involves changing the penalties for certain violations to an "unclassified misdemeanor." This change does not include jail time but allows for a higher maximum fine of up to \$500 per violation, to be determined by the magistrate once filed as a criminal charge.

Vice President Weaver asked his next question based on a recent presentation from Jeff Speck, an urban city planner and national speaker. Vice President Weaver inquired about updates on requirements for parking spaces for various uses. Director Blackford explained that during the early stages of rewriting the zoning code, there was an initial idea to eliminate minimum parking requirements, inspired by some progressive zoning codes that use maximum parking limits instead. However, after initial discussions, the idea was seen as too problematic, and was not well-received. Director Blackford noted that some people, such as Speck, believe zoning codes have arbitrary parking requirements. Director Blackford suggested this topic could be revisited in future code updates. He acknowledged that market demand typically dictates parking needs, making strict requirements less essential. He also clarified that staff do not advocate for completely removing parking requirements. Vice President Weaver clarified he was not advocating for eliminating parking requirements; however, he asked staff to give parking revisions consideration, as it appeared it had not been updated in some time.

With no further discussion, Vice President Weaver summarized that the zoning code ordinances would be on the agenda for a First Reading at the November 18, 2024, Regular Council Meeting, with a Second Reading and public hearing set for the December 2, 2024, Regular Meeting. Vice President Weaver inquired if it were possible to include the items under the Consent Agenda despite the public hearing.

President Bowers voiced a preference for the items to be considered on the regular agenda due to the public hearing.

[ORD-0070-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CITY OF GAHANNA CODE PART

ELEVEN ZONING CHAPTER SECTION 1103.08 - MEDIUM LOT RESIDENTIAL (R-2), REVISING ACCESSORY STRUCTURE REAR YARD SET BACK

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 11/18/2024; Public Hearing Scheduled 12/2/2024; Second Reading/Adoption on Regular Agenda on 12/2/2024.

[ORD-0071-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CITY OF GAHANNA CODE PART ELEVEN ZONING CHAPTER SECTION 1109.01 - PARKING, ACCESS, AND CIRCULATION, REVISING PARKING SPACE REQUIREMENTS, PARKING AREA LANDSCAPING, AND PARKING AREA RESTRICTIONS IN RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICTS

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 11/18/2024; Public Hearing Scheduled 12/2/2024; Second Reading/Adoption on Regular Agenda on 12/2/2024.

[ORD-0072-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CITY OF GAHANNA CODE PART ELEVEN ZONING CHAPTER SECTION 1109.02- SETBACKS AND STRUCTURE PLACEMENT, REQUIRING ACCESSORY STRUCTURES TO BE LOCATED ON THE SAME LOT AS THE PRINCIPAL STRUCTURE AND SUBJECTING POOLS TO ACCESSORY STRUCTURE SETBACKS

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 11/18/2024; Public Hearing Scheduled 12/2/2024; Second Reading/Adoption on Regular Agenda on 12/2/2024.

[ORD-0073-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CITY OF GAHANNA CODE PART ELEVEN ZONING CHAPTER SECTION 1109.05 - FENCES, CLARIFYING THE LOCATION AND HEIGHT OF FENCES

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 11/18/2024; Public Hearing Scheduled 12/2/2024; Second Reading/Adoption on Regular Agenda on 12/2/2024.

[ORD-0074-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CITY OF GAHANNA CODE PART ELEVEN ZONING CHAPTER SECTION 1109.06 - OUTDOOR LIGHTING, CLARIFYING THE APPLICABILITY OF STANDARDS FOR CERTAIN TYPES OF DEVELOPMENT

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 11/18/2024; Public Hearing Scheduled 12/2/2024; Second Reading/Adoption on Regular Agenda on 12/2/2024.

[ORD-0075-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CITY OF GAHANNA CODE PART ELEVEN ZONING CHAPTER 1111 - SIGN STANDARDS, REVISING THE COMPREHENSIVE SIGN TABLE, PERMANENT, TEMPORARY, AND GENERAL SIGN STANDARDS, AND MASTER SIGN PLAN REQUIREMENTS

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 11/18/2024; Public Hearing Scheduled 12/2/2024; Second Reading/Adoption on Regular Agenda on 12/2/2024.

[ORD-0076-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CITY OF GAHANNA CODE PART ELEVEN ZONING CHAPTER SECTION 1113.01 - FLOODPLAIN REGULATIONS, PROVIDING EXEMPTIONS FROM FILING A FLOODPLAIN USE PERMIT AND CONDITIONS FOR CONTINUATION OF NONCONFORMING USES OF STRUCTURES

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 11/18/2024; Public Hearing Scheduled 12/2/2024; Second Reading/Adoption on Regular Agenda on 12/2/2024.

[ORD-0077-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CITY OF GAHANNA CODE PART ELEVEN ZONING CHAPTER SECTION 1117.02 - VARIANCES, ADDING CRITERIA SPECIFIC TO FLOODPLAIN REGULATIONS AND VARIANCE APPROVAL CONDITIONS

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 11/18/2024; Public Hearing Scheduled 12/2/2024; Second Reading/Adoption on Regular Agenda on 12/2/2024.

[ORD-0078-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CITY OF GAHANNA CODE PART ELEVEN ZONING CHAPTER SECTION 1101.09 - RULES FOR INTERPRETING REGULATIONS, CLARIFYING THROUGH LOT REAR YARDS

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 11/18/2024; Public Hearing Scheduled 12/2/2024; Second Reading/Adoption on Regular Agenda on 12/2/2024.

[ORD-0079-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CITY OF GAHANNA CODE PART ELEVEN ZONING CHAPTER SECTIONS 1105.01 - COMPREHENSIVE USE TABLE AND 1105.02 - SPECIFIC USE REGULATIONS, REVISING USES WITHIN THE INNOVATION AND MANUFACTURING DISTRICT AND ALLOWING GROUND MOUNTED RENEWABLE ENERGY SYSTEMS WITHIN ALL ZONE DISTRICTS

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 11/18/2024; Public Hearing Scheduled 12/2/2024; Second Reading/Adoption on Regular Agenda on 12/2/2024.

[ORD-0080-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CITY OF GAHANNA CODE PART ELEVEN ZONING CHAPTER SECTION 1107.01 - CITY-WIDE DESIGN STANDARDS, CLARIFYING APPLICABILITY TO BUILDINGS AND ALLOWING METAL AS PRIMARY BUILDING MATERIAL

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 11/18/2024; Public Hearing Scheduled 12/2/2024; Second Reading/Adoption on Regular Agenda on 12/2/2024.

[ORD-0081-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CITY OF GAHANNA CODE PART ELEVEN ZONING CHAPTER SECTION 1117.07 - DEVELOPMENT PLAN, EXEMPTING ACCESSORY BUILDINGS 200 SQUARE FEET OR LESS FROM THE MINOR DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROCESS

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 11/18/2024; Public Hearing Scheduled 12/2/2024; Second Reading/Adoption on Regular Agenda on 12/2/2024.

[ORD-0082-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CITY OF GAHANNA CODE PART ELEVEN ZONING CHAPTER SECTIONS 1121.01 - ENFORCEMENT AND 1121.03 - MAINTENANCE STANDARDS, IMPROVING THE ENFORCEABILITY OF THE ZONING CODE AND CLARIFYING LANDSCAPING MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 11/18/2024; Public Hearing Scheduled 12/2/2024; Second Reading/Adoption on Regular Agenda on 12/2/2024.

[ORD-0083-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CITY OF GAHANNA CODE PART ELEVEN ZONING CHAPTER SECTION 1121.06 - VIOLATIONS, REVISING PENALTIES

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 11/18/2024; Public Hearing Scheduled 12/2/2024; Second Reading/Adoption on Regular Agenda on 12/2/2024.

[ORD-0084-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CITY OF GAHANNA CODE PART ELEVEN ZONING CHAPTER SECTION 1123.01 - TERMS A-Z, REVISING DEFINITIONS OF USES AND CLARIFYING ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 11/18/2024; Public Hearing Scheduled 12/2/2024; Second Reading/Adoption on Regular Agenda on 12/2/2024.

D. ITEMS FROM THE COUNCIL OFFICE:

[2024-0222](#) Ohio Division of Liquor Control Notice to Legislative Authority Permit NEW 80037020020 SEXTONS PIZZA LLC DBA SEXTONS PIZZA 943 E JOHNSTOWN RD

Vice President Weaver invited Clerk of Council Jeremy VanMeter to speak on a division of Liquor Control notice.

Clerk VanMeter presented an application for a new liquor permit for Sexton's Pizza LLC, operating as Sexton's Pizza at 943 East Johnstown Road. The Division of Police reviewed the request and had no objections, noting no history of issues. The permit is an internal transfer. There were no objections from Council. VanMeter indicated he would notify the Division of Liquor Control accordingly.

[RES-0042-2024](#) A JOINT RESOLUTION AND PROCLAMATION DESIGNATING NOVEMBER 17, 2024, AS "WORLD DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR ROAD TRAFFIC VICTIMS" IN THE CITY OF GAHANNA

Vice President Weaver invited President Bowers to speak on this item. President Bowers introduced a joint resolution and proclamation designating November 17, 2024, as *World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims in Gahanna*. The initiative was prompted by a request from local advocate Sharon Montgomery and Ginger Tornes of *Friends and Family for Safe Streets Columbus*. The Council Office, in collaboration with the Mayor's Office, revised a model proclamation to include possible Gahanna-specific data. An event will take place on November 17, 2024 at Washington Gladden Park in Columbus to honor the day. The Council plans to send a copy of the resolution to the advocates but does not anticipate a ceremonial presentation at the upcoming Council meeting. President Bowers invited Mayor Jadwin to elaborate if she wished. Mayor Jadwin declined.

Recommendation: Introduction/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 11/18/2024.

[ORD-0088-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND GAHANNA CODIFIED ORDINANCES CHAPTER 151 - PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT, SECTION 151.03 - ADMINISTRATION AND CHAPTER 153 - PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD, SECTION 153.01 - CREATION

Vice President Weaver invited President Bowers to speak on the proposed ordinance. President Bowers estimated that over the last 18 months, Council, Administration, and the City Attorney have reviewed City codes, the Charter, and various board and commission procedures, for opportunities to improve and implement best practices. Through this process, an opportunity was identified. President Bowers outlined proposed changes to Gahanna's codified ordinances concerning Parks and Recreation Board appointments. The revisions aimed to align the board appointment processes with best practices, consistent with peer communities, standardizing terms and shifting the appointing authority for one of the seats from the Board of Education to the City Council. The school district provided feedback, requesting the removal of its statutory role in the board appointment process. President Bowers suggested introducing fresh legislation on November 18, 2024, with a potential Committee discussion on November 25, 2024, and a final vote on December 2, 2024. If adopted, this would create a Council-appointed vacancy effective January 1, 2025.

Councilman Schnetzer inquired if the school district had an interest in recommending an individual as a non-voting member, noting their insights could be helpful in the decision-making process.

President Bowers indicated the district preferred to remove the statutory position, citing existing avenues for collaboration between the City and the school district. The Parks and Recreation meetings remain public and open for district participation as needed. President Bowers noted the positive

dialogue and relationship between the Director of Parks and Recreation, the school district, the Mayor, the Superintendent, and Councilmembers.

Vice President Weaver voiced a recommendation for the future consideration of the ordinance.

Recommendation: Held in Committee; New legislation to be Introduced 11/18/2024.

E. ITEMS FROM THE MAYOR'S OFFICE:

[RES-0043-2024](#) A JOINT RESOLUTION AND PROCLAMATION DESIGNATING NOVEMBER 30, 2024 AS "SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY" IN THE CITY OF GAHANNA

Mayor Jadwin provided an overview of the joint resolution and proclamation designating November 30, 2024, as Small Business Saturday in Gahanna. Mayor Jadwin highlighted that this national event, initiated in 2010, aims to encourage support for local small businesses during the holiday shopping season. Noting that 92% of Gahanna's businesses are small businesses, Mayor Jadwin emphasized their vital role in the community's economy. The recognition was shared with Councilwoman Padova, who is involved with the Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB), and no additional comments were made. Council staff also collaborated on the recognition. Mayor Jadwin mentioned plans to involve a local small business in the presentation at the upcoming Council meeting, with final details to be announced. The item is scheduled for a vote and presentation next week.

Recommendation: Introduction/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 11/18/2024.

F. ITEMS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE:

[ORD-0086-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING UTILITY RATES AND AMENDING GAHANNA CODIFIED ORDINANCES TITLE THREE PUBLIC UTILITIES - CHAPTER 919 WATER AND SEWER INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD, CHAPTER 921 SANITARY SEWER CONNECTIONS AND RENTAL RATES, CHAPTER 927 STORM SEWERS, CHAPTER 929 WATER CONNECTIONS AND RATES, CHAPTER 933 BACKFLOW PREVENTION, AND CHAPTER 941 GARBAGE AND RUBBISH COLLECTION; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY

Vice President Weaver invited Senior Deputy Director Corey Wybensing to present on the ordinance.

Director Wybensing presented the annual update, of Title 3 Chapter Nine, focusing on utility rates for water, sanitary sewer, storm sewer, and refuse services. The review, required by code, ensures the City maintains financially sustainable operations and competitive pricing. Key updates included:

Columbus Public Utilities Rates: Based on Columbus' October meeting of

their Sewer Water Advisory Board, Columbus is planning a 6% increase for sanitary sewer and a 7% increase for water rates in 2025. The eligibility for their low-income discount program is expanding, offering a 25% discount based on a 200% federal poverty level threshold.

Utility Rate Study: Gahanna worked with Baker Tilly in 2022-2023 on a utility rate study, projecting costs through 2030 to manage future increases in infrastructure and operational expenses.

Proposed Increase: The net overall increase proposed for this year is 4-5%, equating to approximately a \$5 monthly increase for residents, based on average usage of 4,000 gallons per month.

Comparative Analysis: Despite the adjustments, Gahanna's utility rates remain competitive, positioned in the middle range compared to similar Master Meter communities like Bexley, Reynoldsburg and Obetz.

Future Outlook: Projections indicate potential future increases, with sanitary sewer rates possibly peaking at 7% and water rates at 15% by 2030, emphasizing the importance of ongoing financial forecasting to prevent significant rate spikes for residents.

The presentation highlighted the importance of strategic planning to ensure sustainable utility services while keeping rates manageable for residents.

Vice President Weaver thanked Director Wybensinger for his presentation and opened the floor to discussion.

President Bowers clarified with Director Wybensinger about whether comparisons defining Gahanna as "lower" than other master meter communities referred to price or gallons used. Director Wybensinger confirmed he meant price. President Bowers clarified with Director Wybensinger staff evaluated Gahanna as middle of the pack with other suburban master meter communities. Director Wybensinger agreed.

Councilman Schnetzer clarified with Director Wybensinger the expected utility rate increases, confirming that Columbus projects a possible peak increase of 7% for sanitary sewer by 2030, with current rates already rising 6% this year. He noted that water rate increases could potentially reach up to 15% based on future projects. Councilman Schnetzer highlighted that 80% of Gahanna's utility costs are influenced by Columbus's rates, while only 20% are controlled internally through local operations and capital projects. He acknowledged that Gahanna, being downstream of Columbus in this process, must adjust its rates in response to Columbus's changes.

Director Wybensinger provided an overview of proposed adjustments to the City's water and sewer codes, focusing on several key changes:

Water and Sewer Internal Review Board: Adjustments include changing

the chairperson from the Director of Public Service to enhance the appeal process and adding clarifying language on certain code sections in 919.03 and 919.04.

Rate Increases:

(921.11) Sanitary Sewer: The operational rate is proposed to increase from \$9.18 to \$10.28 per thousand gallons. The Capital Improvement fund rate will remain unchanged at \$1.53 per thousand gallons.

(927.21) ERU Charges: The cost per Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU) for stormwater is set to increase by \$00.18, from \$3.55 to \$3.73, aligning with Columbus's calculations. This adjustment primarily impacts commercial, not residential, properties.

(927.17) Stormwater Management: Updates include aligning the square footage calculation for ERUs with Columbus's standards and modifying the appeal process for consistency across water, sanitary, and stormwater codes.

(929.12) Water Rates: No rate adjustments are recommended for 2025; however, clarifying language around supply costs and discounts for low-income customers (increased from 20% to 25%) will be added.

(933.06) Backflow Prevention and Refuse Collection: Minor language updates are proposed for backflow compliance. For refuse collection, no rate changes are recommended for 2025, as the current contract with Local Waste remains in place through December 2025.

The Administration requested Council to pass these code changes and fee schedules as an ordinance under emergency status to ensure they are effective by January 1, 2025.

Councilman Renner expressed appreciation for the proposed change regarding heavy water users, noting that such users often do not pay their fair share. He specifically thanked the Administration for addressing this issue. Renner inquired why the threshold was set at 3 million gallons, asking if any analysis had been done to determine this figure versus a lower threshold like 1 or 2 million gallons. Director Wybensing indicated that the 3 million threshold was already established in the code and used as the baseline for the current analysis without re-evaluation. Renner suggested revisiting this figure in future reviews to ensure it remains appropriate.

Councilman Schnetzer clarified with Director Wybensing that the proposed change to the Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU) calculation would not affect residential properties, as they would continue to be charged at one ERU. Director Wybensing explained the change applies to commercial properties, specifically in the calculation of impervious surface fees. He explained that the City's current ERU calculation (3,064 square feet) is more

generous than the state average (2,800 square feet) and Columbus's baseline (2,000 square feet). The change is being made to align with Columbus's standards to ensure that commercial properties, not residential ones, bear any increased costs related to the Columbus consent order.

President Bowers asked for clarification on why the City is proactively setting water rates in anticipation of potential increases from the City of Columbus. She sought to understand the reasoning behind preemptively adjusting local rates to account for these expected increases.

Director Wybensinger outlined several points regarding water and sanitary rate increases:

Forecasting Rate Increases: Columbus is forecasting an 8% rate increase from last year through 2030, with this year's actual increase being around 7%. The water fund currently has a \$4.9 million balance, which will help offset rate increases in the short term, especially for water, though sanitary rates are expected to be lower next year.

Fund Balance and Rates: The City aims to minimize the immediate impact on residents by using the existing fund balance to smooth out rate changes. However, if Columbus adjusts its rates mid-year, the City can revisit the rates and adjust accordingly.

Proactive Approach: The City is proposing rate adjustments based on available information to avoid delays, as waiting for official Columbus rate approvals could make it difficult to implement by January 1, 2025.

Rate Increase Projections: The forecast for Columbus's rate increase is 7-8%. However, proposed increases for Gahanna's water and sanitary services might exceed this range.

Capital Improvements: A significant portion of the increase is driven by capital improvements.

Prioritizing Direct Cost Pass-Through: He emphasized that the goal is to only pass along the direct cost increase to residents, without unnecessarily increasing rates. Capital improvements should be funded through other methods, not solely through water and sewer billing.

2024 to 2025 Rates: For water, there are no changes proposed from 2024 to 2025, and no additional costs will be passed to residents for water services during that period.

President Bowers clarified that she had misread the chart earlier and noted that there is indeed an increase in 921.11. She emphasized that her primary concern is avoiding passing on additional costs to residents beyond the necessary increases. She expressed a preference for identifying alternative revenue sources to cover costs instead of raising rates for residents. Director Wybensinger explained that for the Enterprise fund, grant funding is limited,

with low-interest loans being a more common resource. He noted that the significant increase in water capital last year was necessary to build a sustainable water infrastructure maintenance program. He emphasized that the overall rate increase is kept to 4.5%, lower than the 6-7% proposed by Columbus, because they are also utilizing Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds more than in previous years. Director Wybensinger stressed the goal of minimizing unnecessary costs to residents while ensuring adequate funding for infrastructure needs, clarifying it was not an arbitrary decision.

President Bowers expressed concern about the impact of water rate increases on residents' finances, even though the increases are for essential infrastructure improvements. She emphasized the importance of considering alternative funding sources, such as TIF funds, to help reduce the burden on residents. President Bowers clarified that her questions were not suggesting the rate increase was arbitrary but were meant to address the direct financial strain on residents. She also asked about the lack of a reporting the process to Council, particularly regarding the schedule of the Water Sewer Advisory Board. Director Wybensinger explained that the process for reporting to Council remains unchanged, with reports due annually by December 31st, as outlined in the ordinance. These reports detail the criteria and outcomes of the Water and Sewer Internal Review Board. He noted that in 2024, no meetings of the board have occurred, contrasting with a few meetings held in 2023, which he stated he submitted through Council.

Councilwoman Padova asked for clarification, expressing that it seemed the goal was to increase rates just enough to avoid a larger increase the following year, given that rates are expected to continue rising in Columbus. She confirmed her understanding that the approach was to implement smaller increases now to prevent a bigger jump later. Director Wybensinger explained that the goal is to avoid a large, sudden rate increase (such as 15%) by gradually increasing rates in smaller increments. This approach helps prevent future, larger increases while managing the rising costs of water. He acknowledged that water is becoming increasingly expensive and emphasized the effort to maintain a consistent price as much as possible for residents, even though the overall cost of water is rising due to Columbus' increasing expenses. Councilwoman Padova expressed appreciation for the Administration's efforts to avoid a large rate increase, such as 15%, by implementing smaller, gradual increases. She acknowledged the challenge of balancing the need for rate increases with the desire to minimize the financial burden on residents, and she supported the strategy of taking incremental steps to manage costs over time.

Councilwoman Jones asked about the potential risks of rate increases, specifically regarding the uncertainty of the exact rate from the City of Columbus. She sought clarification on the risk involved in gently increasing rates without having definitive information on what Columbus City Council will ultimately approve. Director Wybensinger explained that while the projected budget for Enterprise revenue and expenditures is based on the information

currently available, there is a chance that City of Columbus' rates could change before being officially voted on. He noted that while changes are unlikely, there is still a possibility until the vote is finalized. He emphasized that the budget is based on forecasts to ensure their systems are prepared to start billing by January 1, 2024, and waiting until mid-December for final decisions from Columbus would put them in a difficult position regarding internal billing procedures. Councilwoman Jones acknowledged that the January 1, 2024 deadline is a critical factor.

Vice President Weaver thanked everyone for the discussion, asking if there were any further comments on the item.

President Bowers thanked the team for clarifying that the proposed rate increase is based on Columbus's budget proposal, not just a prediction. She voiced appreciation for the clarification, explaining the increase is documented and pending approval. Director Wybensinger confirmed that staff are using a forecasting model based on the 7% water and 6% sanitary rate increases submitted to Columbus. He clarified that this aligns with their baseline forecast, which is why they are presenting the projected rates.

Vice President Weaver thanked Director Wybensinger for his presentation. Vice President Weaver inquired of Councilmembers if they wished to consider the ordinance on the November 18, 2024, regular agenda, or consent agenda. President Bowers voiced hesitation because Councilwoman McGregor was not present that night for the discussion. President Bowers noted that if the item went on the consent agenda, the agenda could easily be amended to consider the item on the regular agenda, if desired in the future.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 11/18/2024; Second Reading/Emergency Adoption on Consent Agenda on 12/2/2024.

G. ITEMS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGINEERING:

[ORD-0087-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT FOR THE REPAIR AND RESURFACING OF MORSE ROAD

Senior Director Kevin Schultz, on behalf of Engineering Director Tom Komlanc, explained that the ordinance authorizes Mayor Jadwin to enter into an inter-municipal agreement with New Albany and the Franklin County Engineer's office for roadway maintenance on Morse Road. The project will be split into thirds, with Gahanna's share of \$220,000, including a 10% contingency. The total project cost is \$600,000, with each participant contributing \$200,000. The agreement has been signed by the Franklin County Engineers, and the ordinance is also being reviewed by New Albany. The funding for Gahanna's share is included in the 2025 engineering Capital Plan.

Councilman Schnetzer inquired as to who would be responsible for project

inspections. Director Schultz stated that the Franklin County Engineer's office will oversee the entire project, handling everything from bidding to inspection, which simplifies the process for Gahanna.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 11/18/2024; Second Reading/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 12/2/2024.

H. ITEMS FROM THE SENIOR DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS:

ORD-0066-2024 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO AGREEMENT WITH POD DESIGN FOR ACADEMY PARK IMPROVEMENTS

President Bowers introduced concerns regarding the potential expansion of the project, which might reduce access to the field space where soccer goals are currently set up. In response to these concerns about limiting field access, President Bowers requested the ordinance be revisited, and the Administration, led by Parks and Recreation Director Stephania Ferrell, accommodated this request.

Director Ferrell provided an overview of the planned park improvements, addressing concerns about potential impacts on playable field space due to the parking lot expansion. Director Ferrell asserted that the expansion would not negatively affect the flexible green space used for soccer training. A visual aid was presented, demonstrating different configurations for various field sizes, including a large 11v.11 field and smaller configurations based on scheduling needs with affiliate users like the Gahanna Soccer Association. Director Ferrell explained that the current phase involves planning and fitting various improvements into the park layout, considering elements like parking, trailhead integration, shelter upgrades, and playground replacement. The goal is to enhance the park's flow and alleviate parking congestion, particularly on busy days that cause backups onto Cherry Bottom Road. Next steps include finalizing conceptual designs, transitioning to detailed engineering work, and presenting cost estimates. Updates and any necessary budget adjustments will be brought back to Council for review as the project progresses.

President Bowers emphasized the importance of managing water retention and runoff in the park improvement project, particularly with the increase in paved surfaces. She highlighted her concern about mitigating runoff issues that could impact the Big Walnut Creek. President Bowers mentioned learning about innovative solutions, such as water filtration and drainage systems funded through grants, which can filter runoff from parking lots. She urged the consultant, POD, to prioritize exploring these options to address water management effectively in the project plans.

Director Ferrell agreed with President Bowers' concerns about water management. She confirmed that the current infrastructure lacks stormwater features, explaining that the planned parking lot improvements would include necessary stormwater management systems to address runoff issues.

President Bowers requested this item not be considered on the consent agenda in case Councilwoman McGregor had questions.

Vice President Weaver thanked Director Ferrell. Noting the First Reading for Ordinance 0066-2024 was held on November 4, 2024, Vice President Weaver explained the Second Reading on the regular agenda would be held on November 18, 2024.

Recommendation: Second Reading/Adoption on Regular Agenda on 11/18/2024.

[2024-0234](#)

825 Tech Center Drive Construction Project Update 11.12.2024

Vice President Weaver invited Senior Director Kevin Schultz to present an update on the 825 Tech Center Drive Construction Project.

Senior Director Schultz provided an update on the ongoing construction project at 825 Tech Center Drive, highlighting significant progress made in the last six months since construction began on May 1, 2024. Key points included as follows:

Project Objectives: Director Schultz reviewed the main objectives to ensure they are reflected in the ongoing construction activities.

Site Transformation: Emphasizing the substantial changes, Director Schultz noted the site looks remarkably different from its initial state, showcasing substantial development through drone footage.

Construction Progress - Structural Additions: Notable progress on steel expansion for City Council chambers, the basement storm shelter and firing range, and the secure sally port.

Window and Roof Replacement: These installations are nearly complete, enhancing the building's exterior.

Interior Work: The interior framing, plumbing, and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) installation are progressing well, with insulated ductwork enhancing quality.

Project Timeline: The plan is to expedite the schedule by installing barriers and temporary heating, aiming to start drywall installation by December 1, 2024, and finish the interiors earlier than expected.

Budget Overview: The project currently stands at 34% completion by time, with expenditures at \$13 million out of a total budget of \$59.6 million. Contingencies and allowances, used for unforeseen costs and necessary adjustments, have been managed effectively, with discussions about possibly returning unused contingency funds as the project progresses.

Future Vision: Director Schultz concluded with a preview of the project's future look, aligning current structural developments with the planned design for the new Police Department, City Hall, and Senior Center facilities.

Councilman Renner acknowledged the current status of project completion, noting that it is at 22% as of October 2024. Renner inquired about the projected progress by the end of December 2024, asking where the completion percentage is expected to stand by year's end, considering the existing contingencies and allowances that have already been factored in. Director Schultz responded to Renner's question by explaining that the payment applications (pay apps) have been fairly consistent, with about five or six submitted so far. He noted that if the \$13 million budget were divided by the number of pay apps received, it aligns with the current trend. Director Schultz mentioned that some earlier pay apps were slightly higher due to the inclusion of older, long lead-time materials. He estimated that the project might reach about 35% completion by the end of the year, though he acknowledged this as a rough estimate. Renner acknowledged Director Schultz's response, noting his estimate appeared close.

President Bowers asked for clarification on a project slide, specifically about the total cost of \$59.6 million, questioning if this amount included the \$4.7 million contingency, which was confirmed. She then inquired about the project's completion status, asking if the 34% referenced was based solely on the timeline or actual construction progress. Director Schultz confirmed that the 34% completion refers to the construction schedule. He explained that the project is scheduled for approximately 460 days, and they are currently about 160 days into it, which aligns roughly with the 34% progress reported. He noted that while his rough calculations did not match exactly with the project manager's figure, they are close to that 34% mark. President Bowers asked for clarification, confirming her understanding by asking whether the 34% completion means that the project is either on schedule or ahead of schedule. Director Schultz responded that if the project manager were present, he would say the project is slightly ahead of schedule. Schultz mentioned that if the team can complete the building's vapor barrier and begin drywall work, they could exceed the schedule by the end of the project. Director Schultz highlighted the ideal weather this summer, noting only two days of rain and no weather-related delays, allowing them to avoid using the \$100,000 weather delay allowance. The team is also looking to use some of this allowance for the vapor barrier and temporary heating to stay ahead.

President Bowers pointed out that the project potentially lost two days due to an incident at the site, referring to a recent law enforcement interruption from another jurisdiction, which occurred during the arrest of an individual wanted by authorities, who was on the job site. The individual was not employed by

the City. Director Schultz clarified that the project lost three-quarters of a day due to the incident, but the crew was back on site working the very next day. However, he noted that he was unsure of the exact productivity levels the following day.

President Bowers asked if the total project cost of \$59.6 million was still on track, to which the response was affirmatively "yes." She also noted that, based on the contingencies observed so far, there is potential for the project to come in under budget. Director Schultz elaborated that staff are always cautiously optimistic about budgets.

President Bowers shared a resident's question on what would happen to the current City Hall site. Director Schultz explained that the potential for under-budget costs is being actively discussed, along with strategies involving the Gahanna Community Improvement Corporation (CIC) to determine the best use for the property. While the issue was discussed, he noted that it had not gained the necessary momentum but emphasized the importance of continuing to push for progress. President Bowers asked about an anticipated timeline for these discussions to come before Council. Mayor Jadwin evaluated it as premature to provide a specific timeline but indicated that the process would likely continue into next year, with more clarity expected by the end of the second quarter. Mayor Jadwin explained that the goal is to identify all options, so when presented to the City Council, they can review various options (A, B, and C) with an understanding of the potential returns for both the City and its residents.

I. ITEMS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE:

[RES-0041-2024](#) A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TRANSFER OF FUNDS - Public Safety Contract Services to Public Safety Full Time Wages

Recommendation: Introduction/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 11/18/2024.

[ORD-0085-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS - Public Safety Fund for Salaries and Benefits

Finance Director Joann Bury presented Resolution No. 0041-2024 and Ordinance No. 0085-2024 together. Director Bury explained both items are related to a \$175,000 shortfall in the Public Safety Fund for the remainder of the year, stemming from the addition of a fourth School Resource Officer (SRO). The first item is a resolution requesting a budget transfer of \$100,000 from Contract Services to full-time wages. The second item is an ordinance for a supplemental appropriation of \$75,000 to cover the benefit costs associated with that salary. Both items are set to be included on the consent agenda for the November 18, 2024, Regular Council Meeting.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 11/18/2024; Second Reading/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 12/2/2024.

J. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Committee of the Whole, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:33 p.m.

Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

*APPROVED by the Committee of the Whole, this
day of 2024.*

Trenton I. Weaver
Chair