



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Finance Committee

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

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

Jeremy A. VanMeter, Clerk of Council

Monday, October 21, 2024

City Hall, Council Chambers

Immediately following City Council at 7:00 PM on October 14, 2024

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Councilmember Michael Schnetzer, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:28 p.m. The agenda was published on October 18, 2024. Councilmember Renner was absent from the meeting. All other members were present. There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

B. DISCUSSIONS:

1. FY 2025 Capital and Staffing Budget

[2024-0204](#)

2025 Budget Capital & Staffing Presentation - 10.21.2024

Senior Director Miranda Vollmer provided an overview of the agenda for the Council's budget session. She indicated that she would handle staffing requests, while Senior Director Kevin Schultz would discuss capital requests. Vollmer also noted that the budget book had been delivered and would give an introduction to its structure and key points, explaining how to navigate the extensive document.

Senior Director Schultz then began his presentation on the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). He noted that while some information might be repetitive, his aim was to refresh Council on the CIP process. Schultz explained that the CIP is a working document used to identify, prioritize, budget, and construct capital improvements over time. He emphasized that while the CIP reflects planned projects, it does not guarantee funding. Funding decisions are made each year, and the 2025 capital appropriations would be specifically addressed in upcoming budget discussions. Schultz outlined the benefits of capital planning, highlighting that it helps prioritize projects within available resources. He noted that as the CIP matures, both staff and Council have become more efficient in the planning process and estimating project costs. These improvements have enhanced the CIP

Advisory Committee meetings and helped refine the process to facilitate smoother operations in future budget cycles. Schultz also reviewed funding sources for capital projects, explaining that while Issue 12 funds are the largest resource for the Capital Fund, there are additional funding sources, including water, sewer, court building funds, and street funds, as well as grants and sponsorships. He noted the significance of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts, as there are ten TIF districts in the City that restrict project funding to designated uses. This year, the Administration identified projects within these TIF districts to help utilize available funds and, in turn, preserve General Fund resources.

Completed Projects for 2024

Senior Director Schultz reviewed the completed projects for 2024, displaying two slides that illustrated the various initiatives executed throughout the year. He emphasized the Administration's commitment to transparency and the need to showcase the positive developments within the community. While some projects receive recognition through social media, such as early roundabout completions or water tower painting, these slides offered a comprehensive view of the 2024 accomplishments.

Schultz noted that the list covered all major categories in the CIP, including transportation, utilities, equipment, water, sewer, parks, recreation, and public safety. Among the highlighted projects were the Water Tower Rehabilitation, the Academy Park Mountain Bike Trail, and Golf Course Deck and Cart Path Replacements, which were close to completion and would be finalized in the coming weeks. Schultz stressed the extensive investment of time and resources by City staff across these diverse project areas, ensuring substantial improvements throughout the community.

2025 Capital Requests by Fund

Senior Director Schultz provided an overview of the 2025 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) requests. He outlined that the budget includes a 20% reserve for capital, water, sewer, and stormwater funds, serving as an emergency reserve for unexpected projects, such as the recent boiler replacement in the fleet facility. Schultz displayed a table detailing each funding source for capital planning, including the Capital Improvement Fund, TIF funds, and water and sewer capital funds, noting that the total projected revenue for 2025 is just under \$15 million. He highlighted the Capital Improvement Fund and TIF as the two largest funding sources, with available funds for 2025 projects totaling approximately \$22.5 million. Schultz explained that while \$3 million would remain in reserve, the starting fund balance for 2026 would be about \$5.5 million when adding the reserve to the projected end-of-year balance. He concluded that the 2025 plan strategically uses TIF and other restricted funds to preserve the flexibility of the capital fund for future projects.

Councilmember Schnetzer requested a pause to address any questions, and President Bowers sought clarification on the reserve and fund balance details. Directors Schultz and Bury confirmed the true starting fund balance

would be the starting fund balance column, plus the 20 percent in reserve column.

Vice President Weaver sought clarification on the 2025 capital requests, confirming that while the total projected budget for capital projects is about \$42.6 million, these funds are restricted by the specific requirements of each funding source. He emphasized that not all funds could be used interchangeably across all projects, such as TIF funds, which are allocated for specific uses within designated districts.

Senior Director Schultz confirmed Weaver's understanding, noting that expenditures must align with the qualifications and geographic limitations of each fund type, particularly for TIF districts.

Councilmember Jones inquired about the smaller reserves for water, sewer, and stormwater compared to the general capital reserve. Schultz explained that these reserves are calculated as 20% of the projected revenue for each fund type in 2025. He noted that this projection allows for a conservative reserve based on anticipated revenue.

Councilmember McGregor inquired about the court funds, asking if they included accumulated fees, such as the \$5 per ticket, and whether these could be allocated in 2025 for expenses related to the new municipal building. She expressed concern over the limited use of these funds and noted their relevance for the new building project.

Senior Director Schultz confirmed that these funds had been considered for furniture, fixtures, and equipment for the new municipal building, although they were not programmed into the current 2025 budget. He explained that there are three separate court funds, with the majority of the \$600,000 balance residing in the building fund, which would indeed be eligible for 825 project expenses.

Project Summary - 2025 Capital Investments

Senior Director Schultz provided an overview of the proposed 2025 capital budget, emphasizing that breaking down the budget by project categories can help clarify allocations. He presented a summary slide showing budget allocations by category: \$8.5 million for transportation and mobility, \$6.6 million for utilities, \$3.2 million for parks and recreation, \$300,000 for City facilities, \$2.4 million for equipment, and \$1.4 million for technology, totaling approximately \$22.5 million. Schultz explained that each fund's contribution to these categories is detailed in a follow-up chart. For instance, the \$8.5 million requested for transportation and mobility projects is sourced from multiple funds, including \$5 million from the Capital Fund, \$1.8 million from TIF funds, and amounts from Water, Stormwater, and Permissive Tax funds. He noted that in past years, individual projects involving different infrastructure types (e.g., roads, water, and stormwater improvements) might have been listed separately. Now, however, these interconnected projects are consolidated, streamlining fund allocations across multiple resources for efficient project management. The department budget presentations will follow the sequence

outlined in the budget schedule, beginning on October 28 and running through November, with each department presenting its detailed project list as organized in the budget book on page 113 (123 in the PDF). Schultz concluded by noting that this organized approach would allow for in-depth discussion on specific departmental projects, ensuring focused questions and effective oversight during each scheduled presentation.

There were no further questions from Council during this portion of the presentation.

2025 Staffing Requests

Senior Director Vollmer provided an overview of the 2025 staffing requests, emphasizing that the proposed staffing increases are based on the City's recent five-year Staffing Study, accepted by the Council on October 7, 2024. The proposed budget includes funding for new full-time, part-time, and seasonal positions, reflecting a 7% increase over 2024. This increase encompasses both new hires and projected union, Steelworker contract, and unclassified step pay increases, as outlined in the City's salary ordinance. Vollmer explained that this year's staffing requests are categorized into Priority One and Priority Two levels. Priority One positions are considered essential for ensuring continued excellence in government operations and enhancing City services for residents. Priority Two positions, while also important, are next in line after Priority One requests. These positions were not ranked by criticality but were instead listed alphabetically within each priority level. Vollmer presented organizational charts to illustrate the requested staffing changes, with Priority One positions highlighted in yellow-gold, Priority Two in teal, and reclassification requests in gray. She clarified that specific position justifications are detailed in the Staffing Study rather than the budget book, which provides a direct link to the study for further reference.

Public Service

Senior Director Vollmer presented the staffing requests for the Public Service Department for 2025, with details beginning on page 114 of the Staffing Study. Vollmer recommended establishing a facilities division to support the City's growing infrastructure, especially with the upcoming municipal complex expected to open at the end of 2025 or early 2026. The proposed positions included a Facilities Superintendent and a Service Maintenance Worker II, both funded for part of the year in anticipation of a mid-to-late year hiring. The Facilities Superintendent will oversee daily operations for City facilities, including the new municipal complex and service garage, ensuring they remain safe, sustainable, and efficient within the budget. The Service Maintenance Worker II role is based on research indicating one full-time maintenance worker per 50,000 square feet. Given the new complex's size of approximately 136,000 square feet, only one additional maintenance worker is requested at this time, with a plan to reassess needs after the building is fully operational. Additionally, the Public Service Department requested seasonal laborers to assist with increased tasks during summer, such as painting fire hydrants, general cleanup, sweeping intersections, trash pickup, and traffic

control. Vollmer noted the City is still considering whether custodial needs for the new facility would be best met through contracted services or city staff and will update Council later in 2025. Lastly, Vollmer recommended reclassifying the vacant Operations Manager position to Project Manager, with a focus on compliance and reporting for water system regulations. This reclassification results in cost savings, as the Project Manager position is one or two pay grades lower than the Operations Manager role.

Parks & Recreation

Senior Director Vollmer presented the 2025 staffing recommendations for the Parks and Recreation Department. Within the Parks Division, a new Parks Manager was identified as a Priority One position, based on findings from the Staffing Study, beginning on page 101. The Parks Manager role was proposed to reduce the span of control currently placed on the Parks and Facilities Superintendent, who supervises a wide team, including numerous unionized foremen who are not supervisory staff. This new manager would improve supervision, safety oversight, and contract management within the division, while allowing for more effective focus on budgeting, implementing the Parks Master Plan, and establishing work plans that superintendents would carry out on a daily basis. Two reclassifications were also recommended: the Golf Course Superintendent and Forestry Superintendent. These roles would be elevated to superintendents to align with the structure anticipated with the Parks Manager role. The reclassification would empower these superintendents to oversee their respective sections more directly, ensuring efficient execution of day-to-day tasks within their areas of responsibility.

The Parks Department further proposed establishing a Horticulture section, which would focus on plant cultivation, management, and maintenance of non-street trees within parks. To support these activities, the addition of two Parks Maintenance Worker I positions was suggested, with one as Priority One and the other as Priority Two. This team would handle seasonal activities, such as managing flower beds and trees along park signs, while also cross-training to support each other's responsibilities across parks and horticulture.

Councilmember McGregor inquired about the winter responsibilities of the proposed Horticulture section. Vollmer clarified that park maintenance occurs year-round and that this division would contribute to these ongoing efforts. Director of Parks & Recreation Stephania Ferrell further explained that the Horticulture Division would manage prairies and park trees, enhancing seasonal beautification initiatives across park entrances, medians, and other natural elements within city spaces throughout the year.

Public Safety

Senior Director Vollmer presented staffing updates for the Police Division, as outlined in the 2025 budget and detailed on page 127 of the Staffing Study. Priority One positions include two full-time civilian evidence and property technicians to replace the part-time officer who will retire at the end of 2025.

These roles are essential due to updated evidence storage needs, legal compliance, and anticipated increased storage capacity in the new facility. Additionally, a reclassification was proposed for a Communications Technician 1 to a Communications Technician 2 in the 911 dispatch center, creating a lead dispatcher for another shift to improve operations. A Priority Two position was identified for a second Deputy Chief to address growth within Field Services, Support Services, and an expanded School Resource Officer (SRO) program. This role would provide necessary oversight for the increased staff and division responsibilities, as well as serve as part of a succession plan to ensure stability in police leadership. Additionally, a citywide Training Coordinator position was recommended, with funding split 50% between the Police and Finance Divisions. This position aims to standardize and streamline training across departments, handling coordination, vendor scheduling, contracts, and purchase orders. This would allow current sworn personnel to focus on identifying training needs and performing higher-level tasks while ensuring that compliance and revenue opportunities for City facilities are maximized. The Training Coordinator would manage the learning management system and related administrative functions without setting policies or approving training content, responsibilities that remain with respective departments.

President Bowers inquired about the potential loss of expertise by consolidating training coordination under one role. Vollmer assured that each department, including the Police Division, would retain control over identifying specific training requirements. The coordinator's role would focus on logistical support, such as vendor management, scheduling, and paperwork, thus relieving police sergeants and lieutenants from administrative tasks, which are time-intensive. The Training Coordinator would also facilitate conference scheduling and provide centralized access to training resources through the City's learning management system. President Bowers inquired about discussing the mental health liaison position. Senior Director Vollmer noted that this topic could be covered during the upcoming public safety budget discussion and confirmed she would add it to the agenda for that session.

Information Technology

Senior Director Vollmer presented the 2025 staffing priorities for the IT department, highlighting the systems analyst role, marked as a Priority 2 for next year. She explained that the staffing study had identified IT as under-resourced in comparison to similarly sized cities, emphasizing the need for this position to support the systems administrator due to increased technology usage and the complexity of systems, particularly in the municipal complex. Vollmer noted that bringing on the systems analyst in 2025 would allow the new hire to become familiar with various systems while vendors are available for training and support.

Chair Schnetzer asked about a network security-focused role recommended in the staffing study, questioning if the systems analyst would cover network security needs. Vollmer clarified that while the systems analyst could assist, the current need was deemed greater for systems support rather than a dedicated network security position. Chair Schnetzer proposed following up

on his question offline for clarity.

Summary

Senior Director Vollmer presented a summary slide of the 2025 staffing requests, organized by Priority One and Two and listed in alphabetical order. Vollmer explained that the request includes full funding for all positions listed in both priorities, aiming to maintain high standards in City government operations and to enhance City services for residents.

President Bowers sought clarification, asking if the total 7% increase in employee benefits and salaries includes all requested positions. Vollmer confirmed, noting that not all positions are funded for the entire year. Bowers then requested the projected full-year cost of these positions to help anticipate the 2026 budget impact. Vollmer agreed to provide that information and added that the 7% increase also covers salary increases for current staff. She added the salary and benefits also included anticipated health insurance increase of 1% next year, which is also inclusive of the overall 7% total increase.

Budget Book - Tips for Review & Presentation Conclusion

Senior Director Vollmer provided guidance on navigating the newly delivered budget book, highlighting key sections for Councilmembers to review for a comprehensive understanding of the City's financial plans. Vollmer first recommended beginning with the "How to Use This Budget Book" section and the transmittal letter by the Mayor, which functions as an executive summary. Vollmer also directed attention to the "All Fund Summary" and "Fund Summary" sections, which offer overviews of financial allocations, including staffing and capital expenses, that were discussed in prior meetings.

For department-specific information, Vollmer suggested the "Department Narratives" starting on page 54. These narratives cover department descriptions, organizational charts, priorities, challenges, accomplishments, and non-routine items for 2025.

Councilmember Padova expressed appreciation for the timely delivery of the budget and the structured breakdown for department reviews, noting that the new approach facilitates easier navigation compared to previous years.

Councilmember McGregor requested a list of the TIF districts and their current balances for reference, which was acknowledged for future distribution.

Chair Schnetzer noted that the departments scheduled for discussion at the next session on October 28, 202 are HR, IT, Finance, and Mayor's Court. He encouraged members to submit questions by 9:00 p.m. on October 23, 2024, allowing time for administrative review before the scheduled session.

C. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Finance Committee, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:21 p.m.

Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

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

Michael Schnetzer