

CITY OF GAHANNA, OHIO
2026 CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION

TO: Members of Gahanna City Council
FROM: Ethan C. Barnhardt, Chair, 2026 Charter Review Commission
DATE: June 30, 2026
RE: Transmittal of 2026 Charter Review Commission Recommendations

On behalf of the 2026 City of Gahanna Charter Review Commission, I am pleased to submit the Commission's recommended amendments to the Gahanna City Charter for City Council's submission to the electors of Gahanna.

The Commission approached this work with the understanding that the Charter is the City's foundational governing document. Our goal was not to revise the Charter for its own sake, but to carefully consider whether specific changes would strengthen governance, improve clarity, modernize outdated provisions, reduce avoidable costs or risk, and better align the Charter with the City's current structure, practices, and long-term direction.

The Commission's process was organized around five general phases:

- **Organization and Education**, including the election of officers, adoption of rules of procedure, review of the Charter, a presentation on the Our Gahanna Strategic Plan, and an overview of Ohio municipal governance.
- **Proposal Gathering**, which included input from the Administration, members of City Council, board and commission members, individual commissioners, and members of the public.
- **Review and Prioritization of Proposals**, including consideration of whether each proposal was appropriate for the Charter, whether additional information was needed, and whether the proposal was ready for voter consideration.
- **Drafting and Legal Review**, during which the Commission worked with the City Attorney to translate selected proposals into clear, single-subject amendment language.
- **Final Deliberation and Voting**, on the proposed measures to determine which recommendations would be transmitted to Council.

Throughout this process, the Commission worked intentionally to balance thoroughness with discretion. Many proposals presented to the Commission were worthwhile, but not every worthwhile idea belongs in the Charter or on the ballot.

For that reason, the Commission used a prioritization framework to focus its recommendations on measures that were Charter-level, understandable to voters, legally and practically workable, and meaningfully connected to governance structure, accountability, public impact, or long-term durability.

The resulting recommendations reflect several broad themes:

- **Updates and alignment with current practice**, including revisions to administrative department provisions and other operational language.
- **Governance consistency and uniformity**, including standardization of elected office qualifications and revisions to the City Attorney provisions.
- **Efficiency and reduction of unnecessary costs or duplication**, including mayoral primary election reform and the repeal of the Board of Zoning and Building Appeals, with its relevant authority transferred to the Planning Commission.
- **Public accountability and long-term stewardship**, including Charter review cycle revisions, ward boundary standards, Planning Commission attendance and removal provisions, and updates to the Charter's non-discrimination language.

The Commission recognizes that Council has the constitutional and statutory responsibility to approve submission to the voters. In transmitting these recommendations, the Commission respectfully submits that each measure reflects meaningful public discussion, legal review, and careful consideration by the appointed Charter Review Commission.

I want to thank my fellow Commissioners, Vice Chair Carrin Wester, Jamie Belisle, Edward A. Hill, Jr., Richard Maxwell, Raymond J. Mularski, and Karen Reynolds, for their thoughtful service, preparation, and dedication to the City. I also want to thank City Attorney Priya Tamilarasan and Clerk of Council Jeremy VanMeter for their guidance, drafting support, records management, and steady assistance throughout the process.

The Commission appreciates the opportunity to serve the residents of Gahanna in this important civic responsibility and respectfully submits the attached recommendations for Council's consideration.

Respectfully submitted,



Ethan C. Barnhardt
Chair, 2026 City of Gahanna Charter Review Commission