



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Finance Committee

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

Michael Schnetzer, Chair
Karen J. Angelou
Merisa K. Bowers
Nancy R. McGregor
Kaylee Padova
Stephen A. Renner
Trenton I. Weaver

Jeremy A. VanMeter, Clerk of Council

Monday, December 11, 2023

City Hall, Council Chambers

Immediately following the regular Committee of the Whole meeting on December 11, 2023

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Councilmember Michael Schnetzer, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:14 p.m. The agenda was published on December 8, 2023. All members were present for the meeting. There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

B. DISCUSSIONS:

1. Quarter 3 Financial Report FY 2023

[2023-0217](#)

Quarter 3 Financial Report FY 2023

General Fund Q3 Revenue

Director of Finance Joann Bury presented the 2023 Q3 report, focusing on the general fund, special revenue funds receiving income tax, and the capital improvement fund. The discussion revolved around income tax trends, the status of the investment portfolio, and the overall financial outlook. Starting with the general fund revenue, Bury highlighted that they were at 90% of the budget. In comparison to 2022, there was a notable 20% increase, amounting to approximately \$4.3 million. While revenue categories exceeded the 75% threshold, property taxes were an exception, standing at 90%. Bury expressed a commitment to investigating the reasons for not meeting the target in this area as they approached the fourth quarter. She continued the presentation by delving into the main drivers of the revenue increase compared to 2022. Investment income and income taxes played a significant role. Bury noted that fines and fees, charges for services, income tax penalties, and interest all exhibited positive growth. The city experienced an uptick in Mayor's Court activity and saw increased licensing and permits related to construction activities throughout the city.

General Fund Q3 Expenditures

Director Bury proceeded to discuss the city's expenses. She noted that, in comparison to the budget, expenses were at 60%, and compared to the previous year, there was a 6% increase. However, when factoring in encumbrances, the expenses stood at about 74%, aligning more closely with expectations. Bury highlighted that the increase compared to the previous year was primarily driven by salaries and benefits. She explained that this was anticipated due to changes made to the unclassified salary ordinance in the previous year. Additionally, the filling of vacancies and negotiated agreements that included salary increases contributed to the overall uptick in expenses.

General Fund Q3 Fund Balance Impact

Director Bury proceeded with a detailed overview of the fund balance impact, taking into consideration transfers out and advances. She reported that approximately \$7 million had been added to the fund balance, bringing it to a total of \$35.4 million. Within this amount, roughly \$4.5 million was reserved for encumbrances, and \$7.45 million was allocated for the Emergency Reserve. This left an unreserved fund balance of approximately \$23.5 million, equivalent to about 11 months of operations, exceeding the requirements outlined in the city's policy.

Chairman Schnetzer recalled the city's historical approach of conservative revenue projections. He sought clarification on whether the percentage increase for fiscal 2023, which was higher than normal, was being consistently outperformed. Director Bury affirmed Chairman Schnetzer's observation.

Special Revenue Funds Compared to Budget

Director Bury shifted the focus to the three special revenue funds, providing an overview of their performance compared to the budget. In the case of the Public Safety fund, she noted that it had reached about 80% of the projected revenue and incurred 57% of the planned expenses. The vacancy for the mental health clinician contributed to the variance in salaries and benefits. Moving on to the Parks and Recreation fund, Director Bury highlighted that, with the season largely concluded, the fund stood at 94% of projected revenue and 82% of planned expenditures. Some additional winter maintenance expenses were anticipated. Regarding the Public Service fund, Director Bury reiterated the discussion on vacancies and the challenges faced in filling those positions. While salaries and benefits were gradually aligning with the budget, they would likely remain below the allocated amount due to the time it took to fill the vacancies.

Special Revenue Funds Compared to Actual

Director Bury proceeded to compare the special revenue funds to the previous year, noting consistent increases in revenue across all three funds

in 2023. The shifts in income tax percentages were attributed to changes in allocation due to operational adjustments. Examining individual funds, she pointed out the revenue growth in Parks and Recreation, particularly in charges for services. The increase in expenses was primarily tied to salaries and benefits, with 2023 reflecting a full season compared to the reduced programming and cancellations in 2022. In Public Safety, the addition of a community liaison officer and negotiated contract increases contributed to a 31% rise in expenses. Despite this, all three funds added to their fund balances, with Public Service experiencing a 45% increase, Parks and Rec at 28%, and Public Safety showing a slight decrease.

Capital Improvement Fund

Director Bury proceeded with the Capital Improvement Fund, noting a similar story with revenue slightly above expectations. She highlighted a new revenue line for charges for services, representing the first distribution of sidewalk special assessments from the county. On the expense side, approximately \$6.4 million had been spent, with \$16.4 million encumbered, totaling 98% of the budget either spent or encumbered. This marked a 33% increase compared to the previous year. Detailed breakdowns of the expenditures and encumbrances were available on pages four and five of the report, providing insights into capital categories and individual projects.

Income Tax

Director Bury delved into the income tax picture, breaking it down into three categories: withholding, individual, and net profit. She highlighted the planned increase in withholding, reflecting the area's growth, which unfolded as anticipated. On the individual side, a notable anomaly appeared due to a large windfall for a specific taxpayer, and while not expected to continue, it contributed to the overall increase. Discussing the net profit side, Director Bury noted a rebound, moving from a negative position to stabilization in this quarter. Contrary to expectations, the normalization occurred earlier than anticipated, signaling a positive trend for the remainder of 2023.

Investments

Director Bury provided an overview of the city's investments, indicating that approximately 99% was allocated to various securities, including CDs, commercial paper, and Star Ohio. Notably, the city maintained minimal holdings in cash. The interest revenue was reported as significantly higher, a trend discussed in the previous meeting and expected to continue into the first quarter of 2024 before potentially stabilizing. Director Bury drew attention to the interest rate dynamics, noting a narrower spread between quarters. She attributed this to the Federal Reserve's decision to start raising interest rates around March 2022. Anticipating sustained elevated investment income through the early months of 2024, Director Bury concluded her presentation on the city's investment portfolio.

Conclusion

Director Bury concluded the presentation by providing an overview of the city's economic conditions. She noted the ongoing economic expansion, a tightening labor market, and a drop in the unemployment rate. While acknowledging the presence of an inverted yield curve, Director Bury expressed optimism that it wouldn't significantly impact the central Ohio area. She summarized the city's strong financial position, with almost \$7 million added to the fund balance. Looking ahead, Director Bury anticipated the continuation of growth but cautioned that increased revenue would be accompanied by additional expenses.

During the Q&A session, Chairman Schnetzer sought clarification on the estimated return to the unreserved fund balance, and Councilmember Bowers inquired about the nature of earmarked funds contributing to the return. In response, Director Bury clarified that the funds being returned were not necessarily earmarked but represented revenue beyond the planned resources for 2023. These funds would flow into the unreserved fund balance, available for appropriation in the following year. Chairman Schnetzer acknowledged the economic uncertainty but highlighted the favorable impact of a low unemployment rate on the city's revenue from income taxes, expressing hope for its continuation.

2. Continued Discussion on FY 2024 Budget (First Reading was 12/4/23):

[ORD-0080-2023](#) AN ORDINANCE TO MAKE APPROPRIATIONS FOR CURRENT EXPENSES AND OTHER EXPENDITURES OF THE CITY OF GAHANNA, OHIO DURING THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2024

Chairman Schnetzer initiated the discussion on the fiscal year 2024 budget, emphasizing the need for progress as the Council had a public hearing and a scheduled vote on the budget the following week. He posed a question directed to the Department of Finance regarding the increase in Contract Services for the department, specifically referencing page 74 of the budget book.

Director Bury clarified that the increase in Contract Services was associated with the addition of the Division of Operational Administrative Services, created to centralize Citywide initiatives and projects. She explained that this division aimed to capture costs differently while still being overseen by the Mayor.

Vice President Weaver provided a plain English interpretation, stating that the Contract Services increase funded projects detailed in the Mayor's office narrative, specifically Citywide strategic initiatives, the strategic plan, and sustainability initiatives.

Mayor Jadwin and Senior Director Vollmer elaborated on the nature of the projects, highlighting examples such as the Franklin County Health contract and the risk and liability insurance program-initiatives with Citywide impact.

Leaf Collection Pilot Program

Chairman Schnetzer summarized key budget items that generated debate. He suggested addressing each item individually for a more structured discussion. The first item was the leaf collection pilot program, and he noted that a majority of the Council expressed opposition to pursuing it. He emphasized the need to provide guidance to the administration regarding any associated costs, explicitly stating that these costs should be excluded from the budget ordinance.

Senior Director Schultz clarified that the maintenance worker one position would remain in the budget, recommending its retention. He explained that this decision would result in a minimal reduction in equipment costs, specifically one less vacuum machine purchase. He confirmed that there would be no reduction in staffing.

Chairman Schnetzer sought confirmation from the Council regarding the decision to remove the leaf collection pilot program and the Council expressed agreement with the removal. The administration noted the decision.

Community Improvement Corporation (CIC) Appropriations

Next, Chairman Schnetzer discussed the CIC appropriations, noting the historical figure of \$200,000 and now \$500,000 requested. He sought guidance from the Council on their preference for this item.

Vice President Weaver expressed discomfort with the \$500,000 request, suggesting \$300,000 instead. He highlighted the detailed expenses presented by Director Hamons, indicating a level of comfort with the lower amount. He emphasized the need to align appropriations with actual needs.

Chairman Schnetzer sought consensus from the Council regarding the proposed \$300,000 appropriation for CIC. Councilmember Bowers and others expressed agreement with this approach.

Councilmember Bowers shared her perspective on the CIC's role, acknowledging the talent and service within the organization. She stressed the need for conservative allocation of public funds and suggested that additional appropriations could be considered in the future based on performance.

President Renner expressed concerns about potential negative outcomes related to past developers. He emphasized the importance of safeguards and ensuring that funds are used appropriately.

Director Hamons provided insights into the CIC's strategy, emphasizing the long-term nature of economic development. He clarified that funds would not reward specific developers and highlighted upcoming opportunities for

development.

Chairman Schnetzer summarized the discussion, proposing a \$300,000 appropriation for CIC, aligning with the Council's preference.

President Renner sought clarification on the total amount, considering rollovers and appropriations for 2024. Director Hamons explained the allocation and highlighted potential expenses related to grants and development.

Vice President Weaver expressed support for the \$300,000, considering tax benefits and the CIC's long-term goals.

President Renner reiterated concerns about specific developers and the negative balance from past obligations.

Director Hamons reassured that agreements would align with Council support and emphasized the collaborative nature of economic development.

Chairman Schnetzer confirmed the Council's preference for a \$300,000 appropriation for CIC in 2024, marking a net increase of \$100,000 from previous cycles.

Action Sports Park

Chairman Schnetzer directed the discussion towards the Action Sports Park, noting the initial request of approximately \$660,000, representing half of the estimated expense. He expressed the desire to align the appropriation more closely with the actual planning and development costs.

Senior Director Schultz provided context on the funding split in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for 2024 and 2025, with a total of \$1.275 million. He suggested reducing the 2024 appropriation to \$300,000 and carrying the remaining balance of \$975,000 into 2025. He emphasized the need for adjustments based on design and cost estimates.

Chairman Schnetzer summarized the proposal, seeking approval from the Council to decrease the Action Sports Park appropriation from \$662,500 to \$300,000.

President Renner expressed agreement with the proposal.

Councilmember Bowers supported the adjustment but clarified the intention to evaluate the project's progress in the next budget cycle. She encouraged seeking private support for the project.

Staffing Requests

Chairman Schnetzer addressed the topic of staffing, expressing his thoughts on specific positions. He mentioned the Maintenance Worker I position in

Parks and Recreation, highlighting its cost-neutral nature as it replaces two part-time positions. He also supported the School Resource Officer (SRO) funding request as part of a succession plan.

Senior Director Vollmer corrected the information about the SRO position, specifying that it was an addition of four, not a replacement.

Vice President Weaver added that he believed the role would be partially funded by the school district. Chief Spence clarified the necessity of adding an SRO to provide relief during training or absences, ensuring continuous coverage. He emphasized that the school district would not fund this position, and its expenses would come from the public safety fund.

Chairman Schnetzer acknowledged the defraying of costs by the public safety fund and expressed agreement with this approach. He then discussed two additional sergeant positions within the Division of Police, addressing concerns about chain of command and safety. He invited any disagreements on these points.

Councilmember Padova sought clarification on whether the sergeant positions involved promoting existing officers or adding new sergeants. Chief Spence explained that the process would involve adding two new sergeant positions through promotions and subsequently backfilling the promoted officers.

Councilmember McGregor inquired about two additional patrol officers, and Senior Director Vollmer clarified that there were two vacant positions from retirements in 2023, which would be filled in the next round of applications.

Chairman Schnetzer opened the floor for discussion on the Building and Heating Inspector position in the Department of Planning. He expressed minimal concern, emphasizing the need for redundancy and succession planning. He invited feedback from the council.

Councilmember McGregor raised a question about the assumption that the hired individual would be the appropriate replacement for a retiring or departing staff member. She expressed uncertainty about hiring two individuals in such a scenario.

Senior Director Vollmer responded, explaining that the Building Inspector position had the potential to be cost-neutral due to upcoming fee schedule adjustments. The intention was not just succession planning but also to address redundancy. She clarified that the Fleet Technician position was a temporary increase to accommodate planned retirements in 2025.

Councilmember McGregor acknowledged that the concept made more sense to her when framed as addressing redundancy rather than strict succession planning.

Chairman Schnetzer agreed, noting that the term "redundancy" was more

fitting for the situation, emphasizing the need for an additional staff member for building inspection work.

Senior Director Vollmer added that the current Building Inspector had undergone a job audit, recommending a shift to a residential plans examiner role, highlighting the need for an in-house staff member to handle building inspections.

Chairman Schnetzer continued the discussion on various positions. He noted that Director Vollmer had touched on the Fleet Technician, Fleet Interns, and the Maintenance Worker positions funded through proprietary funds. Expressing no concerns, he opened the floor for any comments from the Council.

President Renner sought clarification on the Parks maintenance worker, specifically asking about the position related to the golf course. Senior Director Vollmer offered to present a prioritized list of positions for better understanding. She mentioned having slides prepared to present the information, including recommendations. Chairman Schnetzer agreed to proceed with the presentation slides on the screen for discussion. Vollmer presented an overview of the Staffing budget process, detailing how positions are reviewed and discussed with each department. She highlighted considerations such as workload, classification, risk reduction, and the impact of capital projects and initiatives on staffing.

Chairman Schnetzer requested the presentation of the rank-ordered list of positions based on the administration's priorities. Senior Director Vollmer proceeded to present the rank-ordered list, explaining the considerations behind each position. She indicated that some information was new, prompting Chairman Schnetzer to express interest in the new details. Vollmer presented the rank-ordered list.

Councilmember Bowers expressed interest in seeing the recommended deferral slide before further discussion on the rank-ordered list.

Senior Director Vollmer provided information on the positions recommended for deferral, including IT support specialist, marketing and communication specialist, management analyst 2, and a reduction in police sergeant funding. She explained the rationale behind these recommendations and suggested deferring \$150,000 for the sustainability plan while adding \$100,000 for a 5-year staffing study.

Chairman Schnetzer continued the discussion by providing quick observations and opening the floor for conversation. He addressed the 50% funding for the sergeant position, emphasizing the importance of addressing the long-term run rate. Additionally, he noted the recommendation to move the mental health liaison to Contract Services and sought clarification on grant opportunities.

Senior Director Vollmer responded to Chairman Schnetzer, explaining the

rationale behind the 50% funding for the sergeant position and the need for additional staff to manage grants more efficiently. She highlighted the challenges of tight turnaround times for grant submissions and the potential loss of opportunities without dedicated personnel.

Chairman Schnetzer sought clarification on whether the proposed addition of staff to manage grants would be in addition to using a grant consultant. Senior Director Schultz and Director Vollmer provided insights into the roles of the proposed management analyst, emphasizing the need for compliance and proactive identification of grant opportunities.

Senior Director Schultz elaborated on the challenges of grant administration and the need for dedicated staff to apply for opportunities. He mentioned the involvement of external consultants and the complexity of coordinating paperwork and compliance without internal support.

Councilmember Angelou mentioned the availability of assistance from the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) for grant-related tasks. She highlighted MORPC's expertise and suggested collaboration for specific grant opportunities.

Senior Director Schultz acknowledged MORPC's assistance and provided an example of a successful grant application related to EV charging stations for 825 Tech Center Drive. He emphasized the need for internal resources to complement external support and had offered that once the management analyst 2 became more seasoned in the position, there could be less reliance on outside consulting.

Chairman Schnetzer opened the floor for comments from Council regarding Senior Director Vollmer's presentation and the discussed positions.

Vice President Weaver sought clarification on whether there was a specific dollar amount the Council aimed to reduce. Chairman Schnetzer expressed that he had not heard any specific figures.

Vice President Weaver asked if there was a dollar amount that would help reduce the chart [in the budget book] depicting expenses over time. Director Bury explained the challenges of providing a specific number, as the chart is based on current operations and is updated annually. She emphasized the positive financial position and the intention to use available fund balance judiciously.

Councilmember Bowers addressed the positions to defer, suggesting the elimination of approximately \$345,000 by removing the marketing and communication specialist, management analyst 2, and general IT support specialist positions. She emphasized the importance of long-term planning and aligning priorities with resident expectations.

Chief Spence discussed the challenges in filling the mental health liaison position and the proposed shift to a contract service model. He highlighted the

unique nature of the position and the potential benefits of contracting with established agencies. Chief Spence stressed the need to launch the program promptly to provide mental health services to the community.

Councilmember Bowers expressed support for the intern positions and the maintenance worker 2 position tied to the street tree program.

Chairman Schnetzer sought clarification on the association of the maintenance worker 2 position with the street tree program, and Senior Director Vollmer confirmed the connection.

Councilmember Bowers emphasized the hierarchy of priorities, including public safety, roads, public service, and initiatives related to mobility, walkability, sustainability, and housing.

Councilmember McGregor raised concerns about deferring the management analyst position responsible for grants. She highlighted the importance of having a dedicated person for grant-related tasks and the potential return on investment.

Senior Director Vollmer confirmed that the management analyst 2 position would indeed pay for itself through successful grant acquisition.

Councilmember Padova echoed the sentiments of Councilmember McGregor, emphasizing the potential for the grants position to pay for itself and contribute to the community.

Vice President Weaver expressed support for the sustainability plan and the role of the management analyst 2 in directly contributing to the plan's implementation and grant funding.

Senior Director Schultz provided additional insights into the importance of having dedicated personnel for sustainability and grant-related initiatives. He explained the role of the management analyst 2 in managing the sustainability plan and the benefits of having specialists for large-scale initiatives. In other communities, there would be a dedicated person for a sustainability plan and a dedicated person for grants, but the proposal here for a position with multiple duties was something administration believed would be more palatable.

Chairman Schnetzer discussed his internal conflict over this specific position. He deliberated on the information provided, acknowledging that the position could potentially pay for itself with successful grant acquisition. However, he emphasized the need to consider the order of priority, particularly noting the sustainability plan and its implementation. Referring to Director Schultz's comments, Chairman Schnetzer highlighted the indication that grants were considered lower in priority.

Senior Director Schultz clarified his earlier statement, confirming that the order of items on the list did not necessarily indicate a strict priority sequence.

Chairman Schnetzer reflected on the track record of the city in implementing various plans, stating that many plans, including the land use plan, had been executed without the need for the particular position under consideration. He acknowledged the historical challenge of fully utilizing plans, with some ending up shelved. Expressing his perspective, Chairman Schnetzer suggested that the focus should shift towards elevating the priority of grant-related activities for the designated position. He proposed that allocating resources to securing grants, rather than creating additional documents, might enhance the return on investment and align more closely with community needs.

Mayor Jadwin clarified that the list of items presented was not necessarily in a specific order of priority. She emphasized that the items were listed for discussion rather than indicating a strict sequence, reiterating Director Schultz's earlier point. Mayor Jadwin also shared insights into a past strategic plan, "Go Forward Gahanna." Despite successful creation and initial implementation, the plan lacked continuous management, leading to challenges in tracking metrics and progress. Mayor Jadwin emphasized that the proposed role would address this issue by providing oversight not only in plan creation but also in the ongoing implementation and monitoring of goals and objectives.

Councilmember Bowers acknowledged the importance of the ongoing conversation and focused on the need to address budgetary considerations. She expressed gratitude to Director Bury for her prudent and conservative forecasting. Referring to the chart on Roman numeral ii, Councilmember Bowers drew attention to a significant gap of approximately \$4 million between revenue and expenses in the general fund. She highlighted the Council's responsibility to identify ways to narrow this gap while maintaining fiscal responsibility to taxpayers. Councilmember Bowers raised questions about the prioritization of positions and the recommendation not to defer any. She sought clarification on the positions that were initially listed for deferral, particularly the management analyst position, which had been among the top three. Councilmember Bowers aimed to understand the rationale behind the shift in recommendations.

Senior Director Vollmer responded, explaining that the recommendation to defer certain positions was part of the Council's request to prioritize a list at the last meeting. While the recommendation was to defer those positions, the intention was not to eliminate them permanently. The deferral was seen as a temporary measure, and these positions could be reconsidered in future staffing years based on workload and project needs.

Mayor Jadwin began by addressing the transition from the prioritization list to the deferral discussion. She expressed a willingness to delve into the details and provide explanations for the order of priority assigned to various positions, as requested by Council. The Mayor emphasized the importance of aligning these priorities with the community's objectives and goals, particularly in areas such as parks, trails, and walkability.

Chairman Schnetzer intervened in the discussion to address the long-term projections discussed by Mr. Weaver and Ms. Bowers. He stressed the importance of being conservative with the baseline, highlighting the challenge of cutting staff once added. Chairman Schnetzer emphasized the need for prudent budgeting, recognizing the impossibility of meeting all community demands. Drawing from Ms. Bowers' earlier comments, he underscored the council's responsibility to the residents in future elections. Chairman Schnetzer clarified that he wasn't advocating for choosing projects but rather approaching the decision-making process with a framework that considers absolute necessities and potential project deferrals. He introduced the concept of spreading out or deferring projects over an extended period to accommodate a more modest addition of staff. Using the metaphor of the "pig and the python," Chairman Schnetzer described the challenge of managing a multitude of projects in a limited timeframe. He concluded his remarks, opening the floor for additional thoughts or comments on the ongoing staffing debate.

Councilmember Padova inquired about the maintenance worker position for public service, and referenced the slide presented earlier for the management analyst. Seeking clarification, she asked if a similar breakdown was available for the maintenance worker in public service.

Senior Director Vollmer confirmed that they indeed had information on the maintenance worker position. She specified that it was the one split 25% in the proprietary funds. Additionally, Senior Director Vollmer mentioned that there were a few maintenance worker positions with similar breakdowns.

Councilmember Padova further clarified her question, specifying the maintenance worker position related to streets. She pointed out that she was looking at the department of public service under the Street superintendent.

Senior Director Vollmer acknowledged Councilmember Padova's request and confirmed that the maintenance worker position in question was related to streets. She provided insight into the ongoing initiatives led by Director Anverse and his team within the Public Service Department, highlighting the current focus on various street-related projects.

Councilmember Angelou acknowledged the city administration present, including Director Bury, expressing trust in their work. She raised a concern about whether the proposed initiatives would still proceed smoothly without any modifications. Inquiring about the public's perception and potential challenges, Councilmember Angelou questioned if implementing the proposals as presented would result in public dissatisfaction or if additional funding would be required in the future. She emphasized the need for trust in the decision-making process.

Chairman Schnetzer clarified that his perspective was not rooted in a lack of trust. Instead, he highlighted the essential consideration of sustainability over a 20-year horizon. He acknowledged that there were positions with majority

council approval, specifically mentioning the addition of the management analyst. Chairman Schnetzer identified certain positions, such as those related to Fleet, building inspector, sergeants, maintenance worker in Parks and Recreation (specifically for the golf course), and the School Resource Officer (SRO), where there seemed to be a consensus. He sought confirmation from members and opened the floor for any disagreements or further input.

Senior Director Vollmer provided additional information, specifying that the maintenance worker for streets, mentioned by Councilmember Padova earlier, was allocated 25% to Street, stormwater, water, and sewer initiatives.

Chairman Schnetzer also mentioned the maintenance worker in Parks and Recreation, associated with the street tree program, which appeared to have a consensus. He suggested addressing the remaining positions line by line, starting from the bottom of the list, including administrative assistant in engineering and an intern in engineering. He sought input from members regarding these positions.

Senior Director Vollmer provided details on the interns, noting the absence of a specific slide for them. She mentioned the MORPC intern route, explaining that interns, typically sourced through the MORPC program, are present from May to August. She highlighted the positive contributions of a previous MORPC intern who joined the Parks and Recreation team part-time after the internship. Regarding the administrative assistant position in engineering, Senior Director Vollmer addressed the upcoming fee schedule change, particularly in the Right-of-Way administration. She mentioned that the increased fee would help offset the cost of the position. The administrative assistant would support the street and sidewalk program, handling tasks such as mailers, accounts payable, and accounts receivable, specifically for the sidewalk program. Senior Director Vollmer emphasized the importance of this position in managing the ADA Transition Plan and supporting the 2024 initiatives, which amounted to over a million dollars for engineering. Furthermore, Senior Director Vollmer discussed the significant workload related to the sidewalk program, including numerous calls into the department. The proposed administrative assistant would be responsible for handling inquiries related to engineering topics, especially the sidewalk program, whether received via email or phone calls. She invited Director Schultz or Director Komlanc to provide additional comments or clarification.

Chairman Schnetzer asked a question regarding the organizational chart for engineering, specifically noting the position of an administrative coordinator situated beneath the requested administrative assistant position.

Senior Director Vollmer addressed Chairman Schnetzer's question, explaining that part of the plan for the upcoming year involves addressing a fundamental problem. Currently, there is only one individual in the city responsible for bid processes for the entire city. To resolve this issue, the plan is to promote that individual to a higher pay grade, where they would assist with bid processes for the entire city. Consequently, the administrative tasks initially assigned to that person would then be taken over by the

proposed administrative assistant. This would result in having two engineering program technicians.

Councilmember Bowers intervened, indicating that she thought Chairman Schnetzer's question pertained to the administrative coordinator and sought clarification on the distinction.

Chairman Schnetzer clarified that his question was indeed about the administrative coordinator position, as indicated on the original staffing presentation within the engineering department. He apologized for any confusion and reiterated the structure in the org chart with the senior director of operations, director of engineering, and the requested administrative assistant, with the administrative coordinator beneath.

Senior Director Vollmer affirmed the correctness of the organizational chart, confirming that the administrative coordinator would be promoted to the role of an engineering program coordinator. Senior Director Schultz clarified it was not technically below.

Chairman Schnetzer asked if the intention was then to backfill once the promotion occurred.

Senior Director Vollmer added that the line filters up to the Director of Engineering.

Councilmember Bowers inquired about the proposed organizational changes, seeking clarification that the plan involves eliminating the administrative coordinator position and introducing an administrative assistant position in its place.

Senior Director Schultz provided a detailed explanation, confirming that the proposed plan indeed includes the elimination of the administrative coordinator position. In exchange, two engineering program coordinators would be appointed, alongside the addition of an administrative assistant. The rationale behind this restructuring was to address a current bottleneck where only one person is responsible for bid processing for the entire city. This includes managing bid processes for various projects, such as Parks and Recreation capital projects. With the proposed changes, there would be two individuals capable of handling bid processes, reducing the risk of a single point of failure. Additionally, the administrative assistant would take on various administrative duties, such as handling invoices, sending letters to residents about sidewalk projects, and communicating with them by phone. Senior Director Schultz emphasized that the restructuring plan considers the broader needs and potential gaps in the current system.

Chairman Schnetzer sought clarification on the pay grades associated with the administrative assistant and administrative coordinator positions.

Senior Director Vollmer responded, confirming that the administrative coordinator holds a higher pay grade, specifically a C12, while the

administrative assistant is at a C9 level. Additionally, she provided information that the engineering program coordinator position is at a C14 pay grade.

Chairman Schnetzer opened the floor for comments from Council regarding the proposed addition of the administrative assistant position in the Department of Engineering.

Senior Director Schultz contributed to the discussion, emphasizing that the potential increase in fees related to the right-of-way administration could offset a portion of the costs associated with the new administrative assistant position. He highlighted the need for a fee adjustment, mentioning that the existing fees had not been revised since the mid-2000s, presenting an opportunity to align them with neighboring communities.

Chairman Schnetzer further inquired about the Council's perspective on the administrative coordinator position. He noted the proposal in the Department of Finance for an administrative coordinator and inquired on the feasibility of sharing duties.

Senior Director Vollmer responded, providing insights into the extensive list of projects and tasks currently slated for the Department of Finance administrative coordinator. She highlighted the challenges posed by the multitude of systems, including the finance system, HRIS system, and upcoming implementation of a learning management system. These demands required the involvement of various department heads and personnel, illustrating the need for a dedicated administrative coordinator in the Department of Finance.

Chairman Schnetzer sought a decision from Council regarding the proposed addition of the administrative assistant position in the Department of Engineering, prompting members to express their approval or disapproval.

President Renner conveyed his approval for the administrative assistant position, emphasizing his satisfaction with the funding source being the Enterprise funds, instead of the general fund which had been a source of concern.

Senior Director Vollmer clarified that the funding for the administrative assistant position was derived from the Issue 12 special fund, providing additional context for Council's consideration.

President Renner acknowledged the clarification regarding the funding source, specifying it as the special revenue fund.

Chairman Schnetzer addressed the topic of interns, expressing his personal perspective that interns contribute cost-effectively to the workforce, offering valuable skills. He sought input from the Council members on their views about interns. There were no objections noted.

Senior Director Vollmer clarified Council is retaining the administrative

assistant position and keeping all interns within the staffing proposal.

Chairman Schnetzer confirmed that there were no objections to the inclusion of interns or the administrative assistant position. He proceeded to discuss the next item on the staffing list, which pertained to the Parks and Recreation Department's Recreation Coordinator 2 position funded through the general fund.

Senior Director Vollmer provided information on the request for funding the Recreation Coordinator 2 position within the Parks and Recreation Department. This proposal was aligned with the Parks Master Plan, which identified the Farmers Market as a top priority and Community Special Events as the third highest priority for the community. She highlighted that the Recreation Coordinator 2 would play a crucial role in the expanded volunteer coordination, addressing the current workload managed by a single Recreation Supervisor. The Parks and Recreation Department was set to organize over 65 events in 2024, including a weekly Farmers Market, Touch-a-Truck, Gahanna 175, and the Fourth of July celebrations. The estimated hours for planning, coordination, and on-site presence for these events were presented, emphasizing the need for additional staffing to manage the increased workload efficiently. The Recreation Coordinator 2 position aimed to address the growing demands for event coordination and volunteer management in the city.

Councilmember Bowers shared her considerations on the proposed Recreation Coordinator 2 position, emphasizing the importance of exploring opportunities to leverage existing community organizations and partnerships. She raised the question of whether the city could collaborate with nonprofits to deliver similar services and events, potentially minimizing the long-term impact on the budget.

Director Ferrell responded, stating that the positions being requested would serve as liaisons for coordinating with various entities, including nonprofit organizations. She highlighted the necessity of having city staff involved in event management, considering safety, policy adherence, and the coordination required with public safety entities. Director Ferrell also mentioned the increased demand for events, citing the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, which identified the Farmers Market as a top priority and indicated the need for additional support due to turnover and the demanding nature of the position.

Councilmember Bowers inquired about the potential impact of the Recreation Coordinator 2 position on continued or expanded camp programming throughout the year. She clarified that her question did not pertain to funding for counselors but rather focused on the broader scope of the position.

Director Ferrell explained that the Recreation Coordinator 2 position is not directly responsible for camp programming, as that is funded through a different section within the department. Instead, the role primarily focuses on managing hosted special events and partnerships, such as 5K runs or large-scale events like the Blues & Jazz Festival. Director Ferrell emphasized the year-round planning required for these events and the need for ongoing

support due to the absence of an offseason.

Senior Director Vollmer clarified that Youth and Family programming, including camps, is managed by a recreation supervisor and a recreation coordinator 2.

Councilmember Bowers inquired if the Recreation Coordinator 2 position would help eliminate any overtime burden on other employees.

Director Ferrell acknowledged the opportunity to reduce overtime burden by having a full-time qualified individual in the Recreation Coordinator 2 position. She explained that while seasonal positions currently assist with on-site coordination, having a dedicated full-time staff member would alleviate some responsibilities from the supervisor during events.

Senior Director Vollmer clarified that the Recreation Coordinator 2 position is an hourly role, distinct from the exempt salaried position of the supervisor.

Councilmember Bowers asked whether this hourly position had the potential for significant overtime beyond the budgeted salary.

Director Ferrell assured that employees are not permitted to work overtime unless approved. She emphasized effective management to control and regulate overtime hours as needed.

President Renner expressed surprise at seeing the Fourth of July event mentioned in connection with the Recreation Coordinator 2 position, given the longstanding support for the event. He sought clarification on this point.

Director Ferrell noted that the inclusion of the Fourth of July was not intended to suggest a new position solely for that event. Instead, it was to quantify the hours required for planning and coordinating various events. She emphasized that the Fourth of July is a citywide effort involving multiple individuals and departments.

President Renner sought further clarification, questioning if the intention was to propose a new position to specifically support the efforts of the Fourth of July event.

Senior Director Vollmer clarified that the inclusion of the Fourth of July hours was to highlight the significant time investment required for planning and coordinating events. It was not an indication that a new position was necessary solely for the Fourth of July. The goal was to illustrate the substantial time commitment involved in organizing such events, whether distributed between the current supervisor and a potential new position or not.

Director Ferrell reiterated that the purpose of including the Fourth of July hours was to emphasize the extensive planning and coordination efforts associated with events, dispelling any notion that it implied the need for a new position exclusively for the Fourth of July.

President Renner expressed concerns about the absorption of the farmers market by the Parks & Recreation Department. He questioned the decision to take on the responsibility instead of supporting an existing entity. Additionally, he raised apprehensions about Parks taking on events beyond its traditional scope.

Director Ferrell clarified that the Parks & Recreation Department had provided weekly support to the farmers market. The decision to manage it directly was based on strategic considerations and the challenges faced by the volunteer entity that previously managed the market. The move was informed by data from the parks master plan, which identified the farmers market as important to the community. She emphasized that the department only engages in activities that align with its mission statement. If a nonprofit or entity within the city wished to organize an event, the department would support and manage it through the special event application process.

President Renner sought confirmation that the newly proposed position would support events organized by other entities, including nonprofits, within the city.

Director Ferrell stated that the special event application process runs through the Parks & Recreation Department. The proposed position would have the opportunity to review such applications and present them for further consideration based on the nature of the event.

Councilmember Bowers sought clarification on how the proposed position differed from the current arrangement. Director Ferrell explained that the proposed position represented an additional level of support.

Mayor Jadwin emphasized the extensive workload currently placed on a single individual responsible for coordinating all city-programmed events. This includes events ranging from the egg hunt to the Fourth of July, requiring coordination with multiple departments for logistics such as traffic control, porta-potties, and electrical needs. The proposed position would alleviate the burden on the existing role, addressing the challenges of high turnover and ensuring effective coordination for various events.

Councilmember Padova expressed torn feelings about the proposed position, acknowledging the excellent work done by the Parks and Recreation Department in organizing events like the egg hunt and the farmers market. She expressed concern about the parks master plan being the driver for the position, especially with the farmers market initiative, questioning how the department would manage to take over such responsibilities without residents continuing to express the desire for events that already exist.

Director Ferrell clarified that the farmers market is not the driving force for the position. She emphasized the need for the position in 2023 due to the high expectations and workload associated with various hosted and outside events. Director Ferrell noted the increase in the number of events from around 40 non-city events in 2023 to an anticipated 90 events in 2024. She

reiterated the challenges of having one person handle the extensive workload.

Councilmember Padova expressed understanding and support for the position, acknowledging the positive impact of the events provided by the Parks and Recreation Department and recognizing them as essential to the community's well-being.

Councilmember Bowers expressed appreciation for the work done by Director Ferrell and her staff. She voiced concerns about the city becoming too event-driven, citing examples like the Goblin Fest and questioning the necessity of certain events. She mentioned the reemergence of private events by organizations and suggested the opportunity to phase out some of the added events. Councilmember Bowers emphasized the importance of programming such as camps, youth, and senior programs over events.

Director Ferrell noted that decisions are driven by the Parks Master Plan and community input. She acknowledged the life cycle of programs and events, mentioning adjustments based on feedback. Director Ferrell highlighted the variety of events, including smaller scale ones like paddle trips and adult programming. She stressed the importance of community feedback for continuous improvement.

Chairman Schnetzer shared observations regarding the discussion on the farmers market, drawing parallels with the city's involvement in the swimming pool business. He noted the potential financial implications of taking on such initiatives. He asked Director Ferrell about the fee structure associated with smaller events.

Director Ferrell confirmed that there are fees associated with certain events, such as paddling events, based on the pricing policy. She mentioned the variation in fees depending on the nature and benefit of the event to the community. When asked about the potential offset of the new position through fee revenue, Ferrell hesitated to provide a high-level percentage without a detailed analysis.

Chairman Schnetzer inquired about the potential consequences if the proposed position were not funded.

Director Ferrell expressed concerns about the supervisor's ability to effectively perform their duties without adequate support. She emphasized the importance of feeling supported and hinted at potential limitations in maintaining the current level of excellence without additional resources.

Chairman Schnetzer sought the opinion of the Council regarding the funding of the Recreation Coordinator 2 position under Parks & Recreation, noting the positive sentiment expressed by at least one council member.

Vice President Weaver expressed agreement with Councilmember Padova's perspective and emphasized the need for increased coordination with external entities. He acknowledged potential staffing challenges and indicated

support for the proposal to alleviate such stress.

Chairman Schnetzer noted the lack of a majority consensus on the matter and suggested the possibility of revisiting the proposal for supplemental funding in 2024. He confirmed with the Council if this seemed like a viable path forward, receiving nods of agreement.

Senior Director Vollmer confirmed the understanding and noted the deferral of the Recreation Coordinator 2 position for the time being.

Chairman Schnetzer opened discussion on the Project Administrator 1 position in Parks and Recreation.

Senior Director Vollmer provided additional information on the need for the Project Administrator 1 position, emphasizing the management of \$8 million in capital funds. She discussed the importance of having a designated person on-site during construction to ensure contractors adhere to the terms outlined in the contract with the city. She also highlighted the risk of contractors cutting corners in the absence of dedicated oversight.

Councilmember McGregor raised a question regarding the \$1.3 million allocated in 2022 and \$3 million in 2023, seeking clarification on their status.

Senior Director Schultz explained that the funds from 2022 are in progress, possibly in the design phase or facing delays. He clarified the roles of project managers and administrators, illustrating the need for the Project Administrator 1 position to ensure effective oversight of construction projects. Schultz highlighted examples of issues that arise, emphasizing the importance of dedicated personnel to handle them. He mentioned instances of grants and compliance work that the new position would address.

Chairman Schnetzer shared a historical perspective on the city's playground funding and replacement cycles, expressing sympathy for the backlog and the desire to catch up. He raised a question about whether the proposed Project Administrator 1 position is driven by a need to catch up over the next five years or if it is seen as a necessary long-term position for the next 20 years.

Senior Director Schultz responded that the proposed position is envisioned as a 20-year position and not solely driven by the need to catch up in the short term. He highlighted the differences between Parks projects and infrastructure projects managed by engineering, emphasizing the ongoing need for inspection and project management in the Parks department, making this position essential for the long term.

Councilmember McGregor noted the importance of having someone inspect and ensure the proper execution of projects, especially considering the deferred maintenance in the past. She emphasized the need to spend money effectively on projects to address the backlog.

Chairman Schnetzer sought consensus from the Council regarding the necessity of the Project Administrator 1 position for inspecting and overseeing projects. He acknowledged the agreement through nodding heads. Senior Director Vollmer confirmed acknowledgment and understanding of the consensus on the need for the Project Administrator 1 position.

Chairman Schnetzer moved on to the Finance Administrative Coordinator position and deferred the IT Support Specialist position without the need for further debate.

Senior Director Vollmer provided detailed information about the Finance Administrative Coordinator position, emphasizing the crucial role it plays in supporting various initiatives and programs within the city. She highlighted the success of a similar role, the Risk and Safety Administrator, in enhancing the risk and liability insurance program and implementing the city's first safety program. Vollmer described how the new position would assist in managing claims below a certain threshold and handling various administrative tasks related to the program. She further discussed the involvement of the position in strategic planning, sustainability efforts, and training programs, providing essential administrative support. Additionally, Vollmer mentioned the ongoing technology implementations, including the migration of public records, IT inventory management, and other system upgrades, which require support. Regarding accounts payable/receivable, Vollmer emphasized the role in managing financial aspects across departments, including HR, IT, Finance, DAS, and capital projects. Further, she highlighted the time-consuming nature of budget monitoring, including the city's professional development and training programs and discussed the responsibilities related to serving as a records officer and monitoring contracts under various city departments. Lastly, Vollmer described the need to manage citywide office supply accounts.

Chairman Schnetzer directed a question to Senior Director Vollmer about the consequences if the Finance Administrative Coordinator position doesn't get funded, seeking clarification for the council's due diligence.

Senior Director Vollmer outlined the potential impact of not funding the Finance Administrative Coordinator position, emphasizing the strain on system management and updates, the backlog of training requests, and the need for efficient administration of the risk and liability insurance program. She highlighted how the absence of this position would distribute administrative tasks among existing staff, affecting their ability to focus on core responsibilities.

Chairman Schnetzer sought the opinion of the council on the matter, asking if they are in favor or against funding the particular item under discussion.

President Renner expressed inclination towards supporting the proposal, indicating a positive stance.

Chairman Schnetzer acknowledged the response from President Renner,

noting a few heads nodding in agreement and noted that it was sufficient for a consensus.

Chairman Schnetzer provided a recap of the discussions and decisions made during the meeting, summarizing the key points for clarity. He mentioned specific budget adjustments and changes, including the exclusion of the leaf collection program, reduction of the Action Sports Park appropriation, elimination of the IT specialist position, exclusion of the Park Coordinator 2 position, and the removal of the Marketing and Communication Specialist position. He requested correction if anyone had different information. There were none.

Director Bury informed the Council about additional items from the staff that have been identified since the budget was initially presented. She mentioned that these items would be included in the upcoming revisions. Director Bury assured the Council that, as in previous years, she would provide the original budget request along with all the changes incorporated to arrive at the final budget number.

Recommendation: Second Reading/Adoption on Regular Agenda on 12/18/2023 with consideration of an amendment for substituting Exhibit A.

C. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Finance Committee, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 10:33 p.m.

Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

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

Michael Schnetzer