



**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*

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Monday, November 25, 2024

7:00 PM

City Hall, Council Chambers

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**A. CALL TO ORDER:**

*Vice President of Council Trenton I. Weaver, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. The agenda was published on November 22, 2024. All members were present for the meeting. There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.*

**B. 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

**Discussion on Internal Review Board**

Senior Deputy Director of Administrative Services, Corey Wybensinger, addressed questions regarding changes to the Water and Sewer Internal Board of Review. The proposed amendments included shifting the chairperson role from the Director of Public Service to the Mayor or a designated representative. Wybensinger explained that the change aimed to create an additional layer of impartiality, ensuring that the individual who initially denied an appeal would not chair the subsequent review. Wybensinger stated that the current board comprises the chairperson and two appointees, historically long-serving residents of Gahanna. Moving forward, the chairperson, now the Mayor or a designee, would appoint two additional members. These appointees could continue to include residents, but the City may also consider internal staff members with relevant expertise. The board's focus would remain on individuals familiar with utility systems, rates, and adjustments.



Councilmember Renner inquired about the board's composition and whether formal documentation outlined the review process. Wybensinger noted that the board currently lacks formalized agendas and meeting procedures, although summaries of adjustments are reported to the Council as required by code. Efforts are underway to create a more structured process, including assigning a secretary to manage agendas and minutes. Renner sought clarification on the appeals process, noting that residents escalate issues to the Director of Public Service before proceeding to the review board. Wybensinger explained that customer service staff and the department director handle initial resolutions, with the supervisor authorized to address minor issues under certain guidelines. If unresolved, residents can submit an appeals form to trigger a review by the board. Wybensinger acknowledged the need for a revised appeals form and emphasized improved communication with residents regarding the status of their appeals. He confirmed that while the board does not meet on a set schedule, it convenes as needed to address appeals, with timelines established to ensure timely resolutions. Renner expressed support for involving residents on the board to maintain impartiality and ensure that appointees understand the real-world implications of utility billing concerns. Wybensinger noted that the City aims to expedite reviews and adhere to timelines specified in the code. He reiterated that the process would be formalized to improve efficiency and transparency, with better tracking of appeals and communication with residents.

#### **Discussion on Water and Sewer Billing Processes**

Councilmember Renner initiated discussion regarding water and sewer billing issues raised by residents, particularly regarding estimated bills. Renner noted that current bills do not indicate whether a reading is an estimate or an actual read, which has caused confusion. Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger confirmed that there is currently no clear indicator on the bills for estimated readings, though the utility system tracks this information. He committed to reviewing this issue with the City's billing vendor, SmartBill, and addressing it during the planned bill reformatting process.

Councilmember McGregor added that she had spoken with the water billing supervisor who indicated that reformatting of bills to include this information is already in progress.

Councilmember Renner emphasized that residents can verify their meter readings directly, provided the meter is functional. Wybensinger noted that some meters may require replacement due to communication errors or being non-functional, which has contributed to the issuance of estimated bills. He acknowledged that replacing dead meters is a priority and that the pandemic had delayed these efforts.

#### **Discussion on Improvements to Appeals Process**

President Bowers followed up on the status of amendments to the water and sewer appeals process, including timelines for resolving complaints. Wybensinger explained that the current process is being reviewed and



formalized to improve efficiency and transparency. He indicated that the department aims to update procedures, appeals forms, and timelines by the end of the first quarter of the coming year. He acknowledged that some appeals have been pending for over a year due to staff turnover and procedural gaps. Bowers requested clarification on whether timelines for appeals are codified in City ordinances or purely administrative policies. Wybensinger agreed to provide additional details to ensure Councilmembers have a comprehensive understanding of the process. Wybensinger highlighted that 100% staff turnover in the Public Service Department in this area over the past two years, including at the director and operational levels, has contributed to delays. He noted that the customer service supervisor, Derek Casper, has been instrumental in identifying areas for improvement and making practical recommendations. The department has also expanded staffing and transformed its operations, leading to increased efficiencies. Renner shared positive feedback about Casper's performance, noting that residents appreciate his efforts and that he appears committed to addressing issues despite frustrations with the current process.

President Bowers and Councilmember Renner both expressed their gratitude to Wybensinger, Casper, and the entire staff for their dedication to improving operations. Bowers commended Wybensinger for his transparency and responsiveness, noting the importance of addressing operational challenges. Renner echoed this sentiment, expressing confidence in the administration's efforts to improve processes and resolve resident concerns. The council recognized the importance of continued improvements in utility billing and appeals processes and thanked staff for their ongoing work.

#### **Discussion on Sewer and Utility Rates**

Councilmember Renner moved discussion to upcoming utility rate increases, particularly focusing on the City's approach compared to Columbus' 6% increase in sanitary rates. Renner noted Gahanna's proposed 12% increase for sanitary sewer rates and sought clarification on the reasoning behind the difference. Deputy Director Wybensinger explained that Gahanna is employing a multi-year, holistic approach to rate adjustments rather than reacting annually to Columbus' changes. In the prior year, Gahanna prioritized water rate increases to address operational and capital funding gaps, which resulted in no increase to the sanitary sewer rates. The proposed 12% increase for 2025 reflects a two-year catch-up for sanitary rates while ensuring long-term stability. Renner expressed satisfaction that there would be no proposed water rate increase for 2025. Wybensinger attributed this to the higher 7% water rate increase implemented last year, which addressed funding needs for water operations and capital improvements. Renner asked about the average household water usage and how the increases would affect residents. Wybensinger confirmed that the City uses 4,000 gallons per month as the benchmark for calculating the impact on the average family of four. He noted that households with lower usage, such as those billed at the minimum, would see smaller increases.

#### **Discussion Storm Sewer Rate Increase & Future Rate Increases**



Councilmember Renner inquired about the storm sewer rate increase and its justification. Wybensinger explained that the storm fund is used for both operations and capital improvements, and the increase addresses both preventive maintenance and capital needs. The City is prioritizing preventive maintenance programs, including a \$1.25 million CCTV initiative to evaluate the storm system and replacement of critical sections. He noted that Gahanna's storm rates have historically been lower than neighboring communities.

Councilmember Renner also raised concerns about long-term rate increases, referencing Columbus' projections of significant increases through 2032. He asked if Gahanna had conducted similar long-term planning. Wybensinger stated that the City had worked with Baker Tilly in 2021 to create a six-year rate study, which was implemented in 2024. He emphasized the City's proactive approach to maintaining sufficient fund balances and leveraging Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds and grants, such as a recent \$999,000 OPWC grant and loan, to minimize rate impacts on residents. Renner inquired about the City's plan to communicate with residents regarding the rate increases. Wybensinger emphasized the importance of transparency and explained that the City's message focuses on the reality that utility costs are rising and the efforts being made to minimize the financial burden on residents. He highlighted the City's use of external funding sources, such as TIF funds and grants, to mitigate increases.

**Recommendation: Second Reading/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 12/2/2024.**

[2024-0236](#)

Annual Report to Council - 919.06 Water & Sewer Review Board Hearings 2020 and 2021

Vice President Weaver referred to attachments regarding hearings from 2020 and 2021 and asked if there were any questions.

President Bowers clarified the importance of maintaining a record and asked if these reports had been previously provided to Council. Senior Deputy Director Corey Wybensinger responded that the reports were requested but, due to staff transitions, he could not confirm if they had been shared with the Council Office at the time.

Clerk of Council Jeremy VanMeter confirmed that a review of Legistar filings revealed the most recent reports on file were submitted in 2020 for calendar year 2019 hearings. The 2020 and 2021 reports were not previously included in the City's legislative recordkeeping system.

President Bowers noted that the 2020 and 2021 reports were now available for the first time, emphasizing the importance of including these reports in the City Council's recordkeeping for preservation. VanMeter acknowledged this and agreed to ensure proper filing. President Bowers expressed appreciation to Deputy Director Wybensinger for following up on these items.

**C. ITEMS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGINEERING:**



[MT-0017-2024](#)

A MOTION AUTHORIZING THE DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING TO BID CONTRACT FOR THE 2025 STREET & SIDEWALK MAINTENANCE PROGRAM (ST-1114)

Director of Engineering Tom Komlanc presented three items to the Council. The first item involved requesting permission to bid for the annual street and sidewalk maintenance program for 2025. He provided a map outlining the streets slated for maintenance and areas designated for sidewalk repairs.

Councilmember Schnetzer inquired about the "preservation sealer" indicated in purple on the map, asking if it was the same as slurry seal. Director Komlanc clarified that it was not and explained that the sealer is an asphalt rejuvenating agent applied two to three years after paving to extend pavement longevity. He further clarified that streets marked for crack sealing would also receive micro-surfacing treatment. Councilmember Schnetzer observed that there appeared to be significantly more areas marked in purple than green on the map and asked if this reflected the street cycle or a shift in approach. Director Komlanc explained that the purple areas represented maintenance from previous years and that the preservation sealer was significantly less expensive per square yard compared to rebuilding or overlaying. He reiterated the cost-effectiveness of the program, noting the different tiers of maintenance.

Vice President Weaver expressed appreciation for the program and the efforts of the engineering staff. He specifically noted the inclusion of Deer Run in the upcoming maintenance, highlighting its need for attention and thanking the Department for addressing it.

**Recommendation: Adoption on Consent Agenda on 12/2/2024.**

[MT-0018-2024](#)

A MOTION AUTHORIZING THE DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING TO BID CONTRACT FOR THE 2025 SIDEWALK LOOKBACK PROGRAM (ST-1115)

Director of Engineering Tom Komlanc presented a request for permission to bid on the Lookback Program, aimed at addressing sidewalks from street reconstruction and maintenance projects from 2021 and 2022. The program includes returning to areas previously identified for maintenance to perform needed repairs for sidewalks.

President Bowers asked for an estimate of how much of the overall Lookback Program this request encompasses. Director Komlanc estimated that it represented approximately 25% of the total identified program area for the three-year period. President Bowers further inquired whether the program might accelerate in future years or pick up additional work, particularly if favorable bids were received. Director Komlanc explained that while favorable bids could allow for some expansion, limitations within the procurement process restrict extensions to about 10-15% of the scope. He also noted that any expansion would require contractors who are willing and able to take on additional work. President Bowers thanked Director Komlanc for providing the context and information.

**Recommendation: Adoption on Consent Agenda on 12/2/2024.**



[RES-0044-2024](#) A RESOLUTION TO DECLARE THE NECESSITY AND INTENT FOR ACQUIRING EASEMENTS FOR THE 2025 STREET AND SIDEWALK REBUILD PROGRAM WITH WATERLINE IMPROVEMENTS (ST-1116)

Director of Engineering Tom Komlanc requested a resolution of necessity for the 2025 Street Rebuild and Waterline Replacement project. The project includes work on Laura Drive, where proper drainage will require securing four permanent easements for stormwater management. The resolution would authorize an appraiser and negotiator to discuss fair market value and settlement arrangements with affected property owners to proceed with the project.

Councilmember Padova inquired about the rebuild of Rocky Fork Drive, which had been delayed previously due to the roadway's topography and challenges with sidewalk placement. Director Komlanc explained that design professionals at GPD had developed a solution to elevate the street's profile grade, accommodating sidewalks and transitions for the approximately 14 driveways in the area. The rebuild will also include waterline replacement. Komlanc confirmed that sidewalks would be installed on both sides of Rocky Fork Drive as part of the project.

**Recommendation: Introduction/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 12/2/2024.**

**D. ITEMS FROM THE COUNCIL OFFICE:**

[2024-0235](#) Ohio Division of Liquor Control Notice to Legislative Authority - All Class C and D Renewals Requiring Notice of Objections and Requests for Hearings by January 2, 2025

Clerk of Council Jeremy VanMeter informed the Council of the upcoming renewals for Class C and Class D liquor permits as notified by the Ohio Division of Liquor Control. Attached to the agenda was a report listing the various permit classes, their locations, and the owners of the permits. After consulting with the Division of Police, Mr. VanMeter stated that there were no objections to any of the renewals. He reminded the Council that the Division of Liquor Control requires notification of any hearing requests by January 2, 2025.

Vice President Weaver acknowledged the report and noted no objections from the Council.

[ORD-0089-2024](#) 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 noted this item that had previously undergone its first reading. He opened the floor to President Bowers for any comments. With no additional remarks from her or other Councilmembers, he asked for the Council's preference on placing the item on the regular agenda or the consent agenda. He noted the item had been discussed in a previous Committee.



[Clerk's note: see ORD-0088-2024]. After brief discussion, the Council agreed to include the item on the consent agenda, with no objections raised.

**Recommendation: Second Reading/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 12/2/2024.**

**E. ITEMS FROM THE MAYOR'S OFFICE:**

[RES-0045-2024](#) A JOINT RESOLUTION AND PROCLAMATION DESIGNATING DECEMBER 2024 AS "NATIONAL IMPAIRED DRIVING PREVENTION MONTH" IN THE CITY OF GAHANNA

Mayor Jadwin introduced a joint resolution and proclamation to recognize December as National Impaired Driving Prevention Month. She noted that this would mark the third or fourth year of issuing the proclamation and emphasized the value of collaborating with Council to unify and strengthen the message. The Mayor highlighted the dedication of Gahanna's police officers, specifically recognizing Officer Jeff Hoffman for his two consecutive years of accolades from Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD). Mayor Jadwin remarked on the unfortunate prevalence of impaired driving and reiterated the importance of initiatives to raise awareness and enhance community safety.

President Bowers added a personal perspective, sharing her husband's experiences as a paramedic with Delaware County for over 20 years. She recounted a recent shift during which he encountered multiple fatalities caused by impaired driving. President Bowers underscored the significant trauma endured not only by victims and their families but also by first responders tasked with delivering devastating news and coping with its emotional toll. She emphasized the importance of supporting police officers and first responders as they handle these difficult responsibilities, particularly during the holiday season.

**Recommendation: Introduction/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 12/2/2024.**

**F. ITEMS FROM THE CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE:**

[ORD-0092-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE TO ADOPT AMENDMENTS TO TRAFFIC CODE SECTIONS OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF GAHANNA; TO PROVIDE FOR PENALTIES; TO PROVIDE FOR CODIFICATION; TO PROVIDE FOR SEVERABILITY; TO REPEAL CONFLICTING ORDINANCES; TO PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE DATE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

City Attorney Tamilarasan provided an overview of a supplemental traffic code revision ordinance. She explained that the ordinance primarily involved cleanup work, with the most substantive updates addressing slow-moving vehicles, which had been reorganized into five separate code sections. Additionally, updates were made to the definition section along with some terminology changes and minor revisions. Attorney Tamilarasan noted that the revisions were part of an annual update conducted by Municode. She clarified that the updates presented earlier in the year were based on 2023 revisions, and this supplemental update addressed another set of revisions



received during the current year. Moving forward, the City Attorney anticipates resuming a regular schedule of one update per year.

**Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 12/2/2024;  
Second Reading/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 12/16/2024.**

**G. ITEMS FROM THE SENIOR DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES:**

[ORD-0090-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING THE SALARIES FOR PERSONNEL OF THE CITY OF GAHANNA FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2025, THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2025; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY

HR Manager Ben Nolan presented the 2025 salary ordinance for unclassified personnel of the City of Gahanna. He explained that the ordinance is prepared annually prior to the adoption of the following year's budget and establishes salaries for non-union personnel, aligning with adjustments for the upcoming year. The ordinance was requested as an emergency measure. Nolan discussed the primary changes for the 2025 ordinance, which include the addition of classification titles and pay grades based on recommendations from the staffing study, the removal of job classifications no longer in use, and a proposed 4% pay increase for employees not in the step program, effective during the first full pay period after their anniversary date. He also mentioned clarifying language for part-time employees who have reached the maximum of their pay grade, aligning the terminology with that used for full-time employees. Nolan invited questions regarding the salary ordinance.

Vice President Weaver expressed appreciation for the work involved in preparing the ordinance, emphasizing its importance in retaining and attracting top talent to the City.

President Bowers noted that the ordinance should not be placed on the consent agenda due to the inclusion of additional positions in table two. She pointed out that the ordinance might require amendments if budget discussions lead to changes in the requested positions. It was decided that the ordinance would be scheduled for the regular agenda on December 16th to accommodate potential amendments.

**Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 12/2/2024;  
Second Reading/Adoption with Emergency on Regular Agenda on 12/16/2024.**

[ORD-0091-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING THE BENEFITS FOR PERSONNEL OF THE CITY OF GAHANNA, EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2025; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY

The 2025 benefits ordinance was presented by HR Manager Ben Nolan as a companion to the 2025 salary ordinance for unclassified personnel. He outlined modifications to the ordinance, including minor language changes, the removal of sick leave tiers in favor of a standard accrual rate for all years of service, the replacement of special major medical leave with short-term disability, the addition of paid parental leave for new parents, an increase in the safety footwear reimbursement from \$100 to \$150, and the introduction of



reimbursements for specialized footwear for employees requiring it for their roles.

President Bowers inquired about amendments to the sick and injury leave policies, particularly sections two and seven of Article 7. Senior Director of Administrative Services Miranda Vollmer explained that the accrual table had been standardized to align with the Ohio Revised Code, providing all years of service with 120 hours of sick leave annually. She noted that the short-term disability program now offers a benefit of up to 13 weeks, paid at 60% of weekly wages, and allows employees to supplement their leave to maintain full pay. Vollmer confirmed that sick leave could accrue without a cap and that employees could choose to use sick leave or short-term disability for qualifying incidents, depending on their preference. Bowers clarified that sick leave was paid at the employee's current hourly rate and asked if employees could combine sick leave with short-term disability for extended absences. Vollmer confirmed that employees could do so to retain sick leave for future use or to supplement their pay above the short-term disability benefit cap. She explained that the City also covers employee and employer pension contributions during short-term disability.

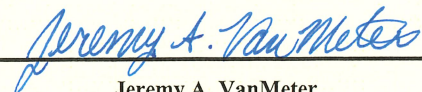
Councilmember Jones commended the addition of paid parental leave, which had not been previously offered. She also inquired about the differences between the former special major medical leave and the new short-term disability program. Vollmer explained that the former required a minimum tenure and could only be used once in a five-year period, whereas the short-term disability program is available from the first month of employment.

Councilmember Padova expressed appreciation for the inclusion of paid parental leave, emphasizing its importance in attracting talent to the City. Both she and Jones commended the team for implementing these beneficial changes.

**Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 12/2/2024;  
Second Reading/Adoption with Emergency on Regular Agenda on 12/16/2024.**

#### H. ADJOURNMENT:

*With no further business before the Committee of the Whole, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 7:58 p.m.*

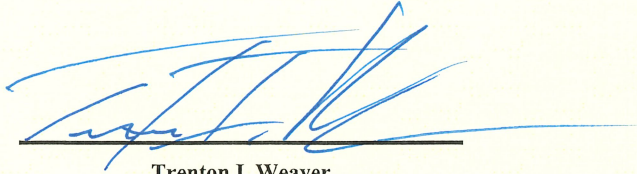


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Jeremy A. VanMeter  
Clerk of Council



APPROVED by the Committee of the Whole, this  
2nd day of Dec. 2024.



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Trenton I. Weaver  
Chair