



City of Gahanna

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

Meeting Minutes Committee of the Whole

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

Jeremy A. VanMeter, Clerk of Council

Monday, April 6, 2026

City Hall, Council Chambers

Immediately following the regular City Council meeting beginning at 7:00 PM

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Gahanna City Council met for Committee of the Whole on Monday, April 6, 2026, in Council Chambers. Vice President of Council Jamille Jones, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:51 p.m. The agenda was published on Friday, April 3, 2026. All members were present for the meeting. There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

B. ITEMS FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION:

[CC-0001-2026](#)

To recommend approval to City Council, changes to Part Eleven - Zoning Code, Chapters 1103, 1105, 1107, 1109, 1111, 1113, 1117, and 1123 of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna.

Director of Planning Michael Blackford addressed the Council and stated that he would present proposed code changes. He explained that he would provide a brief overview of approximately 12 sections of code that changed. He stated that although the changes were important to move forward, staff did not request a waiver or emergency and remained willing to return in May 2026, to allow Council additional time for review. Director Blackford reminded Council that the new zoning code reached its two-year anniversary and noted that this marked the second set of changes presented, with the first occurring in the fourth quarter of 2024. He stated that the limited number and nature of the changes indicated that the zoning code aligned well with the community and development community, as most changes involved cleanup and clarification rather than significant revisions. Director Blackford explained that the proposed

changes fell into three categories: old code, revised code, and new code. He stated that the old code category involved restoring language inadvertently omitted from the previous zoning code. He provided an example involving prohibited signs, where the omission of the phrase “attention getting devices” excluded items such as inflatable tube figures commonly used for advertising, which contributed to distracted driving. He stated that staff proposed to restore this language to maintain the previous standard. He explained that revised code changes involved clarifications and organizational improvements to the 2024 code. He provided examples, including relocating “portable modular structures” from the temporary section to the appropriate alphabetical section and adding electric vehicle charging stations to the use table for clarity, noting that such uses were already permitted as accessory uses in all zoning districts.

Director Blackford then described a proposed new code section affecting the Creekside Mixed-Use (CMU) district. He identified the geographic boundaries of the district and stated that staff did not propose to change those boundaries. Instead, he explained that staff proposed to modify how projects within the district were evaluated in order to better align zoning with the recently adopted strategic plan and economic development strategy. He stated that existing zoning already aligned well with prior plans, but emphasized that plans contained broader goals and aspirations, while the zoning code imposed specific requirements. He explained that staff sought to incorporate plan-based criteria into project evaluation without making those elements mandatory requirements in the code. He stated that when projects advanced desired goals, such as mixed-use development or structured parking, developers often required variances from strict zoning standards. Director Blackford explained that the current variance process limited consideration primarily to property-specific hardships, which made it difficult to approve variances for high-quality projects that advanced community goals. He referenced examples such as the library and City Hall projects, which required multiple variances despite their positive contributions to the built environment. He stated that the proposed changes would allow the Planning Commission to evaluate requests for zoning relief based on how well a project advanced the vision and goals for the district. He added that this approach would prioritize project quality over strict adherence to code and would better integrate land use plans into decision-making. He also stated that the change would reduce

reliance on variances that could unintentionally establish precedents and instead focus evaluation on the merits of each project. Director Blackford concluded by noting that his presentation provided only a brief overview and offered to return later or answer any questions from the Council.

Questions from the Council

President Weaver stated that he watched the Planning Commission discussion and asked Director Blackford to address the proposed setback change from 10 feet to 5 feet. He asked how many variance requests staff received for reducing the setback from 10 feet to 5 feet and noted that he did not oppose the 5-foot requirement. Director Blackford responded that the proposed change involved the R1 zoning district for accessory structures, typically sheds, where the current code required a 10-foot setback. He explained that the current R1 district did not align exactly with the previous SF1 and SF2 districts, one of which required a 10-foot setback and the other 5 feet, and staff originally selected 10 feet. He estimated that staff received approximately six variance requests for reduced setbacks, all of which were approved. He stated that this volume and approval rate suggested that a lower minimum standard, such as 5 feet, might be more appropriate, though some cases might warrant 3 feet or 7 feet. He added that most other zoning districts required a 5-foot setback and noted that the Planning Commission specifically requested this change. President Weaver asked whether staff often received requests for even greater reductions, such as 2.5 feet. Director Blackford replied that staff did receive requests for zero setbacks and typically advised against placing structures directly on property lines while encouraging a balanced approach. He stated that the proposed changes remained modular and could be adjusted or removed if Council had concerns, emphasizing that he did not want future regret regarding these decisions. President Weaver stated that he sought to understand the impact of variance requests handled by staff and commented that a 10-foot setback in the R1 district seemed excessive for backyard sheds. Director Blackford agreed, noting that residents often did not favor that requirement.

Councilmember McGregor stated that a 5-foot setback seemed too close and suggested a compromise of 7 or 8 feet. She observed that many variance requests stemmed from unique property conditions, such

as hills, corner lots, or drainage issues, rather than standard rectangular lots. Director Blackford acknowledged Councilmember McGregor's point but stated that some conditions might be overstated to justify variance requests. He stated that many requests stemmed from a desire to maximize usable yard space. He noted that a 7.5-foot setback represented a common standard in many zoning codes and could reduce the number of variance requests. He added that Council could remove the change and address requests individually if necessary, noting that while the city processed a relatively high number of variances compared to other communities, handling one every few months did not create a significant burden.

Councilmember Schnetzer thanked Director Blackford and stated that he reviewed the redline copy, which spanned nearly 70 pages. He noted that he had not completed a detailed review and asked about several references to funeral homes, requesting clarification on why the code specifically addressed that use. Director Blackford explained that staff received approximately three inquiries regarding funeral homes and discovered that the current zoning code did not list them, although the previous code included them with a specific parking calculation. He stated that during the transition to the new zoning code, staff consolidated use references and removed many specific classifications tied to national systems, which resulted in the omission of funeral homes. Director Blackford explained that without a specific reference, the code either prohibited the use or required him to assign it to a comparable category. He stated that funeral homes aligned with several zoning districts, including office, general commercial, restricted institutional, and innovation and manufacturing, which reflected their placement under the previous code. He emphasized that the proposed change would not introduce funeral homes into new areas but would clarify that they constituted an allowed use. He added that one facility located in the city prior to the adoption of the new code and that staff received at least two additional inquiries, likely in the Taylor Station Road area, though those projects did not proceed. Councilmember Schnetzer acknowledged the explanation and thanked Director Blackford.

Vice President Jones stated that zoning changes required a Public Hearing and proposed scheduling it for April 27, 2026. Director Blackford informed the Council that he would not attend the April 27, 2026, meeting because he would attend the National Planning

Conference, where he would present on the city's zoning code changes as part of a panel discussion. He stated that he would share his experience and noted that the process produced positive outcomes. Vice President Jones wished him well and stated that Council would proceed with the Public Hearing on April 27, 2026, which already received public notice. She proposed conducting the First Reading that evening and scheduling the adoption on May 4, 2026. She asked Councilmembers whether they preferred to bring the matter back to Committee of the Whole, due to a full agenda that night. President Weaver stated that he preferred to continue the item if Director Blackford would be absent on April 27, 2026. Director Blackford stated that he agreed with continuing the item and reiterated that while the changes should move forward, he remained available to return in May 2026, to continue the discussion. He noted that May 4 or May 18, 2026, could serve as possible dates. Vice President Jones asked whether the Council wished to proceed with the First Reading on April 27, 2026, and delay the Second Reading. President Weaver suggested holding the Public Hearing and First Reading on April 27, 2026, then discussing the item at the Committee of the Whole on May 11, 2026, when Director Blackford would be present, followed by a Second Reading and potential Adoption on May 18, 2026. Councilmember Bowers asked for clarification regarding the timing of the Second Reading and whether Council would need to table it if they followed that schedule. She suggested an alternative of holding the Public Hearing on April 27, 2026, First Reading on May 4, 2026, and Adoption on May 18, 2026. President Weaver acknowledged Clerk VanMeter, who indicated agreement with the proposed schedule. Vice President Jones asked for clarification regarding the agreement. Clerk VanMeter confirmed that Council could hold the Public Hearing on April 27, 2026, and conduct the First Reading on May 4, 2026. Councilmember Bowers stated that this approach would eliminate the need to postpone the vote and would allow Council to proceed with a standard Second Reading and Adoption on May 18, 2026. Vice President Jones confirmed that the item would appear before the Committee of the Whole on May 11, 2026, and thanked those present.

Recommendation: Public Hearing Scheduled on Regular Agenda on 4/27/2026; Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 5/4/2026; Return to Committee of the Whole for Further Discussion 5/11/2026; Second Reading/Vote on Regular Agenda on 5/18/2026.

C. ITEMS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGINEERING:

ORD-0013-2026 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH DECKER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY FOR THE 2026 SIDEWALK LOOKBACK PROGRAM (ST-1123/TR-CM-03)

Senior Director of Operations Kevin Schultz stated that he would present two items before Council, beginning with the 2026 Sidewalk Lookback Program. He stated that bids were opened and reviewed on March 17, 2026, and that staff received a total of four bids. He explained that the situation resembled a recent item in which the apparent low bidder was deemed non-responsive and non-responsible. He stated that staff determined the bidder was non-responsive because the bid package lacked required financial information, which automatically disqualified the bid. He further stated that staff determined the bidder was non-responsible due to the limited scope and breadth of the company's prior work, noting that the company was only incorporated for one year and had not demonstrated experience comparable to the project requirements. Director Schultz stated that staff recommended proceeding with the second lowest bidder, Decker Construction, as the lowest responsive and responsible bidder. He stated that staff requested authorization for Mayor Jadwin to enter into a contract with Decker Construction in the amount of approximately \$663,000, which included a 10 percent contingency. Director Schultz also noted that the project would include a separate construction administration and inspection contract outside the base scope, bringing the total project cost to approximately \$738,000. He stated that the administration requested an ordinance authorizing Mayor Jadwin to enter into a contract with Decker Construction for the 2026 Sidewalk Lookback Program.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 4/27/2026; Second Reading/Vote on Consent Agenda on 5/4/2026.

ORD-0014-2026 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH DECKER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY FOR THE 2026 STREET AND SIDEWALK MAINTENANCE PROGRAM (ST-1122/TR-CM-01)

Director Schultz stated that the next item involved the 2026 Street and Sidewalk Maintenance Program and the award of a contract. He stated that bids were opened on March 17, 2026, and that staff received a total of three bids. He explained that staff evaluated the bids and recommended authorizing Mayor Jadwin to enter into a contract with Decker Construction in the amount of approximately \$1,428,000 to complete the program. Director Schultz stated that, similar to the

previous item, the project would include a separate construction administration and inspection contract outside the base contract, estimated at approximately 10 percent of the contract total, bringing the overall project cost to about \$1.7 million. He stated that the administration requested an ordinance authorizing Mayor Jadwin to enter into a contract with Decker Construction for the 2026 Street and Sidewalk Maintenance Program.

**Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 4/27/2026;
Second Reading/Vote on Consent Agenda on 5/4/2026.**

D. ITEMS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE:

ORD-0015-2026 AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CITY OF GAHANNA CODIFIED ORDINANCE SECTION 133.02 - PURCHASING PROCEDURES

Finance Director Joann Bury introduced the first action item regarding revisions to the procurement ordinance. She recapped that on March 2, 2026, Council approved several updates, including mayoral authorization for executing contracts with City Attorney approval as to form, the addition of a pre-qualification process, acceptance of electronic notice for bids, and the establishment of retainage percentages aligned with the Ohio Revised Code. Director Bury stated that the current proposal represented a second set of requested changes. She explained that staff proposed cleanup language to remove references to federal uniform guidance where it no longer applied. She stated that staff reduced the small purchase threshold from \$250,000 to \$149,999. She added that staff included change order authorization for small purchases that exceeded that threshold. Director Bury further stated that staff set both competitive sealed bids and competitive proposals at \$150,000 and added corresponding change order language. She explained that, because the city no longer followed Ohio Revised Code 735, staff needed to establish procedures for handling change orders. She respectfully requested approval of the proposed amendments.

Vice President Jones asked whether the Council had any questions or discussion. She then thanked staff for prior discussions and review of the redline edits and stated that Council would place the item on the May 4, 2026, Consent Agenda. The ordinance would receive a First Reading on April 27, 2026, and a Second Reading on May 4, 2026.

**Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 4/27/2026;
Second Reading/Vote on Consent Agenda on 5/4/2026.**

ORD-0016-2026 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS; AND WAIVING SECOND READING - Capital Improvement Fund for Bond Interest Related to the Gahanna Civic Center Project

Finance Director Joann Bury presented a request for supplemental appropriations related to interest earned on bond proceeds for the 825 Tech Center Drive project. She explained that while the City of Gahanna awaited invoices, staff invested the bond proceeds without certainty regarding the timing of expenditures or future interest rate conditions, and therefore did not include an estimate of interest earnings in the original appropriation. She stated that arbitrage rules required the city to treat interest earned on bond proceeds the same as the proceeds themselves and to spend those funds within the same limitations. She reported that, as expenditures neared completion, staff estimated approximately \$3 million in interest earnings and requested appropriation of those funds to allow expenditure within arbitrage time constraints.

Councilmember Schnetzer stated that he had no concerns with the request and asked about the arbitrage rate. Director Bury responded that she believed the arbitrage yield was approximately 4.25 percent, though she noted she might be confusing it with the actual interest rate earned and offered to provide confirmation. Councilmember Schnetzer stated that his question was for informational purposes and asked whether Red Tree managed the investments to remain below the arbitrage rate. Director Bury stated that the city did not use Red Tree for investing the bond proceeds and instead placed the funds in STAR Ohio to maintain liquidity and stability, given uncertainty regarding the timing and size of payment applications. Councilmember Schnetzer acknowledged the explanation and concluded his questions.

Councilmember Bowers asked whether the city had earned significantly more interest than originally anticipated. Director Bury responded that original projections aligned with the \$3 million estimate but had initially projected slightly higher earnings. She explained that the city spent proceeds more quickly than expected and processed larger payment applications than originally modeled, which reduced the total interest earned.

Vice President Jones noted the waiver requested for the Second

Reading and recommended the ordinance to be placed on the Regular Agenda for April 27, 2026.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading with Waiver of Second Reading/Vote on Regular Agenda on 4/27/2026.

E. ITEMS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

ORD-0017-2026 AN ORDINANCE TO REPEAL ORD-0045-2021 RELATED TO TAX INCREMENT FINANCING FOR PROPERTY LOCATED IN THE CITY OF GAHANNA

Director of Economic Development Jeff Gottke described the requested ordinance as a minor cleanup for clarity in city records. He stated that Council authorized the addition of the Crescent property to the Central Park Tax Increment Financing (TIF) twice, once in 2018 and again in 2021, in connection with a development agreement. He explained that Franklin County had no record of receiving those applications and that they were not recognized. He stated that staff worked with the City Attorney to resolve the issue by submitting the application to the County to recognize the 2018 TIF, and the County acknowledged receipt and approved the settlement terms for the TIF funds. He stated that the remaining action involved repealing the 2021 TIF so future officials would not misinterpret it as the active legislation.

Vice President Jones asked City Attorney Tamilarasan if she had anything to add. City Attorney Tamilarasan stated that Director Gottke had fully summarized the matter and expressed her support for the legislation as a necessary step to clean up records. Vice President Jones asked for questions or discussion.

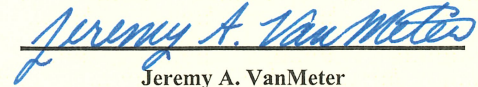
President Weaver asked how far back the County would honor the TIF and whether it would apply back to the 2018 ordinance. Director Gottke responded that the County applied a three-year look-back period from when improvements began and clarified that if no increment existed during a period, there would be nothing to collect.

Vice President Jones asked whether the delay in County recognition created any risk. Director Gottke confirmed that staff addressed the issue in time and that it created no effect. Vice President Jones stated that Council would place the item on the May 4, 2026, Consent Agenda.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 4/27/2026;
Second Reading/Vote on Consent Agenda on 5/4/2026.

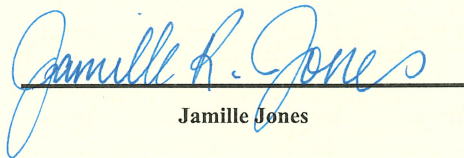
C. **ADJOURNMENT:**

With no further business before the Committee of the Whole, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:26 p.m.



Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

APPROVED by the Committee of the Whole, this
27th day of *April* 2026.



Jamille Jones