

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

Monday, January 13, 2025

7:00 PM

City Hall, Council Chambers

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Vice President of Council Trenton I. Weaver, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. The agenda was published on January 10, 2025. All members were present for the meeting. There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

B. ITEMS FROM THE SENIOR DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES:

1. Strategic Plan Update

[2025-0011](#)

Our Gahanna Strategic Plan Update 1.13.2025

Senior Director of Administrative Services, Miranda Vollmer, provided an update on the City of Gahanna's strategic planning process, currently in its first phase, which involves public engagement. She presented an overview of the 14-month planning timeline and explained that the initial round of engagement focuses on "Table Talks." These small, interactive group workshops are designed to gather input from residents, business owners, City employees, and frequent visitors to help shape Gahanna's vision for the next ten years.

Director Vollmer noted that Table Talks are typically held with groups of ten or fewer participants. For those unable to attend in person, an online survey replicates the table talk experience and allows participants to provide input at their convenience. Table Talk sessions are facilitated by steering committee members and City staff. In addition, three open-call sessions have been scheduled for January 16, 2025, from 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM, as well as on January 25 and 29, 2025, with sign-ups available at OurGahanna.com. Information about the survey and Table Talks has been shared via social media, City newsletters, and through direct invitations to board and commission members. A joint Table Talk for City Council and the Planning Commission will take place on January 21, 2025. Director Vollmer explained

that PlanningNEXT, the City's strategic planning consultant, will collect and analyze data from Table Talk sessions and surveys. They will provide updates to the steering committee in March, followed by a second round of engagement in April. She emphasized the importance of broad community participation to ensure a diverse range of input.

Councilmember Jones asked how diversity in participation is being ensured. Director Vollmer responded that the steering committee was intentionally selected by PlanningNEXT to reflect the City's demographics. Additionally, participants are asked to complete an anonymous demographic survey via a Quick Response code (QR code) at the end of each session, providing data to ensure representation.

Councilmember Renner inquired about promoting the online survey more broadly. Director Vollmer confirmed that the communications team already shared a social media post with survey details and encouraged further distribution to increase awareness.

Mayor Jadwin clarified that participants should either attend a Table Talk or complete the survey, as both formats cover the same material. Director Vollmer confirmed, noting that Table Talks are more interactive, while the survey provides a convenient alternative.

President Bowers asked for details about how PlanningNEXT will process data from the Table Talks. Director Vollmer explained that the data would be entered into a system to identify themes and trends. The steering committee will review this information to help shape the vision for Gahanna's future.

President Bowers also asked about the importance of participation. Director Vollmer emphasized that this engagement is critical to creating a unified vision for Gahanna. Input from those who live, work, and play in the city will help inform the strategic plan and ensure that all stakeholders are working toward common goals. She noted that the project aims to engage over 1,000 participants and urged everyone to contribute through a Table Talk or the survey.

Councilmember Jones raised additional questions about current participation levels and whether the timeline is flexible. Director Vollmer stated that participation levels were still low, with fewer than 100 responses so far, but noted that PlanningNEXT advised against concern due to recent holidays and weather disruptions. The timeline may be extended slightly into February 2025, to increase participation.

Councilmember Jones also asked about outreach to high school students or youth groups. Director Vollmer confirmed that outreach efforts include providing Table Talk materials and facilitating sessions for interested groups. She invited suggestions for additional groups to engage and announced plans to distribute survey postcards with QR codes at the Chamber of Commerce's annual luncheon and other community events.

C. ITEMS FROM THE COUNCIL OFFICE:

1. Council Communications - Newsletter Proposal

MT-0001-2025

A MOTION TO ADOPT A COUNCIL NEWSLETTER COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Jessica Hilts, Council Management Analyst for Communications and Research, addressed the Council, Mayor Jadwin, and City Attorney Tamilarasan to present a new initiative, a bimonthly Council newsletter. She explained that her role focuses on research and communication for the Council, and the idea for the newsletter grew from a need to better inform and connect community members with their representatives. She stated that the newsletter's goal is to highlight the Council's role in the legislative process, provide civic resources, and share opportunities for engagement. This initiative would complement existing City communications rather than duplicate efforts.

Ms. Hilts outlined the six key sections of the newsletter from the proof of concept:

1. **Legislative Highlights:** A summary of meetings and legislative initiatives over the previous two months, including hyperlinks to meeting recordings for further review.
2. **Member Spotlights:** Updates on Councilmember professional development and notable moments, such as ribbon cuttings and City events.
3. **From the Archives:** Highlights from preserved City records, offering a historical perspective on Gahanna's past.
4. **Community Highlights:** Updates on Councilmembers' activities in the community and news about upcoming events, such as an Empowering Women's Walk scheduled for February 2, 2025.
5. **In The Know:** Notifications of upcoming meetings and constituent hours to facilitate direct interactions with representatives.
6. **Contact Information:** Direct links to contact Councilmembers and staff.

Ms. Hilts emphasized that the newsletter would leverage existing resources, such as software, templates, and style guides, to create a polished and cost-effective digital publication. It would be distributed via email and featured prominently on the Council's pages of the City website to ensure accessibility and convenience. She noted that the project aligns with Council Office operations and existing resources, requiring no additional financial investment. The initiative was designed to establish a direct and dedicated line of communication between Councilmembers and the community. Ms. Hilts requested feedback and approval to move forward with the newsletter as a pilot program. The proof of concept would allow refinement of the process based on Council input. If successful, the newsletter could become a valuable tool for strengthening connections between the Council and the Gahanna community. She concluded by expressing confidence in the initiative's potential for positive impact and invited the Council's thoughts and input.

Vice President Weaver opened the discussion by thanking Ms. McGuire and Clerk VanMeter for their efforts and commending Ms. Hilts for the work involved in preparing the proposed Council newsletter. He invited questions and comments from his colleagues.

Councilmember Schnetzer expressed appreciation for the presentation and emphasized the importance of educating residents about government operations. He sought clarification on whether the newsletter would remain fully digital and if any additional costs were expected. Ms. Hilts confirmed that the newsletter would be entirely digital, utilizing existing City-owned software used for other newsletters, such as the Senior newsletter and Parks and Recreation newsletter. She explained that this approach aligns with sustainability and cost-efficiency goals, avoiding additional financial burdens.

Councilmember Jones thanked Ms. Hilts for the detailed presentation and mockup, then asked how the Council newsletter would integrate with individual Councilmembers' newsletters. Ms. Hilts explained that the Council newsletter is intended to capture and amplify the Council's collective voice rather than staff opinions. She noted that individual newsletters could continue to provide more detailed updates on specific member initiatives and could be cross-referenced in the Council newsletter and on the City's website to enhance connectivity.

Councilmember Jones inquired about metrics, such as open and click rates, to evaluate the newsletter's success. Ms. Hilts responded that the software includes tracking capabilities and noted that existing City newsletters show varied engagement rates. She indicated that the communications team could provide additional insights to refine the strategy.

Councilmember Jones asked what support Council could provide to ensure the newsletter's success. Ms. Hilts emphasized the importance of Councilmembers providing content to ensure balanced representation of all wards and at large members. She noted that this input would help highlight Council initiatives effectively and inclusively.

President Bowers asked about strategies for building the newsletter's audience and creating subscribers. Ms. Hilts suggested leveraging existing communication channels, such as individual newsletters, social media platforms, and Council meetings, to promote the newsletter. She proposed using QR codes at Council meetings, creating social media content for distribution, and incorporating links into current resources. She highlighted the importance of a multi-faceted approach and the potential for collaboration with the City's communications team to expand outreach efforts.

Councilmember Padova thanked Ms. Hilts for preparing the Council newsletter and complimented the layout and content, noting it effectively reflected Gahanna's past, present, and future. She inquired about the proposed timeline, asking if the newsletter for January and February would be published by the end of March. Ms. Hilts confirmed this timeline, explaining that it allows time to review the prior two-month period. She emphasized that

the pilot program would help refine the process, including determining whether the timeline could be condensed to better serve the community.

Councilmember Padova asked why the newsletter was proposed as bimonthly rather than quarterly or monthly. Ms. Hilts responded that monthly publication may be too ambitious for a new initiative, while quarterly publication might leave too much content to cover. She shared that the current pilot edition for January and February contained a wealth of information, with some items being cut due to space constraints. She noted that adjustments could be made based on the pilot program's results.

Mayor Jadwin commended Ms. Hilts for her efforts and recognized the significant work involved in preparing a newsletter, given her experience in overseeing the communications and marketing team. She asked how the Council newsletter would align with the City's existing communication efforts to ensure consistent messaging and avoid conflicts, especially for strategic communication plans. Ms. Hilts assured the Mayor that the newsletter would not serve as a source of breaking news but as a reflective and forward-looking publication. She emphasized that the Council Office works well with the City's marketing team, leveraging existing branding guidelines and resources. She described the newsletter as an opportunity to amplify Council's voice and complement the City's communication efforts rather than compete with them.

Councilmember Renner expressed his support for the newsletter's format and goals, praising the team-focused approach. He stated his preference that the newsletter exclusively represent the collective voice of Council, without including links to individual Councilmembers' newsletters.

Vice President Weaver commended the draft newsletter for its alignment with the City's branding and acknowledged the partnership with the communications and marketing team. He reiterated the importance of using multiple communication channels to meet residents where they are and emphasized that the newsletter would serve as an additional tool for engaging the community. Seeing no further questions or comments, Vice President Weaver confirmed that the item would be added to the Consent Agenda for the Regular Meeting scheduled for the following week.

Recommendation: Introduction/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 1/21/2025.

2. Honorary Resolutions for Introduction & Adoption January 21

RES-0001-2025

A JOINT RESOLUTION AND PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY, AND NATIONAL DAY OF SERVICE, JANUARY 20, 2025, IN THE CITY OF GAHANNA

President Bowers introduced a resolution recognizing Martin Luther King (MLK) Jr. Day and National Day of Service on January 20, 2025. She thanked Ms. Hilts for drafting the resolution and noted that there were no edits to the current draft. Mayor Jadwin requested that the resolution be presented as a joint resolution and proclamation, as she has issued an MLK Day

proclamation annually in the past. President Bowers agreed, stating that the item would be prepared for adoption the following week as a joint resolution and proclamation.

Recommendation: Introduction/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 1/21/2025.

RES-0002-2025

A JOINT RESOLUTION AND PROCLAMATION DESIGNATING JANUARY 2025 AS "CERVICAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH" IN THE CITY OF GAHANNA

President Bowers addressed Resolution 0002-2025, which recognizes January as Cervical Health Awareness Month. She shared that both she and Mayor Jadwin had personal connections to the issue, having lost loved ones to cervical cancer. President Bowers mentioned that the resolution was requested by The Crawford Crew and had her support as well as other Councilmembers'.

Councilmember McGregor proposed adding a "whereas" clause to the resolution, stating that the incidence of Human Papillomavirus Virus (HPV) among abstinent individuals is extremely low. She referenced the National Institute of Health as the source for this information and emphasized the importance of including it, particularly for younger audiences. While she had prepared the exact wording for the addition, she noted that it was left at home.

President Bowers suggested keeping the resolution on the regular agenda to allow for an amendment at the next meeting. Councilmember McGregor offered to send her proposed addition to Council for review and potential inclusion before the resolution's final adoption. President Bowers confirmed that The Crawford Crew would be present to receive the resolution.

Recommendation: Introduction/Adoption on Regular Agenda on 1/21/2025.

3. Anticipated Honorary Resolutions for February and March

RES-0003-2025

A JOINT RESOLUTION AND PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING FEBRUARY 2025 AS "BLACK HISTORY MONTH" AND HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF BLACK AMERICANS IN THE CITY OF GAHANNA

Councilmember Jones introduced a resolution recommending the recognition of Black History Month in February. She explained that redlined edits had been circulated, aligning the resolution more closely with the work of Jewel Woods, a Gahanna-based business owner focused on mental health for Black men, rather than the national theme on labor. Councilmember Jones suggested inviting Mr. Woods to receive the ceremonial resolution and joint proclamation with the Mayor during the first regular meeting in February.

Recommendation: Introduction/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 2/3/2025.

Other Resolutions as Requested by Members

Vice President Weaver asked for additional comments or discussion

regarding the resolutions. He noted a line for discussion on any other resolutions requested by Councilmembers and invited Clerk VanMeter to provide input.

Clerk VanMeter returned to resolution 0002-2025, apologizing for an oversight and stating that the title of the resolution would be updated to reflect its status as a joint resolution and proclamation. He reminded the Council of a discussion from the December 9, 2024, Committee of the Whole meeting, regarding potential resolutions to honor various events and causes in 2025. Clerk VanMeter highlighted Councilmember Jones' previous suggestion to recognize School Resource Officer (SRO) Appreciation Day on February 15, 2025, and asked for feedback on this and other potential resolutions for February and March.

President Bowers shared her proposed list of resolutions for the year, including the following:

1. **Government Communicators Day**, to be observed on February 17, 2025, with a Committee recommendation on February 10, 2025. She welcomed the administration's partnership to highlight the City's communication initiatives, including the newsletter introduced by Ms. Hilts.
2. **Women's History Month** at the beginning of March 2025.
3. **Food Waste Action Week** on March 17, 2025.
4. **Earth Month** on April 7, 2025.
5. **Herb Week** during the first week of May 2025.
6. **Public Service Month** and **Mental Health Month** in May 2025.

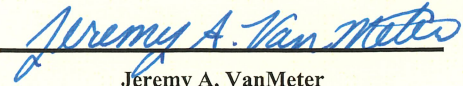
President Bowers invited colleagues to collaborate on any of these resolutions and encouraged partnership with the administration.

Councilmember Jones expressed her support for President Bowers' list and suggested adding Juneteenth as an annual resolution. Regarding SRO Appreciation Day, she noted that with three resolutions already planned for February, Council should remain mindful of the number of recognitions in a given month.

Vice President Weaver encouraged members to review previously shared charts and reach out to Clerk VanMeter in advance to ensure adequate preparation by staff. He noted that he also had resolutions planned for later in the year. No further comments were made regarding other resolutions as requested by members, and the discussion concluded.

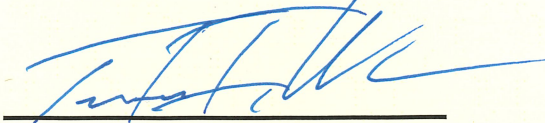
D. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Committee of the Whole, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 7:46 p.m.



Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

APPROVED by the Committee of the Whole, this
21st day of *January*, 2025.



Trenton L. Weaver