



City of Gahanna

200 S. Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

Meeting Minutes

Charter Review

Ethan Barnhardt, Chair
Carrin Wester, Vice Chair
Jamie Belisle
Edward A. Hill, Jr.
Richard Maxwell
Raymond J. Mularski
Karen Reynolds

Jeremy A. VanMeter, Clerk of Council

Thursday, February 12, 2026

6:30 PM

Council Chambers, City Hall

Organizational Meeting

A. OATH OF OFFICE: Administered by Hon. Laurie A. Jadwin, Mayor

Karen Reynolds, Seat 1
Ethan Barnhardt, Seat 2
Edward A. Hill, Jr., Seat 3
Jamie Belisle, Seat 4
Richard Maxwell, Seat 5
Raymond J. Mularski, Seat 6
Carrin Wester, Seat 7

The City of Gahanna Charter Review Commission met on Thursday, February 12, 2026, in Council Chambers for its Organizational Meeting. The agenda was published on February 6, 2026. All members were present for the meeting. There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

Mayor Laurie Jadwin welcomed those in attendance and watching from home to the 2026 Charter Review Commission organizational meeting. She explained that the Charter Review Commission is convened every five years pursuant to City Charter, which is effectively the constitution of the City of Gahanna. The Commission is comprised of four citizens chosen by City Council and three citizens chosen by the Mayor to review Charter, engage the public and city staff, and bring forward suggested changes or raise questions. She invited Commission members to introduce themselves and share what ward they reside in.

Dick Maxwell, ward four, stated that his family has lived in Gahanna 49 years and had three daughters that graduated from Gahanna. He shared his appreciation for the City and added that he is nearly retired.

Ed Hill, ward one, stated he has been a Gahanna resident for 35 years.

He expressed excitement to be part of the Commission and give back to the community.

Jamie Belisle, ward one, has been a resident for five years. She has two children and stated that living in Gahanna has given her so much and she felt the need to give back.

Carrin Wester, ward four, has lived in the Gahanna for almost 13 years. She expressed excitement to serve the community on the Commission.

Ray Mularski, ward two, introduced himself as a mostly retired attorney of over 40 years, and a resident since the age of three, for a total of 63 years. He was the City Attorney from 2020-2024 and practiced law in Gahanna his entire career. While mostly retired, he continues doing hearings for the Ohio Department of Health.

Ethan Barnhardt, ward four, shared that he had lived in Gahanna for about ten years, and was a transplant from South Carolina. He and his wife have a four-year-old daughter and are proud to call the Gahanna community home.

Karen Reynolds, ward three, has lived in Gahanna since 2017 and works to support libraries with their IT services and social media. She expressed her love for libraries and community, and felt serving on the Commission would provide a good opportunity for outreach.

Mayor Jadwin then introduced Assistant City Attorney Matt Roth, noting that City Attorney Priya Tamilarasan would be joining future meetings.

After introductions were made, Mayor Jadwin administered the Oath of Office to all members.

B. CALL TO ORDER: Pledge of Allegiance & Roll Call

Mayor Jadwin called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m.

Present 7 - Ethan Barnhardt, Jamie Belisle, Edward A. Hill Jr., Richard Maxwell, Raymond J. Mularski, Karen Reynolds, and Carrin Wester

C. ELECTION OF CHAIR:

1. **Open Nominations**
2. **Close Nominations and Elect Chair**
3. **Mayor Jadwin turns over meeting to Chair**

Mayor Jadwin opened the floor for nominations for Chair of the 2026 Charter Review Commission. Ms. Wester nominated Mr. Barnhardt as

Chair. Mr. Barnhardt accepted the nomination. There were no additional nominations.

A motion was made by Mularski, seconded by Belisle, to elect Ethan Barnhardt as Chair of the Charter Review Commission. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Barnhardt, Belisle, Hill, Maxwell, Mularski, Reynolds and Wester

D. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR:

- 1. Open Nominations**
- 2. Close Nominations and Elect Vice Chair**

Chair Barnhardt opened nominations for Vice Chair of the 2026 Charter Review Commission. Mr. Barnhardt nominated Carrin Wester for Vice Chair. Ms. Wester accepted the nomination. There were no other nominations.

A motion was made by Mularski, seconded by Belisle, to elect Carrin Wester as Vice Chair of the Charter Review Commission. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Barnhardt, Belisle, Hill, Maxwell, Mularski, Reynolds and Wester

E. ADOPTION OF RULES OF PROCEDURE:

[RULES-0002-2026](#) Charter Review Rules of Procedure - Proposed Draft 2.12.2026

Chair Barnhardt noted that the Rules of Procedure were distributed to members in advance. He invited discussion on the rules prior to a motion to accept them. There was no further discussion.

A motion was made by Belisle, seconded by Hill, that the proposed Rules of Procedure be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Barnhardt, Belisle, Hill, Maxwell, Mularski, Reynolds and Wester

F. DISCUSSIONS:

- 1. Overview of duties, roles, deadlines, and current City Charter**

[2026-0028](#) Charter Review Commission Onboarding Materials

Assistant City Attorney Matt Roth introduced himself. He introduced Charter Review as an important process that happens every five years. He noted that while there is not much guidance within the Charter as to

what Charter Review entails; the job is to review the existing Charter and make recommendations to City Council for changes that would be voted on by the public. He explained that Charter is similar to the City's version of the United States Constitution. Ohio law has always permitted municipalities to become charter municipalities. Cities without a charter are governed by the Ohio Revised Code in terms of how the city operates. Communities transition from village to city designation when they reach 5,000 residents. Villages can also have charters, and Gahanna's charter was initially passed in 1961, when Gahanna was still a village. When a municipality adopts a charter, they gain what is referred to as a home rule, or self-governance. Mr. Roth explained that this largely means the City can make its own rules with some exceptions where Ohio Constitution and statutes overrule charter.

Mr. Roth explained that the Charter outlines the City's organization, such as its executive, legislative, and judicial bodies, while ordinances passed by City Council deal with the day-to-day operations of the City. Charter serves as a framework that the rest of city governance is built from.

Mr. Roth explained the ways in which Gahanna City Charter can be changed. The first is through the Charter Review Commission process. Second, if five members of City Council put forth a matter on the ballot for voters, they can enact Charter amendments. Third and finally, if a citizen petition in which at least ten percent of City residents would sign, a charter amendment can be placed on the ballot. The last time a citizen petition occurred was in 1964, and is uncommon. Most changes to charter happen by way of the Commission. There have been 123 charter amendments since 1961. Eighty-eight of which were passed by vote of the citizens. Mr. Roth explained that the Commission's proposed amendments will be presented to City Council, who then votes to pass the amendments to the Franklin County Board of Elections. City Council does not make any changes to the recommendations that go to the voters. The only exception would be amendments that are clearly illegal under Ohio law.

Provisions related to the Charter Review Commission are very brief. They must be concluded by July 1, 2026. Mr. Roth stated that in previous review years, the Mayor and her staff have been invited to suggest changes, along with City Council and the general public. The Commission then discusses all suggestions, assisted by the Clerk of Council and City Attorney's office. Mr. Roth closed his presentation by noting that Charter Review Commission is not required to make changes.

Chair Barnhardt thanked Mr. Roth for his presentation, adding that the

Commission would certainly lean on the City Attorney's Office for guidance through the process.

2. Set meeting schedule

Chair Barnhardt then shifted to the discussion of the meeting schedule. The proposed schedule is generally the second and fourth Thursday of each month (proposed calendar of meeting dates attached to the agenda). He opened the floor for discussion. Mr. Maxwell noted that it may not be possible for every member to be there every time. Mr. Mularski asked whether video conferencing was an option. Mr. Roth felt that as a public body, the Commissioners should be required to be in attendance. If a member is unable to attend and wants to watch from home, the livestream option is available. He added that he would confirm current rules. Clerk VanMeter commented that video conferencing capabilities within Council Chambers are limited and there would be technical hurdles to overcome. He added that the state legislature has permitted certain public bodies to convene virtually, but he did not know where Charter Review Commission fit within those rules. If permitted at the state level, a policy would also need to be in place at the municipal level, and Charter Review Commission's rules would need amended. Mr. Mularski noted telephonic options might work better than video conferencing.

Vice Chair Wester inquired if there happened to be a week when multiple members were unable to attend, whether the adopted schedule could be amended. Mr. VanMeter noted public meetings needed to be public noticed 48 hours in advance. Mr. Roth suggested that if there was no quorum, the meeting date could be moved. Chair Barnhardt asked members to be present for all meetings they could, and to provide as much notice as possible when they were unable to attend.

A motion was made by Wester, seconded by Maxwell, to adopt the Charter Review Commission meeting schedule as proposed in the calendar attachment. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Barnhardt, Belisle, Hill, Maxwell, Mularski, Reynolds and Wester

3. Discussion on the structure of future meetings

Chair Barnhardt opened discussion for how the Commission would like its meetings to be structured. He noted that previous commissions have invited input from the administration, City Council, and public. He asked the Commission if they had any additional suggestions on how to handle the meetings.

Mr. Mularski felt it was pertinent to hear from the administration and City

Council. He also felt it was important to determine how the body should hear from the public as soon as possible because engaging the public can pose challenges.

Vice Chair Wester agreed that hearing directly from staff conducting the work is critically important. She added that the public needed to be provided with as much information as possible, and their hearing their input was also important. She considered different options, such as assigning each department their own week. Mr. Roth added that it was ultimately the Commission's decision on how to schedule meetings with the administration, City Council, and the public, adding that advance notice was important. Mr. Mularski recalled challenges with notifying the public during the previous Charter Review Commission. Belisle suggested the creation of a subcommittee that is dedicated to engaging the public and pursuing methods of communication with the public. Chair Barnhardt asked the Mayor whether her staff could provide any updates at the next meeting. Mayor Jadwin noted that the March 12 meeting would allow more time for the Senior Directors to prepare. Chair Barnhardt suggested that March 26 be reserved for City Council. He suggested the next meeting, February 26, could be reserved for discussion of subcommittees and planning.

Vice Chair Wester and Mr. Hill volunteered to work with Ms. Belisle on the subcommittee.

Mr. Mularski recommended April 9 for a meeting to receive public comments. Ms. Belisle wondered if the Commission should schedule a meeting for public feedback after it receives suggestions from the subcommittee dedicated to public engagement. Mr. Hill suggested the subcommittee connect with the City's Communications team to further communicate ideas on reaching the public.

Vice Chair Wester inquired with Mayor Jadwin whether one meeting would be sufficient to hear from the administration. Mayor Jadwin noted that additional meetings may be needed once input is received from all sources, as staff may have new ideas or feedback to share. Mr. Roth added, regarding public comment, that there is also time during each regularly scheduled meeting for public comment. Clerk VanMeter added that there is an opportunity for members of the public to submit a video recording of their comments as well.

Ms. Wester directed a question to Clerk VanMeter. She wondered whether all engagement, including social media posts and correspondence, should be saved as a potential public record. Clerk VanMeter confirmed.

Chair Barnhardt remarked on his connections with the John Glenn College at Ohio State University. He wondered if there would be a benefit to invite a professional from the College to talk with the group about best practices as a way to have well-rounded advice.

Mr. Roth returned to the discussion of meeting dates, noting that City Hall will be in the process of moving to the new Civic Center building in April. No action needed to be taken at present, but the meeting schedule may need to be revised to accommodate.

Mr. Hill made a clarifying comment to Chair Barnhardt. He identified two prongs to the public engagement side: first, there would be public engagement in the form of receiving comments and suggestions from the public. Second, there would be public input that is received based on what the Administration and City Council present to the Commission. He wanted to ensure that both perspectives were understood. Chair Barnhardt agreed.

Ms. Belisle noted that she would not be in attendance for the April 9 meeting.

Vice Chair Wester wondered if the Commission should set objectives or agenda items for the next meeting, noting there would be no scheduled presentations. Chair Barnhardt stated two initial objectives, which were for all members to read through charter and provide their thoughts, and also to have the subcommittee provide a report. Chair Barnhardt welcomed additional thoughts if members had other items they wished to add to the agenda.

Ms. Reynolds inquired about video input. She wondered if there were additional forms public could provide feedback. Mr. VanMeter stated [CRC@gahanna.gov <mailto:CRC@gahanna.gov>](mailto:CRC@gahanna.gov) was the Charter Review Commission's email, where all members could receive feedback from the public. Mr. VanMeter also noted other municipalities have used formats such as a Google form to solicit feedback.

G. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Commission, the Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

*APPROVED by the Charter Review, this
day of 2026.*

Ethan Barnhardt