



# City of Gahanna

## Meeting Minutes

### City Council

200 South Hamilton Road  
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

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

*Jeremy A. VanMeter, Clerk of Council*

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Monday, October 7, 2024

7:00 PM

City Hall, Council Chambers

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#### **A. CALL TO ORDER: Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance, Roll Call**

*Gahanna City Council met in Regular Session on Monday, October 7, 2024, in Council Chambers. President of Council Merisa K. Bowers called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Councilmember Kaylee Padova delivered an Invocation and led members in the Pledge of Allegiance. The agenda was published on October 4, 2024.*

**Present** 6 - Merisa K. Bowers, Jamille Jones, Nancy R. McGregor, Kaylee Padova, Stephen A. Renner, and Michael Schnetzer  
**Absent** 1 - Trenton I. Weaver

#### **B. ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA:**

None.

#### **C. PRESENTATIONS:**

##### **1. Joint Resolution and Proclamation Presentation by Council & Mayor - National Coaches Day**

Councilmember Schnetzer announced a special presentation in partnership with the Mayor. He explained that they had prepared a joint resolution, humorously referred to as a "Procolution" in the past, to recognize National Coaches Day, which would be observed on Sunday, October 6, 2024. He noted that the following year, the day would fall on a Monday. The purpose of the joint resolution was to honor the contributions of coaches throughout the community in helping make Gahanna a city that everyone loves. Councilmember Schnetzer acknowledged several guests from various athletic organizations who were in attendance. Representing the Foxboro Barracudas were Sophia York and Francisco Rivera; from the Gahanna Soccer Association, Tracey Larick; from the Gahanna Junior League Baseball, Dustin Cullen; and from the Gahanna Lions Youth Football League, Chris Johnson. He also mentioned that the Hunters Ridge Seahorses could not attend but would receive their resolution at a later date.

He invited the guests to come forward for the presentation and a quick photo. After the photo, Councilmember Schnetzer welcomed any of the guests who wished to speak about their organizations or the impact of coaching to take the microphone.

Mr. Cullen, representing Gahanna Junior League Sports, expressed gratitude on behalf of the organization. He thanked Gahanna Parks and Recreation, City Council, and Mayor Jadwin for their continued support. He mentioned that during his eight years on the board, the partnership between the league and the City had never been stronger, particularly in the last few years. He appreciated the time, effort, and financial resources that the City invested to help create great experiences for the children in the community. He concluded by thanking everyone involved.

Councilmember Padova also expressed her gratitude to the coaches in attendance. She shared a personal story, explaining that she was raised by a coach-her mother, who coached cheerleading from the Bidy League level up to middle and high school. Councilmember Padova recalled how her mother often received late-night phone calls and was a trusted figure for many of her cheerleaders during their teenage years. She acknowledged that coaches play a vital role in shaping the lives of young people and are often the individuals whom children feel comfortable turning to for support. She thanked the coaches for their dedication, recognizing that whether volunteer or paid, the compensation for their efforts is often not enough to reflect the value they provide.

## **2. Visit Gahanna Update by Executive Director Lori Kappes**

### [2024-0181](#)

Visit Gahanna Update to City Council 10.7.2024 & Tourism Economic Impact Study

Lori Kappes, Director of Visit Gahanna, provided an update on the organization's recent activities. She began by reminding everyone that Visit Gahanna, the Gahanna Convention and Visitors Bureau, is a nonprofit destination marketing organization with a mission to promote travel to Gahanna, supporting local businesses, jobs, and future investments in the community. She emphasized the importance of the travel sector to the local economy, noting that visitors generate significant economic benefits.

Kappes shared that Visit Gahanna recently conducted a tourism economic impact study for 2023, in partnership with Tourism Economics, to measure the impact of visitor spending. The study found that direct visitor spending in Gahanna for 2023 was estimated at \$78.2 million, generating an additional \$26.9 million in indirect and induced benefits, bringing the total economic impact to \$105.2 million. Visitor spending supported 811 jobs and generated \$8.5 million in state and local government revenues. She noted that while Gahanna's figures may appear small compared to all of Franklin County, this only highlights the potential for future growth in Gahanna's tourism sector. The full study was included in the meeting agenda for those interested in further details.

Kappes also provided updates on staffing changes. Sarah Carnes joined as the new Community Development and Event Manager in August, and Hannah Kershaw, a recent graduate of Clark State Community College's horticulture program, took on a part-time coordinator position at the Ohio Herb Center.

Regarding finances, Kappes reported that Visit Gahanna is primarily funded through lodging tax revenue. This year, the organization has received \$192,600 in lodging tax, an increase of nearly \$14,000 compared to the previous year, and they hope this trend continues.

Kappes highlighted some of the key initiatives Visit Gahanna has undertaken, including the release of a new visitors guide in May during National Tourism Week. The guide has been distributed at various travel centers and events across Ohio and surrounding states. She also announced the fall and winter edition of the Herbal Cocktail Trail, which now includes 10 Gahanna establishments, including a new addition, Bubbles Tea, offering a non-alcoholic mocktail option. The Herbal Cocktail Trail, created in 2017, has been a success in bringing customers to local businesses and offering a unique experience for participants. Kappes then discussed Visit Gahanna's events, noting the success of Herb Day, held in May, which attracted over 1,000 attendees and featured 36 vendors. She also provided an update on the Creekside Blues and Jazz Festival, which saw slightly lower attendance due to extreme heat but still drew visitors from 20 states and various Ohio cities. The event provided over \$15,000 in earnings for local nonprofit groups that volunteered. Kappes mentioned Visit Gahanna's media coverage for the festival, which included appearances on Fox 28, ABC 6, and Good Day Columbus. She also shared details about the "Midweek at the Creek" series and a new partnership with Make Gahanna Yours to support Pelotonia riders passing through the city.

Before concluding, Kappes highlighted the growing popularity of the Ohio Herb Center's classes, many of which sold out with long waitlists. Attendees have come from 40 different zip codes, and the center has hosted private workshops, participated in outreach events, and welcomed motor coach tours. The center has also seen over 1,400 visitors this year and currently features items from six local artisans. Finally, Kappes invited everyone to the upcoming Holiday Lights Celebration on Sunday, November 24, and the Santa Race on December 7. She offered to answer any questions from the Council.

#### **Questions from Council**

Councilmember Jones asked Director Kappes about the nearly \$14,000 increase in lodging tax, seeking to understand the reason behind the rise. She inquired if the increase was industry-wide or if there were specific factors contributing to it. Director Kappes explained that the increase could be attributed to several factors. Some hotels had raised their rates, which likely accounted for part of the rise in revenue. Additionally, several hotels in Gahanna had regular contracts with local companies, which could have contributed to increased occupancy rates. She emphasized that it was a

combination of multiple factors.

Mayor Jadwin thanked Director Kappes for her presentation and inquired if the lodging tax collections were being affected by extended stays, particularly from construction workers and other long-term guests. Director Kappes confirmed that extended stays were indeed impacting lodging tax collections. She noted that reports from the hotels indicated a rising percentage of extended stay visits, which are not subject to lodging tax if guests stay for 30 days or more. She pointed out that two specific hotels in Gahanna had seen a significant increase in extended stays, with one hotel seeing its percentage jump from 40% to an average of 70%. She also mentioned that there were displaced individuals from Columbus staying in Gahanna hotels last winter due to housing issues in their areas.

President Bowers followed up by asking if Gahanna's current hotel capacity was sufficient to accommodate the potential visitor base. Director Kappes responded that there was room for more guests, especially if the city had more specialized hotels. She mentioned that Kevin Dengel, who attended the "Give to Gahanna" conference, expressed interest in holding future conferences in Gahanna but noted that attendees preferred boutique-style hotels in walkable areas with access to local amenities. She emphasized that this type of accommodation was something that could attract more visitors for meetings and conferences.

Councilmember Padova thanked Director Kappes for her presentation and asked how the lodging tax increase compared to pre-COVID levels. She inquired if the city was still down compared to the numbers prior to the pandemic. Director Kappes confirmed that Gahanna was still significantly down from pre-COVID levels, estimating a decrease of at least 20%.

### **3. Municipal Aggregation Update - Sr. Director of Operations Kevin Schultz**

[2024-0195](#)

SOPEC AEP Energy Rate Set Presentation 10.7.2024

Senior Director of Operations Kevin Schultz provided an update to the Council on the energy aggregation program. He explained that, earlier than anticipated, the City had been able to set a rate with Sustainable Ohio Public Energy Council (SOPEC) for the energy aggregation, which would be implemented in Gahanna starting with the AEP December billing cycle of this year. Schultz shared that the program had been rebranded as "Gahanna Energy Plus" and was still the same Community Choice Aggregation program previously discussed. Schultz announced that they had locked in a 100% clean energy rate of 6.445 cents per kilowatt hour, which was lower than AEP Ohio's standard rate of 7.61 cents per kilowatt hour. This results in a savings of approximately 1.165 cents per kilowatt hour for participants. The term of this rate would last six months, from December to June 2025, at which point the City would set a new rate with SOPEC along with other municipalities. He emphasized that the program would remain an opt-out program, with no fees for opting in or out, and that eligible residents would automatically be enrolled unless they chose to opt out. Schultz reiterated that

anyone not currently participating in another energy provider program or receiving government assistance related to energy would be eligible to participate. He also reminded residents that they could still shop for energy rates on their own via the Energy Choice Ohio website. Schultz then presented a mockup of a postcard that would be sent to all eligible residents, explaining the program details and promoting two town hall sessions on October 22, 2024, for residents to ask questions and review their energy bills. He also shared a draft of the opt-out letter, which residents would receive, and explained the various ways to opt out of the program. He noted that approximately 9,500 residences and 1,000 small businesses in Gahanna would be eligible for the program, which accounts for about 65-66% of residences that do not currently shop for energy on their own.

President Bowers asked Schultz to briefly review the eligibility criteria. Schultz clarified that eligibility was determined by whether individuals were already shopping for energy on their own or receiving assistance through programs such as PIPP (Percentage of Income Payment Plan). He mentioned that approximately 35% of Gahanna residents were currently shopping for their own energy rates. Bowers also inquired about the eligibility for small businesses. Schultz explained that small businesses using less than 7,000 kilowatt hours per month would qualify for the program, while those using more than that would not.

Councilmember Schnetzer thanked Schultz for his presentation and remarked on the speed of the rate lock-in. He asked if the decision to lock in the rate so soon was influenced by recent geopolitical events, including escalations in the Middle East and China's economic stimulus package. Schultz confirmed that these factors, along with a recent dock strike, had influenced the market. He added that the rate of 6.445 cents was considered very competitive, and securing the rate now provided a buffer before AEP's capacity charge would hit early next year. The next rate would be set in June 2025.

Councilmember McGregor inquired about the two energy options-clean energy and traditional (brown) energy-and asked at what point residents would make their selection. Senior Director Schultz explained that two rates had been set. The default rate was for 100% clean energy, meaning that if residents took no action, they would be automatically opted into the clean energy option. If a resident wished to select the traditional energy option with a rate of 6.185 cents per kilowatt hour, they would need to call the AEP Energy 1-800 number, which is provided on the opt-out notice. This step-down option was available at the customer's request.

Mayor Jadwin added that residents could also opt out entirely and default to the AEP Ohio standard rate offering if they preferred, or they could shop for energy rates on their own.

Councilmember Padova thanked Schultz and everyone involved in the process, acknowledging the quick turnaround and expressing appreciation for their efforts to get the program up and running.

President Bowers echoed those sentiments and emphasized the potential savings for residents. She then reminded the Council about the resolution authorizing Gahanna to become a Power Clean Future Ohio (PCFO) community, which was adopted on March 18, 2024. She pointed out that the resolution served as a guiding document that articulated the City's goals in advancing the aggregation program, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting clean energy choices, and addressing sustainability and resiliency efforts within the community. Schultz added that he and Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger had a conversation with PCFO the previous week regarding the City's greenhouse gas reduction plan. He mentioned that they were reviewing significant data and metrics related to the City's energy usage and environmental impact. Schultz noted that with the implementation of the 100% clean energy aggregation program, adjustments were being made to understand both the 2010 baseline and the current baseline for greenhouse gas emissions. He highlighted that PCFO would provide updated data in 2025 to reflect the impact of the clean energy program and projected a return to present the results to the Council in January or February of the following year, after budget season.

#### **D. HEARING OF VISITORS:**

*Jaren Marette and Isa Hanger-Duque of Gahanna, OH, spoke on the proposed Action Skate Park via video comment.*

Jaren introduced himself, stating that he lives in the Rivers Edge neighborhood and has been playing soccer since the age of three. He expressed his love for playing soccer at Lower McCorkle, emphasizing its importance as a space for soccer activities.

Isa, also from the River Edge neighborhood, shared that she is nine years old and similarly opposed the proposed changes. She mentioned that the park is a place where people of all ages, including teenagers, gather to play soccer. Isa also shared that she practices gymnastics at the park and emphasized how fun and important the space is for the community. She expressed concerns that any new development would result in increased noise, particularly affecting the neighboring area, and asked the Council to reconsider tearing down the park.

*Melissa Carrelli of Gahanna, OH, spoke on the proposed Action Park and Lower McCorkle.*

Ms. Carrelli highlighted her concerns about the proposed Action Park project at Lower McCorkle Park. She questioned why City leadership appeared to be misaligned with the majority of taxpayers who live near and use the park, stating that the project was being executed hastily with little regard for its alignment with the City's Capital Improvement or strategic plans. Carrelli noted that the City had entered into a contract with OHM Advisors in late July of this year. According to the request for proposal from OHM, multiple community engagement sessions were supposed to take place. However, only two public meetings had been held so far—one over Zoom, which was attended by only five members of the steering committee, and another with a limited audience of steering committee members. She emphasized that both

meetings primarily consisted of Action Park supporters, representing a small fraction of respondents from a 2022 Parks and Recreation needs assessment. She pointed out that none of the attendees were from the broader community or represented the user groups who would be displaced by the redevelopment plans. Carrelli thought the project timeline was unrealistic, citing a lack of meaningful engagement, sufficient planning, and robust deliverables. She also raised concerns about the lack of transparency in the selection process for OHM Advisors, as there was no documentation of who served on the request for proposals (RFP) selection committee or meeting minutes reflecting the evaluation process. She further mentioned that the project's scheduled completion date of December 1st seemed unrealistic given the poor planning and organization to date. Carrelli suggested that the City should learn from its recent development of a mountain bike trail at Academy Park. She proposed leveraging that project to assess community feedback and maintenance needs before moving forward with the Action Park. She praised past City leadership for recognizing the value of building a golf course and practice fields near Big Walnut Creek, which aligned with the Lower Big Walnut Creek Watershed Action Plan. She urged the City's current leadership to value the importance of watersheds and to reconsider how the Action Park plan and its proposed location fit into the City's long-term park planning. Carrelli concluded by calling for a "big picture" analysis and purposeful evaluation, which she believed would provide an opportunity to optimize natural resources and consider alternative locations for the Action Park, thereby preserving the integrity of Lower McCorkle Park.

*Michael Heitzman of Gahanna, OH, spoke on the proposed Action Park.*

Mr. Heitzman stated his continued opposition to the proposed site for the Gahanna Action Skate Park at Lower McCorkle Park. He began by asking those in the audience who live in neighborhoods off Old Ridenour or adjacent to McCorkle Park to raise their hands, emphasizing that these residents must be listened to as they are the ones most affected by the project. He reminded the Council that, as representatives of the Gahanna community, they have a responsibility to act on the concerns of these residents. Heitzman acknowledged that while many may speak in favor of the project, they are not neighbors to the proposed site, and their perspective is different from those living nearby. He emphasized that the views of the directly impacted residents must be seriously considered. Heitzman shared that over the past few weeks, he and his neighbors have been in discussions with various City administrators, Councilmembers, and other citizens. He expressed gratitude for the time and willingness of those who engaged with them and was pleased to hear that the Mayor was working to schedule a public engagement session. However, he stressed the importance of establishing a date for this session within the next three to five days, as the lack of a firm date could make it seem as though their concerns were being disregarded. He also referenced the August 21, 2023, public hearing on the Capital Improvement Plan, during which Council President Bowers and Councilmember McGregor reminded attendees that the plan was still just a plan, and no funding had yet been allocated beyond the planning and conceptual design phases. Heitzman reiterated his stance that

future funding should not be approved if the project remains at Lower McCorkle Park, and he committed to continuing to advocate this point during the upcoming budgeting season. Heitzman expressed disappointment that the City had signed a contract with OHM Advisors to develop plans for Lower McCorkle Park without first engaging the neighbors who would be directly affected by the changes. He called this a significant misstep, arguing that major alterations to the area required community dialogue before moving forward with such a contract. He concluded by stating that the City should cut its losses and find a new site for the project, emphasizing that it would be irresponsible to fund a project without providing citizens adequate opportunity for input. He expressed his displeasure with the current public engagement efforts, noting that a one-sided Wheels Committee and an online survey with only 37 respondents were not sufficient forms of public input.

*Rebecca Cavener of Gahanna, OH, spoke on the proposed Action Skate Park.*

Ms. Cavener addressed the Council to express her concerns regarding the proposed Action Skate Park at Lower McCorkle Park. She made it clear that she was not opposed to the idea of an Action Skate Park but was strongly opposed to its proposed location, citing serious safety concerns. She explained that placing a skate park of this size at Lower McCorkle Park would lead to a significant increase in traffic on Old Ridenour Road, which is not designed to handle such volume. Ms. Cavener recounted that when she first moved to Gahanna over 20 years ago, Old Ridenour Road was designated as a bike path where automobiles were merely tolerated. The road has a 15 miles per hour speed limit, is very narrow-just one and a half lanes wide-and lacks lines and curbs. She expressed concern about drivers disregarding the speed limit, frequently traveling between 35 and 45 miles per hour, and warned of the potential for accidents, particularly in an area where families frequently walk and bike. She emphasized that, as a self-insured City, Gahanna would not want to bear the liability that could come with increased accidents due to this project. Ms. Cavener further estimated that hundreds of cars would be using Old Ridenour Road to access the skate park and noted that it was unrealistic to expect people would only arrive via skates, skateboards, or bikes. She warned that a tragic accident was likely to occur if the project moved forward at this location. Citing a survey and the City's comprehensive master plan, Ms. Cavener pointed out that 40% of Gahanna's residents are 60 years of age or older, while only 1% of residents expressed interest in an Action Skate Park. She questioned why such a low-priority project, according to the City's own priorities and investments for parks and recreation, would receive more than \$2 million in funding. She also expressed displeasure with the City for engaging with the Wheels Committee but failing to involve or be transparent with the taxpayers who would be most affected by the project. In addition to her safety concerns, Ms. Cavener highlighted the negative impact the project would have on local wildlife, including owls, brown bats, minks, and bald eagles. She warned that the increased human activity and noise would significantly disrupt the area's wildlife and could potentially violate the Eagle Act, which protects bald eagles and their habitats. Ms. Cavener concluded



by urging the Council to pursue an alternative location for the skate park and implored them, "Don't pave our paradise and put in an Action Skate Park."

*Kevin Cavener of Gahanna, OH, spoke on the proposed Action Skate Park.*

Mr. Cavener raised concerns about the decision to build the proposed Action Park at Lower McCorkle Park, which he noted is located in a flood zone. He referenced materials that he intended to email to all Councilmembers and the Mayor, stating that according to the site figures posted on the Gahanna City website, Lower McCorkle Park is classified as an AE flood zone by FEMA, which is considered high-risk for flooding. Mr. Cavener mentioned that during the September Parks and Recreation meeting, Director Farrell had explained that the former skate park at Shull Park was closed due to flooding, which caused rust damage and rendered it unusable. He expressed confusion as to why the City would consider placing the new Action Park in another flood-prone area, pointing out that Lower McCorkle Park floods annually. He detailed how portions of the soccer field, golf course, and Creekside become inundated during winter and early spring, with the parking lot across from the soccer field also flooding. He highlighted that Old Ridenour Road is closed every year for three to four days due to flooding, asking again why a skate park would be placed in such a location. Mr. Cavener also referred to a previous instance in which Sheetz, a gas station business, was turned away from Gahanna, questioning why they were rejected while the Action Park was being pursued in a similarly unsuitable location. He argued that the skate park did not fit in the Old Ridenour area, which is primarily residential, and should instead be placed in a commercial area. He raised concerns about the noise that the park would generate, citing examples from skate parks in Newark and Westerville where loud music, bullhorns, and shouting were common. Regarding the plan to build a canopy walk in the woods near the proposed park, he believed this would disrupt local wildlife, including eagles, and infringe on the privacy of nearby residents, particularly those living near Old Ridenour Road. He concluded by referencing the 2006 Watershed Action Plan and Inventory, which stressed the importance of maintaining the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Big Walnut Creek watershed. He questioned why the City would disregard this report by planning to build in such a sensitive area.

Before he could continue, President Bowers apologized, noting that Mr. Cavener's time had exceeded the three-minute limit for comments. Bowers thanked him for his input and invited him to follow up via email.

*John Marette of Gahanna, OH, spoke on the proposed Action Park.*

Mr. Marette expressed his gratitude to the members for their service to the City of Gahanna. He acknowledged that the Council is busy and dedicates a great deal of time to the city's residents. He extended a special thanks to Council President Bowers and Councilmember Schnetzer for agreeing to meet with the neighborhood directly impacted by the proposed Action Skate Park. Mr. Marette reiterated that while the large, organized group of residents along the Old Ridenour Corridor is happy to advocate for the skating community in Gahanna, they are opposed to the skate park being

built in their neighborhood. He emphasized that they do not want to lose something they and their children love. He argued that none of the Councilmembers would want a similar development in their own backyards. Marette strongly urged the City to consider two alternative locations that, from a logical standpoint, made more sense for the development. He suggested the property to the north of the Gahanna Swimming Pool as an ideal location for the skate park, particularly since the City is currently undergoing an Aquatics Master Plan. He also proposed Shull Park as another suitable option. He explained that both of these locations are in semi-commercial areas, closer to Creekside and retail shops, unlike Lower McCorkle Park, which is not within 0.9 miles of any retail. Additionally, both alternative sites are centrally located, easily accessible by schools, neighborhoods, Route 62, sidewalks, and trails. Mr. Marette pointed out that the noise and foot traffic typical of skate parks would be more appropriate in these areas, where such activities are already common. He noted that these locations would avoid the destruction of a peaceful natural area at Lower McCorkle Park, which hundreds of residents walk by daily. He also emphasized that both alternative locations are larger in acreage, allowing for future growth and expansion, and they already have the necessary utility infrastructure. These areas would also be more efficient for City staff, EMS, fire, and police, and would prevent the dangerous traffic situations that could arise if the skate park were built at Lower McCorkle. Mr. Marette then expressed dissatisfaction with the way the Parks and Recreation Director had treated the community, citing a lack of transparency. He stated that residents had been left out of discussions, lied to, misled, and spoken to with condescension. He stated that requests for engagement had been met with avoidance or completely ignored, leading the community to feel excluded from the decision-making process. He believed the Parks and Recreation Department was trying to push the project through without proper engagement, hoping the community would give up their fight to preserve the quality of their neighborhood. In closing, Mr. Marette urged the City Council to hold the Parks and Recreation Director and the Mayor accountable. He called on them to challenge the focus on serving a small interest group and the influence of outside companies such as OHM, which he claimed have strong financial ties to the City. He emphasized that this push for the skate park was coming at the expense of Gahanna residents.

*Julie DeGarmo of Gahanna, OH, spoke on the proposed Skate Park.*

Ms. DeGarmo shared her concerns regarding the proposed Action Park at Lower McCorkle Park, stating that the location is unsuitable for such a development. She described the area as quiet and contemplative, located near the Gahanna Golf Course and the Big Walnut Trail, with large, open green spaces that remain unspoiled and undeveloped. She emphasized the importance of preserving this area, protecting the wildlife, plants, and trees, which include bald eagles, endangered owls, and other animal species. Ms. DeGarmo expressed concern over the proposed clearing of wooded areas for the canopy walk and Frisbee golf course, warning that it would devastate the habitats of the animals living there. She also noted that the installation of lights would negatively affect nocturnal animals. She highlighted that field space is already limited, particularly on the west side of Gahanna, where

youth sports teams such as Gahanna Soccer Association, i9 Sports, and others, regularly use Lower McCorkle Park throughout the year. She warned that the loss of this space would strain these youth sports organizations. Additionally, she pointed out that the square footage of the Lower McCorkle site does not allow for growth and expansion, whereas the alternative site north of the pool offers greater potential for future development. Ms. DeGarmo was concerned that the Big Walnut Trail, which runs through Lower McCorkle Park, would be disrupted by the park's noise, activity, and potential floodlights, diminishing the peaceful experience currently enjoyed by walkers, joggers, and bikers. She expressed specific worries for residents of Walnut Trace, many of whom use walkers or other assistive devices to navigate the path at a slow pace, fearing for their safety and well-being. She also raised concerns about Old Ridenour Road, which she stated is not designed to accommodate the traffic that would result from the park's development. She cited an online survey conducted by the City, which revealed that nearly 50% of respondents would drive to the Action Park rather than use the trail or carpool. She argued that the expectation that most visitors would access the park via the trail is not consistent with the survey data. Ms. DeGarmo referenced the public skate park development guide, which recommends that skate parks be located in areas with high visibility, activity, and social interactions to reduce the potential for criminal activity. She noted that the proposed site lacks these key factors and could potentially invite crime. Furthermore, she stated that the location would not attract visitors to local businesses, as there are no retail establishments within a 15-minute walk. She concluded by noting that Shull Park and the alternative site north of the pool have several businesses nearby and are closer to places where teens already congregate, such as the library, high school, and Creekside. Ms. DeGarmo concluded her remarks as her time expired.

*Ashley Hammond of Gahanna, OH, spoke on the proposed Action Park.*

Ms. Hammond conveyed her concerns about the community involvement in the planning process for the proposed Action Skate Park. She expressed frustration over the lack of public engagement, stating that despite the significant impact the project would have on the neighborhood, there had been minimal opportunities for public input and discussion. Ms. Hammond noted that communication between the City, the Parks and Recreation Board, and the neighbors had been virtually nonexistent. While acknowledging the complexities involved in project development, she emphasized the importance of having a more inclusive and transparent process. Ms. Hammond shared that her research indicated the stakeholder engagement process for this project had been very limited, with only a small number of opportunities for public feedback. She pointed out that the online survey conducted by the City received a low response rate, and the Action Skate Park community group, comprised of just five individuals, had only met once since its formation. She argued that this level of engagement was inadequate for a project of this size and urged the city to reconsider its approach, prioritizing public input in the decision-making process.

*Karen Blaes of Gahanna, OH, spoke on the Action Park proposed site at*

*Lower McCorkle Park on Old Ridenour.*

Ms. Blaes shared concerns about traffic and safety related to the proposed site of the Action Skate Park at Lower McCorkle Park, located on Old Ridenour Road. She described Old Ridenour as a narrow, quiet road that is just over a mile long, with half of it designated as a 15-mile-per-hour zone. The road lacks sidewalks, shoulders, road markings, and is barely wide enough for two cars. Additionally, there are multiple blind spots and hidden driveways, making it challenging for residents who walk, bike, or drive on the road. Ms. Blaes expressed concern that placing an Action Park at Lower McCorkle Park would lead to a significant increase in traffic, which would overwhelm the small corridor. She referenced users of the Newark Action Park, built by the same contractor bidding for this project, who described the park as "always a mad house" and mentioned frequent use at 2 a.m. She also pointed to the Blacklick Woods canopy walk, which attracted over 290,000 people in its first six weeks, creating overflow parking and substantial disruptions to the surrounding area. She warned that the addition of an Action Park at Lower McCorkle Park would result in unsustainable levels of traffic and disruptive street activity, particularly during nighttime hours when residents are resting. Ms. Blaes noted that the speed monitor recently installed at Walnut Trace would not capture the full extent of the traffic and safety challenges that would arise from an influx of visitors. She stated that it would be negligent for the City to ignore the safety concerns of both residents and visitors, as Old Ridenour Road is not equipped to handle heavy traffic alongside pedestrians and bicyclists. Ms. Blaes concluded by urging the City to consider a more suitable and safer location for the proposed Action Park. She also mentioned that she had shared photos illustrating the current conditions of Old Ridenour Road and would follow up with an email to provide additional information. She thanked the Council for considering these safety concerns as part of their planning decisions.

*Natalia Miranda of Gahanna, OH, spoke on the proposed Action Park.*

Ms. Miranda spoke to the Council, offering her perspective on the proposed Action Skate Park. She began by stating that while she did not have a prepared speech, she felt strongly that Lower McCorkle Park was not the right location for the park. Ms. Miranda, a 16-year-old soccer player for Gahanna Lincoln High School, shared that she and many others regularly use the field at Lower McCorkle Park to train. She pointed out that various youth sports teams, including i9 Sports, Gahanna Soccer Association, and lacrosse teams, rely on the field for practices, and it is a popular spot for people to spend time with their families, walk their dogs, and participate in leagues. Ms. Miranda highlighted concerns about the park's proximity to a nearby retirement home, stating that it would be disruptive to the residents, who are seeking peace and quiet. She also expressed concerns from her perspective as a teenager, explaining that skate parks can sometimes attract undesirable behavior. She referenced the rundown state of the skate park at Shull Park as evidence of this and indicated that residents in the area do not want to deal with the problems that could arise from having an action park nearby. Ms. Miranda suggested that a better location for the Action Skate Park would be the green space across from the pool. She noted that this

location is already open, close to Creekside, and frequently visited by families and children. There is also ample parking, and the pool's proximity would allow for a more integrated recreational experience, with kids able to move easily between the pool, park, and Creekside. Ms. Miranda concluded by raising concerns about the potential environmental impact of the project at Lower McCorkle Park, stating that it would disturb the wildlife, creeks, and trees in the area. She also pointed out the narrowness of Old Ridenour Road and the frequent speeding that occurs there, adding that she would feel unsafe if the park were built at this location. She urged the Council to reconsider and thanked them for their time.

*Richard Blaes of Gahanna, OH, spoke on the proposed Action Park.*

Mr. Blaes stated that he also did not have a prepared statement but wanted to speak from the heart. He shared that he had polled some of the other residents and noted that it took the group about a week to gather the information they could from the Gahanna website. Reflecting on the challenges of the past few years, including the COVID crisis, lockdowns, and government mandates, Mr. Blaes expressed that trust in government had declined among many residents. He expressed displeasure with the Mayor for not engaging with the community earlier, referencing past opportunities when the community had raised concerns, and remarked on a recent conversation where he stated the Mayor suggested the situation had been blown out of proportion. Mr. Blaes then expressed frustration with the lack of transparency, stating that in the limited time they had, residents uncovered maps suggesting that the Action Skate Park project involved more than just a skate park. He pointed out that the plans appeared to include additional features like a pump track, climbing wall, canopy walk, and Frisbee park, which he likened to an amusement park. He emphasized that such a large project would not be appropriate for Gahanna, particularly given the limitations of the two-lane road leading to the proposed site. He closed by suggesting that, moving forward, the City should implement better communication practices when changes in land use are planned, such as placing large format signs to inform residents of any significant developments. He asked that similar signs be put up at any new location selected for the park, ensuring the surrounding community is made aware of what is being planned.

*Maria Duque of Gahanna, OH, spoke on the proposed Action Park.*

Ms. Duque expressed her deep heartbreak over the proposed Action Skate Park project. She explained that, as a relatively new citizen who became a U.S. citizen seven years ago, her trust in government had been severely shaken. Admitting that she does not fully understand local government, she said the more she learns about the project and its impact on the residents in the affected area, the more her heartbreak grows. Ms. Duque emphasized her disappointment in the Councilmembers, pointing out that each one had openly shared their reasons for running for office and their intentions to serve the community. However, she said she could not see those intentions reflected in the current project. She highlighted concerns about the lack of protection for the environment, the waterways, the watershed, and the

residents, particularly children. She described the area where she lives, beginning with a cemetery, passing by a golf course, and soon to include a mental health addiction clinic set to open in two weeks. The corridor also includes a retirement community where elderly residents, some using walkers, would face potential conflicts with teenagers and skate park users. She noted that the road is narrow, with only 1.5 lanes, and cars often need to stop to allow the right of way. Ms. Duque concluded by asking the Council to listen to the residents and do the right thing for the homeowners and constituents who live in the affected area.

*Frank Kurtz of Gahanna, OH, spoke on the proposed Action Park.*

Mr. Kurtz discussed the importance of the existing soccer field at Lower McCorkle Park. He explained that soccer is one of the fastest-growing sports in the United States and that the regulation soccer field at Lower McCorkle is regularly used by soccer teams, field hockey players, and various organizations such as the Gahanna Soccer Association, i9 Sports, and other Gahanna teams. He also noted that the field is used by individuals and groups who enjoy playing for fun. Despite this, he said the City plans to displace the field with a cement skate park and possibly other venues, even though space is limited and safety concerns are significant due to the narrow road and the heavy pedestrian traffic from the nearby rehabilitation center, senior living facility, and residential neighborhoods. Mr. Kurtz emphasized that the skate park would negatively impact the natural beauty of the area. He made it clear that he and the community are not opposed to the idea of a skate park, but Lower McCorkle Park is not the appropriate location. He referenced his visit to the Westerville Skate and BMX complex, which is situated in a non-residential area with plenty of space for further development. He suggested that the former Shull Park site would be an ideal location for the skate park, as it shares similar characteristics with Westerville's site and has ample room for growth. If Shull Park is not an option, Mr. Kurtz and others have identified other possible locations, such as the area adjacent to the swimming pool on the north side, which would be far more suitable. Mr. Kurtz concluded by stating that an unbiased observer would likely conclude that Lower McCorkle Park is not a suitable location for the skate park or any future developments. He posed the question to the Council: "Why Lower McCorkle?"

President Bowers then reminded the audience that, as per the Council's typical format, they do not respond during the Hearing of Visitors but anticipated that Councilmembers would share comments later during the meeting. She thanked all attendees for coming.

## **E. CONSENT AGENDA:**

### **1. Minutes - To Approve:**

[2024-0178](#)

Council Special Minutes 9.16.2024

**The minutes were approved on the Consent Agenda.**

[2024-0179](#) Council Regular Minutes 9.16.2024

The minutes were approved on the Consent Agenda.

[2024-0180](#) Committee of the Whole Minutes 9.23.2024

The minutes were approved on the Consent Agenda.

## 2. Resolutions:

[RES-0035-2024](#) A JOINT RESOLUTION AND PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING OCTOBER 6, 2024, AS NATIONAL COACHES DAY IN THE CITY OF GAHANNA

The Resolution was adopted on the Consent Agenda.

## 3. Ordinances for Second Reading and Adoption:

[ORD-0056-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE ACCEPTING PUBLIC WATER IMPROVEMENTS AND EASEMENT ASSOCIATED WITH THE DISCOVERY STORAGE DEVELOPMENT LOCATED AT 4569 MORSE ROAD

The Clerk read the Ordinance by title. The Ordinance was adopted on the Consent Agenda.

[ORD-0058-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO PROVIDE CONSENT AND ENTER A PARTICIPATORY AGREEMENT WITH THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT ON WYNNE RIDGE COURT

The Clerk read the Ordinance by title. The Ordinance was adopted on the Consent Agenda.

[ORD-0059-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY ATTORNEY OR THE CITY ATTORNEY'S DESIGNEE TO FILE FOR APPROPRIATION OF RIGHT-OF-WAY AND TEMPORARY CONSTRUCTION EASEMENT FOR 986 RIDGE CREST DRIVE, PARCEL ID 025-010858; SAYOKO T. CULLEN, OWNER; IN FURTHERANCE OF THE WYNNE RIDGE COURT BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

The Clerk read the Ordinance by title. The Ordinance was adopted on the Consent Agenda.

[ORD-0060-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY ATTORNEY OR THE CITY ATTORNEY'S DESIGNEE TO FILE FOR APPROPRIATION OF RIGHT-OF-WAY AND TEMPORARY CONSTRUCTION EASEMENT FOR 320 WYNNE RIDGE COURT, PARCEL ID 025-010865; LAUREN RENNER AND PETER RENNER, OWNERS; IN FURTHERANCE OF THE WYNNE RIDGE COURT BRIDGE

## REPLACEMENT PROJECT

The Clerk read the Ordinance by title. The Ordinance was adopted on the Consent Agenda.

**End of Consent Agenda**

A motion was made by Schnetzer, seconded by Renner, to Pass the Consent Agenda. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Yes:** 6 - Bowers, Jones, McGregor, Padova, Renner and Schnetzer

**Absent:** 1 - Weaver

**F. RESOLUTIONS:****[RES-0032-2024](#) A RESOLUTION ACCEPTING THE 2024 STAFFING STUDY**

President Bowers noted the staffing study was discussed at the previous Committee of the Whole meeting. The version before Council on this agenda contained amendments to the original resolution discussed during Committee. Specifically, Council would be accepting the Staffing Study, not adopting it.

A motion was made by Schnetzer, seconded by Renner, that the Resolution be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Yes:** 6 - Bowers, Jones, McGregor, Padova, Renner and Schnetzer

**Absent:** 1 - Weaver

**G. ORDINANCES FOR SECOND READING / ADOPTION:****[ORD-0054-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE TO ADOPT AMENDMENTS TO PART FIVE GENERAL OFFENSES 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**

President Bowers noted that there was a request to amend Ordinance 0054-2024, which involved approving and adopting the amended substitute Exhibit A. This amendment pertains to the revisions of Part Five, General Offense Code sections of the codified ordinances of the City of Gahanna. The amendments were previously presented to the Council during the last Committee of the Whole by City Attorney Tamarlasan.

A motion was made by Schnetzer, seconded by Renner, that the Ordinance be Amended by Substitution of EXHIBIT A. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Yes:** 6 - Bowers, Jones, McGregor, Padova, Renner and Schnetzer

**Absent:** 1 - Weaver



**A motion was made by Renner, seconded by Jones, that the Ordinance be Adopted as Amended. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Yes:** 6 - Bowers, Jones, McGregor, Padova, Renner and Schnetzer

**Absent:** 1 - Weaver

[ORD-0057-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE ACCEPTING CRESCENT PLACE PUBLIC ROADWAY, WATER MAIN, STORM SEWER, AND SANITARY SEWER PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CRESCENT WOODS DEVELOPMENT

**A motion was made by Renner, seconded by Padova, that the Ordinance be Adopted. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Yes:** 6 - Bowers, Jones, McGregor, Padova, Renner and Schnetzer

**Absent:** 1 - Weaver

[ORD-0061-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ACCEPT AND ENTER INTO AN ACCESS AGREEMENT WITH OHIO POWER COMPANY, SUCCESSOR-IN-INTEREST TO COLUMBUS AND SOUTHERN OHIO ELECTRIC COMPANY, FOR PUBLIC SAFETY VEHICULAR ACCESS TO 825 TECH CENTER DRIVE; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY

President Bowers noted that there had been a discussion to amend Ordinance 0061-2024 to adopt the proposed substitute Exhibit A, which pertains to an access agreement. She mentioned that a redline version of the agreement was included in the Councilmembers' materials for review.

**A motion was made by Schnetzer, seconded by Renner, that the Ordinance be Amended by Substitution of EXHIBIT A. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Yes:** 6 - Bowers, Jones, McGregor, Padova, Renner and Schnetzer

**Absent:** 1 - Weaver

**A motion was made by Jones, seconded by Schnetzer, that the Ordinance be Adopted, as Amended, as an Emergency. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Yes:** 6 - Bowers, Jones, McGregor, Padova, Renner and Schnetzer

**Absent:** 1 - Weaver

**H. CORRESPONDENCE AND ACTIONS:**

**1. Clerk**

**Application for National Historical Publications & Records Commission**

Mr. VanMeter reported to the Council that Deputy Clerk of Council, Sophia

McGuire, had applied for an appointment through the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA) for a position on the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), which is part of the National Archives. He explained that the NHPRC is a 15-member body representing various branches of the federal government, as well as professional associations of archivists, historians, and records administrators. McGuire had submitted an extensive application, and a decision would be made by late fall. Mr. VanMeter detailed the responsibilities of the NHPRC position, which includes attending biannual meetings at the Historic Archives Building in Washington, D.C., with travel expenses covered by the NHPRC. The main duty of the commission is to review 50 to 60 grant applications. He highlighted Sophia's qualifications, which include her successful experience with grant applications for the City, her previous work in records preservation, her professional certifications in records and archives, and her involvement in NAGARA presentations. He expressed optimism about her chances and hoped to report back with good news in the fall.

President Bowers asked if there were any questions from the Council and then wished Deputy Clerk McGuire the best of luck in her pursuit of the position.

## **2. Council - None.**

### **I. REPRESENTATIVES:**

#### **1. Community Improvement Corporation (CIC) - Renner, Weaver**

Councilmember Renner mentioned that he was unable to attend the last CIC meeting. However, he noted that Mr. Weaver would provide a detailed report at the next Council meeting. He also announced that the next CIC meeting is scheduled for October 22, 2024 at 8:00 a.m. in the Committee Room.

#### **2. Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) - Weaver**

[2024-0182](#)

Councilmember Weaver's MORPC Report to City Council 10.7.2024

President Bowers reported that Mr. Weaver was absent due to illness but had submitted a written report to the Council, dated that day. The report included updates and initiatives from MORPC. President Bowers highlighted that MORPC offers a member benefit where members can engage in discounted training facilitated by the YWCA, encouraging Councilmembers to review the information in Mr. Weaver's report.

#### **3. Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) - Padova**

Councilmember Padova noted no additional information, as Council had received a full presentation earlier in the evening.

#### 4. School Board (SB) - Jones

Councilmember Jones began by celebrating several achievements from the district. Matt Blackwell, who works in IT for the district, received the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA) Exemplary School Employee Award. Additionally, School Board President Kara Coates was appointed to the OSBA Central Region Executive Committee. Jones also acknowledged media teacher Mark Lowrie, the state Teacher of the Year, as well as Curriculum Director Tia Holliman and High School Principal Jessica Williams, who recently attended a back-to-school event at the White House. Jones shared that the district received four stars on the Ohio School Report Card, signifying that the district exceeds state standards. This was discussed in detail at the last workshop meeting, held the previous Thursday, and she encouraged everyone to watch the recording online for more information. Lastly, Jones reminded the Council that the next regular School Board meeting is scheduled for October 17, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. at Clark Hall.

#### J. OFFICIAL REPORTS:

##### 1. Mayor

Mayor Jadwin addressed the Council and shared several updates. She began by congratulating the City of Gahanna team for receiving the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Distinguished Budget Presentation Award, which is the highest recognition in governmental accounting and financial reporting. She highlighted that this achievement was the result of contributions from all City departments and praised the professionalism of the team, particularly the Finance Director, Joann Bury, and her staff. This marked the 11th consecutive year Gahanna has received the award.

Mayor Jadwin also thanked the Gahanna Historical Society for hosting the Mill Street Market the previous Sunday despite the rain. She noted that many community members and City staff, including Director Ferrell, Director Schultz, Director Vollmer, Director Wybensing, and Chief Spence, were present and engaged with the public on a variety of City projects, including the 825 Tech Center Drive project and the City's aggregation plan. Mayor Jadwin then mentioned the City's upcoming strategic plan and encouraged public involvement over the next 12 to 14 months as the City defines its future vision. She also announced the launch of the comprehensive transportation and mobility plan, which will address roadways, traffic management, bike lanes, and pedestrian facilities. As part of this effort, renowned city planner Jeff Speck will be leading a community conversation on walkability in Gahanna. This free event will take place on Wednesday, October 30, 2024, at the Menlo at Franklin Peak.

Mayor Jadwin also shared news of new communication panels being installed in four Gahanna parks to assist individuals who are nonverbal or have limited speech abilities. These panels will be placed in Friendship Park,

Hannah Park, Woodside Green, and Sunpoint Park, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony scheduled for Saturday, October 19, 2024.

In addition, the Mayor reminded the community of the upcoming Town Halls on energy aggregation, scheduled for October 22, 2024, with two sessions at noon and 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

Addressing comments from the public regarding the proposed Action Sports Park, Mayor Jadwin emphasized that the City is still in the early stages of evaluating the feasibility of the project. She clarified that no decision has been made about building the park at Lower McCorkle Park or any other location. OHM Advisors, the consultant hired for the project, has been tasked with conducting a feasibility study, which includes evaluating environmental and traffic impacts, designing concepts, and engaging the public. The Mayor stressed that public engagement is just beginning, and no final decisions have been made. Mayor Jadwin acknowledged the many residents who had reached out to her individually and explained that she preferred holding a larger community meeting to address everyone's concerns at once, ensuring consistent information is shared. She confirmed that a community meeting will be scheduled within the next two to three weeks and encouraged all residents to attend. She concluded by expressing her confidence in the professionalism of the City's directors, noting that they are passionate about their work and are dedicated to serving the community. She reiterated that the City follows established processes for every project and encouraged residents to reach out to her for further discussion. The Mayor promised to notify residents when the community meeting is scheduled.

## 2. City Attorney

City Attorney Tamilarasan expressed her gratitude for the passage of the ordinance updating the City's criminal code. She explained that her role involves overseeing the prosecution and defense of offenses and litigation within the City, including cases in both Mayor's Court and Franklin County Municipal Court for misdemeanor offenses. Ms. Tamilarasan announced a new development regarding the handling of first-time OVI (Operating a Vehicle Impaired) offenses. Currently, OVI citations are typically directed to Franklin County Municipal Court, which comes with costs for the City to use the court system. In collaboration with the Police Department and City Administration, the decision has been made to shift the prosecution of first-time OVI offenses to Gahanna's Mayor's Court. To provide context, she noted that in September alone, there were 28 OVI citations, and the City has recorded 172 OVI citations to date for the year. A significant portion of these are first-time offenses, which carry a mandatory minimum fine of \$375. By prosecuting these cases in Mayor's Court, the City would retain this revenue, allowing for reinvestment into the community rather than paying to use the Franklin County Municipal Court. Ms. Tamilarasan offered to provide more detailed information about the pros and cons of the change, as well as the benefits it would bring to the City. She invited anyone with questions about the ins and outs of Mayor's Court to reach out to her for further discussion.

## K. COUNCIL COMMENT:

Councilmember Jones provided an update on her September constituent newsletter, which was attached to the meeting agenda. She highlighted her passion for celebrating Juneteenth in the community, noting that although the holiday is still months away, preparations are underway. She is forming a committee of residents to brainstorm ideas for the event in collaboration with Lori Kappes and Visit Gahanna. Jones invited residents of all backgrounds and ages to participate. She also gave a shoutout to the Gahanna GEAR program, which focuses on job readiness for disabled members of the community. Jones had recently spoken with interns from the program and encouraged Council colleagues, the Mayor, and local businesses to get involved. She noted that the program relies on local businesses to offer placements for interns to gain valuable skills. Jones concluded by acknowledging the residents who attended the meeting to express their concerns. She emphasized that silence from certain Councilmembers should not be interpreted as a lack of support or understanding. She assured residents that they are heard and expressed her commitment to attending as many community meetings as possible, where Sunshine Laws allow, to stay engaged in the conversation.

Councilmember McGregor thanked the community for attending the recent Mill Street Market. Despite the rainy weather, many vendors reported a successful day with good sales, as community members came together to enjoy the event. She also expressed gratitude to Mr. Schnetzer for his work on the coaches' resolution, noting the dedication of local coaches who spend countless hours supporting young athletes. McGregor shared her personal experience coaching Gahanna Soccer Association teams for eight seasons and highlighted the hard work of swim coaches, like her son-in-law, who work tirelessly to support young swimmers. McGregor then addressed the concerns surrounding the proposed Action Park on Ridenour Road. She provided historical context about the road, recalling that years ago, there were discussions about closing Ridenour Road due to safety concerns. However, after a survey of residents, the overwhelming response was against closure, as many enjoyed the peaceful drive home on the quiet, shaded road. As a compromise, the speed limit was lowered to 15 mph, and signs were posted indicating that the road was primarily a bike trail, with cars tolerated. McGregor said she still has one of the original signs in her backyard. She expressed concern over the potential impact of the Action Park on this unique and quiet road, emphasizing that Ridenour Road is narrow, with blind spots, frequent flooding, and no berms, making it difficult for cars to pass each other safely. Additionally, she mentioned that part of the area near the parking lot is designated as a wetland, sold for wetland credits, meaning it could not be expanded. McGregor concluded by emphasizing the importance of understanding the history of the area as conversations about the Action Park continue.

Councilmember Padova began her comments by echoing Councilmember Jones' earlier remarks, stating that Jones had effectively covered everything she wanted to say. She thanked the residents for coming to share their thoughts on the park and expressed her hope that throughout the process, everyone would continue listening and working together toward a shared direction. Padova also thanked Councilmember Schnetzer for his work on

the coaches' resolution, noting that Schnetzer is himself a coach, frequently involved in various sports like football and baseball. She concluded her comments by expressing her appreciation for his dedication and effort.

Councilmember Renner thanked the administration for its work on the City's aggregation initiative. He noted that President Bowers had earlier reminded everyone of the City's goals to reduce greenhouse gases and responsibly manage natural resources. Renner explained that joining Power Clean Future Ohio (PCFO) had led to more discussions on electrical aggregation and how it aligned with Gahanna's broader goals of environmental stewardship, community well-being, and economic vitality. He acknowledged the partnership between the Administration and Council in moving these initiatives forward. Renner then shifted focus to the public process, acknowledging that sometimes government actions and reports may seem confusing or opaque to residents. He expressed empathy for those who feel out of the loop but assured the public that Council is focused on the details of ensuring that Gahanna remains a valuable, vibrant community—not just monetarily but also in terms of community spirit and well-being. Speaking specifically about the Action Park proposal, Renner emphasized that while the concept of the park is appealing, the process of evaluating its feasibility at Lower McCorkle Park has raised concerns. He admitted he did not understand how the park became associated with that location and reiterated his personal commitment to environmental preservation, referencing his long-term use of an electric vehicle and his pursuit of a master's degree in sustainability and resiliency. Renner explained that hiring OHM Advisors to conduct a feasibility study was a necessary step to determine whether an Action Park would work in the area and how it might look. He acknowledged that the process, while necessary, could appear messy or concerning to residents, especially when the City spends money and produces reports. However, he stressed that the City is still in the information-gathering stage and no final decisions have been made. He urged residents to trust the process and stay engaged. Renner pointed out that engagement with City officials has generally declined, with few people attending meetings unless a major issue arises. He thanked the residents who had shown up to voice their opinions and encouraged them to remain involved, reiterating that their participation is crucial. Renner concluded by emphasizing the importance of public trust and accountability, inviting the public to continue holding the Council and administration to high standards, and welcoming feedback if he or his colleagues fall short. Renner's closing remarks expressed his passion for serving the community, and he urged residents to continue working together as the City moves forward.

Councilmember Schnetzer began by congratulating Finance Director Joann Bury and her team for receiving the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Distinguished Budget Award. He noted that Bury has likely run out of space to display her numerous awards and emphasized how much the Council values her expertise. He also thanked the guests from the Foxboro Barracudas, Gahanna Soccer Association (GSA), Junior League, and Gahanna Lions Youth Football League for attending the meeting and accepting the Coaches Day resolutions on behalf of their volunteer coaches. Schnetzer expressed gratitude to everyone who attended the meeting,

especially those who stayed until the end. He acknowledged how scarce time can be and appreciated their participation in the governmental process. On the topic of the Action Sports Park, Schnetzer mentioned that he and President Bowers have a meeting scheduled with many of the residents affected by the proposed project. He also noted that due to Sunshine Laws, not all Councilmembers could attend, but reassured residents that everyone was engaged in the process. Schnetzer concluded on a lighter note, announcing that Gahanna Youth Football's junior division finished the regular season with two undefeated teams-Gahanna White (5-0) and Gahanna Gold (6-0)-and both teams had earned top seeds in the playoffs. He shared that Vice President Chris Johnson had reminded the coaches that their hard work was building the foundation for a strong future varsity football team.

President Bowers thanked Chief Spence and Lieutenant Moffitt for their valuable discussions on best practices earlier that morning. She extended congratulations to Director Bury for the GFOA recognition and to Kari Hawk and the Historical Society for another successful Mill Street Market, which Bowers noted is one of her favorite events. She also thanked Director Schultz and Deputy Director Wybensinger for their work on the City's aggregation program and communication tools, which were helpful during her conversations with residents. Bowers expressed appreciation for the residents who remained at the meeting, emphasizing that their comments were well-received and part of the democratic process. She shared her own experience as a resident before joining the Council, when a multifamily residential development near her home had been proposed, she and her neighbors got involved to express concerns over the impact that lighting, lack of screening, and garbage deliveries would have. Bowers encouraged continued participation in both formal and informal settings, and looked forward to engaging with residents at future meetings, including the upcoming one on Thursday. She also briefly mentioned the CIP (Capital Improvement Plan) Advisory Committee meeting that took place earlier in the day, noting that although the process was bumpy in its first year, the City is committed to improving how the budget is discussed and delivered. In closing, Bowers gave a "quick point of privilege" to congratulate the Gahanna Junior League A-Minor Reds on their championship win and the Brewers on their runner-up finish. She expressed her joy in participating in the league and looked forward to a continued relationship with them.

Councilmember Schnetzer added a final comment, recognizing the difficult choice President Bowers made by attending the Council meeting rather than watching her child's championship game. He praised her for her dedication to the Council, acknowledging how challenging that decision must have been. President Bowers proudly shared that her child was named MVP of the game, a moment that made her especially proud.

[2024-0192](#)

Councilmember Merisa K. Bowers' Constituent Report - August 2024

[2024-0193](#)

Councilmember Jamille Jones' Constituent Report - September 2024

**L. EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

**A motion was made by Schnetzer, seconded by Renner, to go into Executive Session under authority of Section 5.40(c) of the Council Rules of Procedure to confer with the City Attorney for the public body concerning disputes involving the public body that are the subject of pending or imminent court action.**

The motion carried by the following vote:

**Yes:** 6 - Bowers, Jones, McGregor, Padova, Renner and Schnetzer

**Absent:** 1 - Weaver

President Bowers announced that Council would meet in Executive Session in the Law Library. Mayor Jadwin and City Attorney Tamilarasan were invited to attend the Executive Session.

Council rose to report to Executive Session at 9:06 p.m.

Council rose to report from Executive Session at 9:18 p.m. with no further action.

**M. ADJOURNMENT:**

*With no further business before the Council, President Bowers adjourned the meeting at 9:18 p.m.*

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**Jeremy A. VanMeter**  
Clerk of Council

*APPROVED by the City Council, this  
day of 2024.*

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**Merisa K. Bowers**