



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Finance Committee

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

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

Jeremy A. VanMeter, Clerk of Council

Monday, November 18, 2024

City Hall, Council Chambers

Immediately following City Council at 7:00 PM on November 18, 2024

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Councilmember Michael Schnetzer, Chair, called the meeting to order on November 18, 2024, at 8:24 p.m. The agenda was published on November 15, 2024. All members were present for the meeting. There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

B. DISCUSSIONS:

Public Service and Engineering Budgets

[ORD-0065-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING APPROPRIATIONS FOR CURRENT EXPENSES AND OTHER EXPENDITURES OF THE CITY OF GAHANNA DURING THE FISCAL YEAR 2025

Chairman Schnetzer opened the meeting, stating that the only item on the agenda was the continuation of the discussion on the 2025 budget proposal. He noted that, unlike in previous years when the entire budget was reviewed as a whole, this year the budget was being addressed in sections by department. He clarified that the focus of the evening's presentation and discussion would be on the Public Service and Engineering budgets. Chairman Schnetzer then turned the floor over to Miranda Vollmer, Senior Director of Administrative Services.

Public Service Achievements, Priorities, Expenditures & Revenue

Senior Director Vollmer explained that the meeting would start with the Public Service Department, with all capital items for both Public Service and Engineering to be presented at the end. She noted that the presentation would cover expenditures, revenue, and staffing for Public Service, followed by a similar discussion for Engineering.

Director Vollmer provided an overview of the 2024 achievements for the Public Service Department, which were organized by division:

Fleet: The department created a comprehensive Capital Equipment Replacement Schedule in conjunction with the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Streets Division: Successfully replaced and updated 20 mile per hour (mph) school zone flashers with light-emitting diode (LED) bulbs.

Utilities Division: Responded to over 1,200 service calls and nearly 5,000 Ohio Utilities Protection Service (OUPS) tickets.

Customer Service: Successfully hired staff, including a supervisor, and transitioned to a city-wide customer service model, now housed under the Public Service Department.

Director Vollmer then outlined the department's priorities for 2025, which include establishing an in-house street sweeping program, creating a sign shop, resuming the leak detection program, hiring a facilities superintendent, and assisting with the coordination and planning for the move of City operations to the new municipal complex.

Director Vollmer continued by presenting the Public Service Department's funding and expenditures. She explained that the department is funded through various sources, with slides detailing the following: General Fund Expenditures for Public Service, Special Fund Expenditures, including the Street Fund and State Highway Fund, and Proprietary Fund Expenditures, covering Stormwater, Water Capital, Sewer, and Sewer Capital funds. Director Vollmer also addressed the Public Service Department's revenue. She explained that the slides covered revenue sources in the same order as expenditures: General Fund revenue, Special funds, and Proprietary funds.

Cable Franchise Fees Discussion

Director Vollmer responded to a question about the anticipated \$439,000 reduction in fines and fee revenue noted on page 104 of the budget. She clarified that the reduction was due to cable franchise fees being moved out of their previous fund and into the Right of Way Fund.

Chairman Schnetzer requested further clarification about the repositioning of cable franchise fees and asked about the reasoning behind moving the funds.

Joann Bury, Director of Finance, explained that after further review, it was determined that cable franchise fees align better with the purpose of the Right of Way Fund. She noted that these fees are intended for managing the right of ways that cable franchises utilize, and it made more sense to group them with other Right of Way-related revenues.

Chairman Schnetzer asked if this change had been a point of discussion in

audits or reviews conducted by the state or other entities. Director Bury clarified that it had not raised any concerns in audits.

2025 Staffing Requests

Director Vollmer presented the 2025 staffing requests for the Department of Public Service. Under the Priority One category, the department requested the addition of a Facilities Superintendent and one Service Maintenance Worker II for facilities. In the Priority Two category, the department requested three Public Service Seasonal Laborers. She referred to the organizational chart on the following slide, which depicted these staffing priorities.

Director Vollmer described how the divisions listed on page 99 of the budget fit within the organizational chart on page 101. She clarified that divisions shown in all caps and underlined on the chart correspond to those discussed at the beginning of the Department of Public Service narrative.

She provided a breakdown of the organizational structure:

Utility Billing Division: To be renamed the Customer Service Division, including a Customer Service Supervisor, a Management Analyst, and three Customer Service Specialists.

Facilities Division: Currently consists of one Facilities Foreman, a unionized position. The budget request includes the addition of a Facilities Superintendent and one Service Maintenance Worker II, as recommended in the staffing study.

Water, Sanitary, and Storm Water Divisions: Includes the Utility Superintendent and employees associated with water and utility functions.

Streets Division: Includes a Superintendent, a Foreman, and Maintenance Workers. Seasonal laborers would report to this division.

Fleet Division: Overseen by a Superintendent and Fleet Technicians, this division, though not included in the budget book, falls under Public Service.

Administrative Division: Includes the Manager of Projects and the Program and Compliance Administrator, who oversee and manage Ohio EPA and federal EPA reporting requirements.

President Bowers asked if the organizational chart on page 101 would be updated to reflect this information in the final budget. Director Vollmer confirmed that it would be updated.

Director Vollmer noted that page 102 of the budget regards the apprenticeship program for fleet technicians, potential industry changes, and anticipated costs. She explained that one of the department's 2024 objectives was to establish an apprenticeship program for fleet technicians in response to one technician's retirement and two additional notices of retirement. Efforts to

work with local career centers to establish the program are ongoing and will continue into 2025. Director Vollmer highlighted industry changes that the apprenticeship program aims to address, specifically the maintenance of electric vehicles (EVs). The program will ensure fleet technicians are trained to service EVs, reducing the need to send them to outside facilities. Additionally, the program will help plan for the known retirements in the department. Costs associated with the program would include those for interns, contingent upon establishing a partnership with a local career center.

Director Vollmer then moved to page 103 regarding the need for the Facilities Superintendent position. She clarified that while the City currently has a Facilities Division, it is staffed by only one Facilities Foreman, a unionized position. The proposed Facilities Superintendent position has been budgeted for seven months in 2025, with an anticipated hiring date in May or June. The Facilities Superintendent's responsibilities will include managing the day-to-day operations of City facilities, such as the Municipal Complex, the service garage, and the fleet garage (shared with the schools). The superintendent will ensure the facilities are safe, sustainable, and efficient, operating within a set budget. They will also manage the facility's budget and contracts associated with the City's various buildings.

Vice President Weaver asked Director Vollmer to elaborate on the responsibilities of the proposed Facilities Superintendent prior to the transition to the new municipal complex at 825 Tech Center Drive.

Director Vollmer explained that the Facilities Superintendent would be responsible for tasks such as managing the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, overseeing warranties, and ensuring proper contracts are in place. These are management-level tasks unsuitable for unionized employees under collective bargaining statutes. Additionally, the superintendent would assist in determining whether cleaning services should be contracted out or staffed internally, as well as facilitating the transition of equipment, personnel, and materials to the new facility. Once the transition is complete, the superintendent would oversee the new municipal complex, manage the current property at 200 South Hamilton Road while it remains under City ownership, and oversee the service complex.

Vice President Weaver asked where the workload for the Facilities Superintendent role currently falls. Director Vollmer stated that without this position, these responsibilities would fall to Director Anverse. However, under Ohio Revised Code and collective bargaining agreements, many of these tasks cannot legally be assigned to a unionized employee.

Senior Director of Operations Kevin Schultz added details about the specific responsibilities of the Facilities Superintendent. He highlighted the need for oversight of preventive maintenance and service contracts for the new municipal complex, which will feature more sophisticated systems, such as HVAC and access controls, requiring specialized management. The superintendent would ensure systems are functioning properly, coordinate contractor visits for maintenance like filter replacements, and oversee or manage janitorial staff or contracts to maintain cleanliness and upkeep.

Director Schultz provided an example, explaining that if the building's access control system malfunctioned, it would fall under the Facilities Superintendent's responsibilities to address the issue rather than the Police Department, who would only report the problem. He emphasized that this separation of work is necessary as it does not fall under the responsibilities of director-level staff, nor is it appropriate for the current foreman to handle under the collective bargaining agreement.

Vice President Weaver asked about the current management of janitorial staff or contractors. Director Schultz confirmed that while technically overseen by Director Anverse, in practice, these responsibilities fall to the Facilities Foreman, which is less than ideal given the limitations imposed by collective bargaining agreements.

President Bowers clarified whether or not the Service Maintenance Worker II was an unclassified position. Director Vollmer responded that it was a unionized position.

Clarification on Garage Maintenance Expenditure

Director Vollmer noted on page 138 of the budget, garage maintenance, as a planned expenditure from the Public Service Special Fund in 2025. She clarified that this expenditure is specifically for the maintenance of the Creekside Parking Garage, not for maintenance work performed within other garages.

Engineering Achievements, Priorities, Expenditures and Revenue

Director Vollmer provided an overview of the Engineering Department's 2024 achievements. Key accomplishments included the completion of the Taylor Station roundabout, water system improvements such as the water tower, Havens Corners, and Claycraft waterline replacements, successful staffing of the department through internal promotions, and the execution of annual street and sidewalk programs. She then outlined the 2025 priorities for the Engineering Department, which include finalizing design, permitting, and bidding for construction of the Creekside Flood Mitigation project, advancing the West Gahanna Sanitary Relief Sewer project, adopting the Comprehensive Transportation and Mobility Plan for integration into the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), and progressing the Wynne Ridge Bridge Project. Director Vollmer presented slides detailing the expenditures for the Engineering Department, funded through the special fund (Public Service Fund), followed by projected revenues for that fund.

Director Schultz introduced the capital requests for 2025, broken into three main categories: 1) Transportation and Mobility (Section 4 of the CIP document), 2) Utility Systems (Water, Sanitary, and Storm) (Section 5 of the CIP document), and 3) Equipment Purchases (Section 8 of the CIP document). He explained that equipment spans multiple departments, with the evening's discussion focusing on items related to wheeled assets.

Director Schultz highlighted key updates and accomplishments:

Speed Awareness Signs: For the first time, the department procured materials and completed installations internally, saving approximately 40% per sign compared to previous outsourcing practices. This initiative reflects efforts by the Street Superintendent to enhance in-house capabilities.

Street Rebuild and Asphalt Overlay Program: Continued success with annual maintenance programs.

Streetlight Painting: Nearly 300 streetlights were painted in 2024 despite challenges with securing bids. To maintain progress, the department solicited quotations under the bid threshold and completed a portion of the work. Plans to paint 600 streetlights were deferred, but Schultz noted that the simplified bid process may allow for greater progress in 2025.

Waterline Replacements: The Claycraft and Havens Corners waterline projects were completed.

Fleet Condition Assessment: Comprehensive evaluations of wheeled assets led to the decommissioning and replacement of various vehicles, including police cruisers.

Ongoing projects include the Hamilton Road Bridge construction and the Tech Center Drive traffic signal. Schultz noted that the Comprehensive Transportation and Mobility Plan, while not directly a capital project, will guide the future direction of the CIP. He also referenced the West Gahanna Sanitary Relief Sewer project, which was previously presented in detail to Council.

President Bowers asked if there were plans for additional speed awareness signs in 2025. Director Schultz explained that all planned installations had been completed and there were no new requests for 2025. However, he noted that savings from in-house work allowed for the installation of an additional sign, bringing the total to four signs. Schultz mentioned that any future requests, including one residential suggestion submitted via Facebook, would be evaluated accordingly.

President Bowers reminded the Council of the upcoming CIP Advisory Committee meeting on December 10, 2024. She highlighted the importance of this meeting in identifying and discussing projects collaboratively with Council. She expressed gratitude for the continued progress and the transparent process that supports these efforts.

Capital Requests

Director Schultz continued the discussion by outlining the capital requests for 2025, focusing on Transportation and Mobility, Utility Systems, and equipment purchases. He explained that the presentation would cover wheeled assets from the equipment budget. Using a pie chart, he emphasized that Transportation and Mobility accounted for the largest portion of the \$8.485 million capital investment. He acknowledged that one slide required updating

but assured the Council that the overall total was accurate and that an updated version would be submitted for inclusion in the minutes.

Director Schultz detailed the Transportation and Mobility projects, dividing them into capital maintenance projects and other capital programs. He explained that the five capital maintenance requests for 2025 totaled \$7.295 million. These projects included cyclical programs for street maintenance, sidewalk maintenance, and infrastructure upgrades.

He described the Street Light Maintenance and Upgrades project as including streetlight painting and converting incandescent bulbs to LEDs. The Traffic Control Maintenance and Upgrades project involved updating pedestrian lights, crosswalks, traffic signals, and detection cameras. The Street Maintenance Program was divided into the Asphalt Overlay Program for resurfacing streets and the Street Rebuild Program, which targeted streets requiring significant repairs. For 2025, \$6.2 million was allocated to the Street Rebuild Program. Schultz also discussed the Sidewalk Maintenance Program, which began in 2024 and integrated sidewalk work with street maintenance in the same geographical areas. Additionally, the Lookback Sidewalk Program addressed sidewalk maintenance from 2021 through 2023, with plans to include future years in the program. He noted that water and stormwater line replacements were incorporated into some street and sidewalk projects, allowing the department to use Water Capital and Stormwater funds in addition to capital funds. Schultz highlighted specific projects, including portions of Rocky Fork Drive and Laura and Heil Streets, which fall within a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district. These projects will utilize TIF dollars for their rebuilds.

Vice President Weaver expressed appreciation for the presentation slide detailing the \$6.2 million investment in the City's streets. He shared that during his preparation, he had attempted to compile a total for street program investments and noted the clarity the slide provided. Weaver inquired about the street program investment for the current year and how it compared to 2025.

Director Schultz responded that the investment for 2025 was similar to the previous year, though the \$6.2 million figure included waterline and sidewalk work in addition to street, curb, and gutter investments. He explained that determining the exact 2024 allocation would require reviewing contracts and performing calculations, which he offered to provide later. Weaver acknowledged the rising costs of construction and emphasized the importance of maintaining robust funding for the street program, calling it one of the City's best initiatives.

Mayor Jadwin provided additional context, noting that the bids accepted for the 2024 street and sidewalk program totaled approximately \$5.2 - \$5.3 million, including contingencies and inspections. This amount encompassed \$4.9 million for the street and sidewalk program, \$30,000 for crack and micro-surfacing, and \$290,000 for golf course path improvements. Jadwin clarified that the \$290,000 golf course portion could be excluded from comparisons of street investments.

President Bowers asked for clarification regarding the \$750,000 allocated to the sidewalk maintenance program and whether it included the three-year catch-up program and 2025 investments. Schultz explained that the \$750,000 was a portion of the three-year catch-up program. He added that the City was working to break the catch-up program into manageable phases to align resources with project requirements. Schultz emphasized that the goal of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is to match resources with project needs rather than maintaining a fixed dollar allocation year over year. He explained that inflation and rising construction costs sometimes require reprioritizing projects, which may lead to adjustments in the scope of the street program. He noted that balancing resources across multiple sectors is critical to addressing the City's broader needs, citing the decision to defer the Academy Park parking lot project as an example of managing funding spikes.

Chairman Schnetzer referenced past discussions about the pavement condition rating (PCR) metric and asked whether it was still being used. Director of Engineering Tom Komlanc explained that the City transitioned to using an optical pavement scan to calculate a Pavement Condition Index (PCI), which is slightly different from the PCR metric. Komlanc noted that the PCI score focuses on pavement condition, while the PCR included additional factors like curb and gutter conditions. Combining the PCI and curb ratings would provide an apples-to-apples comparison with the former PCR. Schnetzer reiterated the importance of tracking pavement condition metrics to assess the City's progress and service levels. Schultz clarified that the intent of recent discussions around service levels referred to need-based metrics rather than dollar amounts. He emphasized that while the goal is to address community needs effectively, financial resources are finite, and the CIP Advisory Committee must prioritize projects thoughtfully to balance competing demands.

President Bowers sought clarification about specific service level questions referenced in the discussion. Schultz highlighted a question that appeared to define service levels by a dollar amount, noting that he interpreted the intent as maintaining service levels based on community needs rather than fixed monetary figures. He explained that inflation and fluctuating costs necessitate flexibility in programming to ensure that resources are allocated effectively across various sectors.

Chairman Schnetzer noted the importance of balancing investments in infrastructure, stating that the City does not need "gold-plated streets" but must meet a minimum standard that has been consistently discussed in Council meetings over the years. He emphasized the need for a clear plan to achieve this standard. Director Kevin Schultz agreed with this assessment.

President Bowers referenced the previous discussion about pavement condition metrics and inquired whether the PCI (Pavement Condition Index) used today is similar to the PCR (Pavement Condition Rating) previously employed, which operates on a 100-point scale. Director Komlanc confirmed that the PCI also uses a 100-point scale and explained that a score in the 50 to 60 range typically indicates a need for major rebuilding, while acceptable

scores are generally 70 or higher. President Bowers recalled that past service goals aimed to bring all streets to a score of at least 70 to 75 and asked if the City was still on track to achieve that goal. Chairman Schnetzer and Director Schultz confirmed that the 70 target was familiar and was set because it represented an efficient service level for street maintenance. Director Schultz stated that, based on the current definition of service levels, the City was tracking well toward maintaining streets at a 70-75 score or above. He added that funding levels to achieve this target may vary year by year, adjusting for inflation and other factors.

Director Bury mentioned that the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) includes detailed information about pavement condition ratings, budget allocations, and expenditures over the past three years. She offered to provide this report to Councilmembers, noting that it is also available on the City's website.

President Bowers expressed appreciation for the \$750,000 allocated to the sidewalk maintenance program, noting that sidewalk-related issues are among the most frequent complaints she receives from residents. She explained that residents are often frustrated when streets are improved, but sidewalks are not addressed at the same time, leaving them with code violations and repair costs. She advocated for continued prioritization of the sidewalk catch-up program and thanked staff for designing a comprehensive plan to address the backlog. Bowers emphasized the program's potential to alleviate resident concerns and expressed her support for efforts to align sidewalk and street maintenance.

Streetlights

Councilmember Renner raised concerns about streetlights, referencing a line item for streetlight upgrades and maintenance in the budget. He asked Director Schultz to clarify the term "planning level" in this context and to explain the process for addressing streetlight-related concerns. Renner highlighted increasing discussions from residents about adding streetlights in certain areas and inquired whether this would be considered a separate project.

Director Schultz explained that the planning level term referred to determining which areas would be prioritized for painting and maintenance of light poles. He noted the need to catch up on identifying which lights had been converted to LED versus those still using incandescent bulbs. Schultz clarified that the process is managed through the Public Service Department rather than the Engineering Department. He further noted that the City had fewer than 20 requests on record for new street light installations, with responsibility split roughly 50/50 between City-managed and AEP-managed lights. Schultz explained that AEP-managed lights are placed in a queue, making it challenging to track their progress. He emphasized that new light installations are generally prioritized at intersections or pedestrian crossings rather than entire streets.

Renner expressed frustration over the City's inability to address what he

identified as a frequent request, particularly on the west side. He suggested discussing the process offline to identify improvements and ensure the City meets resident needs. Schultz acknowledged the concerns and noted that many lights on the west side, particularly along Agler Road, are managed by AEP, which affects the timeline for addressing requests.

Councilmember Jones asked for clarification regarding the figures presented in the budget slides, specifically the difference between \$6.2 million and \$7.295 million. Schultz explained that \$6.2 million represents the top two line items for the street program, including asphalt overlay and street rebuilds. The \$7.295 million figure includes all capital maintenance items for streets, including traffic control and streetlight maintenance programs.

Update on Streets and Rebuild Timelines

Director Schultz offered to address additional questions about street-related projects. Councilmembers expressed interest in updates regarding the remaining miles of Detroit streets to be rebuilt and the estimated timeline for completion based on current funding levels. Director Komlanc was invited to provide further details on these topics.

Director Komlanc provided an update on the status of Detroit streets, noting that the City's asset inventory indicates 4.3 centerline miles of Detroit streets remaining to be rebuilt. He explained that the prioritization for rebuilding is based on factors such as pavement condition, PCI scores, and the presence of underlying issues like waterline breaks or stormwater system improvements required in the same corridor. Komlanc highlighted that Detroit streets are not the only concern, as other streets with Macadam bases, such as those in the Laura, Heil, and Colony Place areas, may deteriorate at a faster rate and also require attention. Komlanc estimated the cost to rebuild the remaining Detroit streets at approximately \$11.5 to \$12 million in today's dollars. He noted the impact of inflation on materials, with asphalt costs increasing by 38% and concrete costs rising by 49% over the past five years. These increases, combined with labor costs, present challenges in maintaining budgets for infrastructure projects.

Councilmember Jones inquired about the definition of a Detroit street. Komlanc explained that Detroit streets are constructed as a single, monolithic pour of concrete, including curbs, gutters, and the pavement base. Over time, when these streets fell into disrepair, they were often overlaid with asphalt instead of being rebuilt, leading to drainage issues, particularly around curbs and downspouts. This design poses unique challenges for maintenance and necessitates full reconstruction when repairs are required.

Director Schultz added that the Engineering Department has been actively investigating the condition of suspected Detroit streets through core sampling to assess the condition of the base and prioritize rebuilds based on actual street conditions rather than street type. He noted that while Detroit streets require full reconstruction, other streets with worse conditions may take precedence for rebuilding, depending on their state of disrepair.

Councilmember Schnetzer reflected on the historical challenges of Detroit streets, emphasizing the high costs associated with their reconstruction compared to traditional streets, which allow for less intensive mill-and-overlay repairs. He acknowledged that funding from Issue 12 has significantly helped address the backlog of these costly projects.

Komlanc confirmed that the 2025 program includes the rebuild of Laura and Heil streets and Rocky Fork Drive North, reducing the Detroit street inventory by just over one-tenth of a mile. He explained that the cost for rebuilding a square yard of pavement is approximately \$190, while mill-and-overlay costs around \$60 per square yard and crack seal or micro-surfacing is just under \$10 per square yard.

Councilmember Schnetzer noted that the cost of rebuilding is more than three times higher than mill-and-overlay projects, underscoring the financial challenges associated with addressing Detroit streets.

Chip Seal (Micro Surfacing) Program

Director Schultz introduced a previously shared Council-submitted question regarding the benefits, challenges, and improvements for the chip seal (micro surfacing) program implemented in 2024, addressing issues such as resident communication, gravel cleanup, and the timing of applications.

Director Komlanc clarified that micro surfacing is a preventative pavement maintenance measure that extends the useful life of roadways by 7 to 10 years or more. The program allows the City to maintain a larger area at a lower cost compared to more intensive reconstruction efforts. He noted that extreme heat during the summer of 2024 caused the binder in the micro surfacing to re-liquify, leading to improper curing and visible tire marks. For 2025, the program is scheduled for cooler periods in the spring or fall to prevent such issues. Komlanc acknowledged the gravel byproduct generated by the application and stated that the 2025 bid package will include street sweeping as a specific line item to address this concern.

President Bowers thanked staff for identifying opportunities to improve the program, emphasizing its environmental benefits and the importance of post-application street sweeping. She noted concerns about particulate matter washing into storm sewers and supported prioritizing funding for cleanup efforts. Councilmember Renner added that grass clippings and leaves thrown into gutters exacerbate stormwater issues, further highlighting the need for effective street maintenance.

Overview of Transportation and Mobility Projects

Director Schultz summarized six projects within the Transportation and Mobility category for 2025, totaling \$1.1 million. These include as follows: a traffic signal at Crescent Park, the Wynne Ridge Bridge reconstruction, gateway entryways and wayfinding projects, the West Johnstown Road reconstruction, and the Morse Road reconstruction, which was recently approved through an inter-municipal agreement with New Albany and the

Franklin County Engineers Office.

ADA Crosswalk Ramp Upgrades

In response to a question regarding Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, Director Komlanc reported that the City has an asset inventory of 2,374 ADA ramps. In 2024, the City addressed 165 ramps through the program, and 156 ramps are scheduled for 2025. He noted that these upgrades address various issues, including cracked concrete, slope irregularities, and the addition of detectable warning strips. While this represents 6-7% of the total inventory annually, the exact number of ramps requiring future work will depend on condition assessments within specific corridors.

Wayfinding and Entry Signage

Councilmember McGregor inquired about the wayfinding and entry signage project, expressing concern about outdated signs, such as one on Taylor Station Road. Schultz explained that the project encompasses three components: gateways, entry signs, and wayfinding. Mayor Jadwin acknowledged the poor condition of some signage. She noted that some older signs crumble during removal due to their age and condition. Director Schultz explained that the project aims to improve uniformity and design consistency across City signage. Schultz highlighted that the design guidelines being established for signage at 825 Tech Center Drive will serve as a model for future gateway and entryway projects, creating a cohesive visual identity for the City.

Cost Split for Tech Center Drive at Crescent Park Signal

Director Schultz addressed a question regarding the cost split for the Tech Center Drive at Crescent Park traffic signal, where funding was divided between the Capital Improvement Fund and the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Fund. He explained that an initial allocation of \$125,000 in the 2024 budget was charged to the Capital Improvement Plan due to incomplete information about the Crescent TIF and Buckles TIF at that time. Schultz noted that the 2025 budget request of \$540,000 for the signal is being fully allocated to the Buckles TIF. He estimated that the overall funding split for the project was approximately 80% from the TIF and 20% from the Capital Improvement Fund. Schultz stated that if the details of the TIF districts had been fully understood earlier, the entire project could have been charged to the TIF.

Chairman Schnetzer sought clarification on why part of the project had been charged to the Capital Improvement Fund, asking if it was due to a lack of available funds in the Crescent TIF. Schultz explained that the Crescent TIF had not yet started generating revenue, which initially necessitated charging the project to the Capital Improvement Fund. However, the Buckles TIF, which is adjacent to the Crescent TIF, benefits directly from the signal. Upon review of the legislation, it was determined that Buckles TIF funds could be

used to finance the signal.

Chairman Schnetzer inquired about the \$25,000 charged to the Capital Improvement Fund that could not be covered by the TIF. Schultz explained that this amount likely represents leftover funds from the \$125,000 allocated for design, which cost less than anticipated. He suggested that the \$25,000 may be reallocated, pending further research and confirmation. The matter will be revisited once additional details are verified.

Middle School East Sewer and Transportation Improvements

Director Schultz addressed a question regarding the funding arrangements for transportation and sewer capacity improvements related to the Middle School East project. He clarified that the southbound left turn lane on Clotts Road was identified as necessary through a traffic impact study and warrant analysis associated with the school's expansion. The design, construction, and inspections for this turn lane are being fully funded by the school district.

Director Komlanc provided further details on the sanitary sewer capacity improvements. He explained that during the site civil review in 2022, the City evaluated the sanitary sewer system serving the area. The existing 18-inch sewer line on Clotts Road transitions to a 15-inch line at the northern end of the school property. While the school's design flows approached but did not exceed the capacity limitations outlined in the City of Columbus Sanitary Sewer Design Manual, the City determined it was prudent to upgrade the 15-inch segment to an 18-inch line. This decision aligns with best practices and ensures sufficient capacity for the tributary area. Komlanc emphasized that the improvement follows guidelines in the City's water and sewer agreement with Columbus and complies with capacity management requirements set by the Ohio EPA. He confirmed that the sewer upgrade is discretionary and will be funded exclusively by the City, as Middle School East did not exceed the system's capacity limits.

Chairman Schnetzer commented that the upgrade was not strictly necessary but prudent, and Komlanc agreed, noting that the system was approaching capacity based on design calculations.

Update on Creekside Garage Flood Mitigation Efforts

Director Schultz introduced a Council-submitted question regarding the current status of flood mitigation efforts at the Creekside Parking Garage. Komlanc reported that schematic designs for the project were submitted in the fall. The City recently reviewed the designs and provided feedback to the consultant, Fishbeck. He stated that the next design development submittal, including associated costs, is expected either late this year or in the first quarter of 2025. The final plan package is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2025, at which point the City could seek permission to bid on the project.

Water System Projects

Director Schultz presented three water system projects identified for 2025. The primary project is the replacement of the Taylor Road waterline, which supports the pump station and water tower servicing the southern half of the city. Schultz explained that the project, totaling \$3.3 million, would be funded primarily through the Central Park TIF, the Eastgate Pizzuti TIF, and the Eastgate Triangle TIF. Additionally, \$240,000 from the Water Capital Fund is allocated for design work on future projects or emergency fire hydrant repairs or replacements under the Fire Hydrant Replacement Program. Schultz invited questions about water system projects.

Chairman Schnetzer commented on the increased reliance on TIF funds in the current budget cycle, noting it as a positive development aligned with discussions in prior Council and CIP Advisory meetings. Schultz emphasized the strategic approach to identifying when TIF funds can appropriately be used, ensuring alignment with legislative guidelines.

Sanitary Sewer Projects

Schultz outlined six sanitary sewer projects with a total budget of \$2.2 million for 2025. Two are capital maintenance items: 1) Sanitary Sewer Rehab and Replacement - Funding will support the design and subsequent construction of identified sewer projects and 2) CCTV Program - A program to clean, televise, and line sanitary sewer lines, either internally or through contracted services, to extend their lifecycle. Schultz highlighted the Serran Drive Sanitary Sewer Replacement, which has faced challenges in securing bids due to its small scope. The City plans to package this project with the Middle School East project and potentially others to increase its appeal to contractors. Another major initiative is the Sanitary Pump Station Evaluation and Improvements project. Schultz explained that evaluations were completed on two pump stations, revealing the need for significant upgrades. While specific improvement costs are not yet included in the CIP, evaluations for other pump stations will continue, and supplemental funding requests may follow in 2025.

Director Komlanc clarified that \$420,000, previously mislabeled as the Taylor Road Waterline Replacement, is allocated to the West Gahanna Relief Sanitary Sewer Project. This project focuses on phase one of sewer improvements, extending from the outfall near West Johnstown to South Stygler and Agler roads. Additionally, \$75,000 is allocated for West Johnstown Road design to align roadway improvements with sewer installations. Komlanc explained that the project involves replacing roadway sections after sewer installations, ensuring the alignment of infrastructure improvements along the West Johnstown Corridor. Schultz assured Councilmembers that the mislabeled budget item would be corrected in the record.

Stormwater Projects

Director Schultz provided an overview of stormwater projects in the utility systems category for 2025. He highlighted two capital maintenance items:

- 1) Stormwater System Rehabilitation and Replacement: This funding request,

totaling \$900,000, does not currently have specific projects identified. Schultz explained that this allocation allows flexibility to address emerging needs. If specific projects are identified, the funds would be reallocated through the CIP Advisory Committee and tracked under a new project number. Any unspent funds at the end of the year would return to the fund balance.

2) Stormwater CCTV Program: This program mirrors the sanitary sewer CCTV initiative and aims to investigate the condition of stormwater facilities throughout the city. Data from this program will help identify future projects for system improvements.

Councilmember Renner raised a question about the 2025 initiative to collect stormwater asset data, conduct tributary hydraulic modeling, and develop capital improvement recommendations. He asked whether this included work on the west side of the city. Director Komlanc confirmed that stormwater components are being addressed as part of the Westside Sewer Relief project. Phase one improvements will include hydraulic modeling for stormwater in the corridor, with phase two targeting the Royal Manor and Brentwood areas. Renner inquired about the timeline for receiving stormwater modeling outputs. Komlanc stated that preliminary results could be available by summer or fall 2025, depending on when a consultant is brought on board. He confirmed that a request for qualifications (RFQ) for the Westside Sewer project had been issued, with responses due December 13, 2024. The City plans to review submissions, conduct interviews if needed, and negotiate fees before presenting a contract to City Council in the first quarter of 2025. Renner asked whether the investigation and modeling would include opportunities for green infrastructure projects. Komlanc affirmed that green infrastructure was incorporated into the RFQ and would be a design component evaluated by consultants. Renner expressed enthusiasm, noting his academic focus on green infrastructure.

Chairman Schnetzer sought clarification about the \$900,000 request for stormwater system rehabilitation and replacement. He confirmed with Schultz that the funds are a placeholder for anticipated needs, with any unused amounts returned to the fund. Schultz reiterated that while no specific projects have been identified, the City is confident there are sufficient stormwater needs to warrant the allocation.

Equipment & Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging

Director Schultz provided an overview of the equipment section in the 2025 budget proposal. He explained that the City is requesting \$765,000 for wheeled assets, which include police vehicles, fleet equipment, heavy equipment (such as snowplows), specialty vehicles (such as vac trucks and stump grinders), and vehicle replacements for general fleet use. He noted that this allocation is part of a strategic approach to replace aging assets and maintain operational efficiency. Schultz then addressed the City's EV charging infrastructure, requesting \$60,000 to replace six EV charger heads at the end of their useful life. These chargers are located at various sites, including City Hall. The request is part of a broader effort to standardize EV chargers across the city and align them with the specifications planned for

the 825 Tech Center Drive project.

Councilmember McGregor asked whether users currently pay to use the EV chargers. Schultz confirmed that users pay an initiation fee (currently 50 cents) and a dollar for the first hour of charging. However, Schultz emphasized that the current system is largely subsidized by taxpayer funding, an issue that needs to be addressed to ensure fairness and sustainability.

Councilmember Renner supported increasing user fees for EV chargers, as recommended by organizations such as Clean Fuels Ohio, noting that EV charging remains more cost-effective than gasoline. Schultz added that the City is working with partners such as Power a Clean Future Ohio (PCFO) and Donovan Energy to develop a comprehensive electrification roadmap. This initiative includes evaluating current EV charger usage, capacity, and placement to inform future decision-making.

President Bowers expressed interest in a broader discussion on sustainability and electrification, noting the importance of aligning spending with other critical priorities like sidewalk programs and nonprofit funding. She questioned whether the \$60,000 for charger replacements could be deferred and sought clarification on the availability of grant funding for such projects. Schultz responded that while the \$60,000 request is modest relative to overall capital funds, the City is pursuing grants and may reduce the actual spend through subsidies. He cautioned that some existing chargers have been out of service for over a year, necessitating either replacement or removal.

Councilmember Renner added insights on alternative energy technologies, noting that hydrogen fuel cells are unlikely to compete with batteries in the automotive sector due to higher costs and limited viability. He emphasized the importance of scientific literature and combating misinformation in discussions about sustainability.

Mayor Jadwin highlighted the value of the City's partnership with PCFO, which brings expertise to guide future decisions on electrification and sustainability.

Chairman Schnetzer recalled the initial funding of EV charger installations, which were largely supported by grants, and reiterated his stance that users should bear the cost of charging their vehicles to ensure equity. He emphasized that while the chargers should not necessarily generate profit, they should at least cover their operational costs.

Conclusion & Next Steps

Chairman Schnetzer addressed the Council regarding the budget review process and scheduling. He reminded the members that he had sent an email requesting feedback on the current calendar and any items to be added or removed. Acknowledging the late hour, Schnetzer suggested either continuing the discussion about the budget or postponing it to a future meeting. He noted that next week's agenda would cover departments such as Planning, Council Office, Mayor's Office, Economic Development, and the

Law Department, which might allow for a quicker discussion given the absence of capital project reviews. Mayor Jadwin confirmed that the departments scheduled for next week's meeting were relatively straightforward and anticipated short presentations.

Chairman Schnetzer then outlined the upcoming schedule: one more Finance Committee meeting dedicated to department-level budget discussions on November 25, 2024, and a general budget discussion scheduled for December 2, 2024, to address additions and removals. A final review of the amended budget would be held December 9, 2024. He expressed concern that one meeting for general budget discussion might not be sufficient, given the time needed for comprehensive deliberation.

President Bowers shared her general comfort with the budget, stating that she had no significant concerns apart from one staffing position, for which additional information would be provided. She expressed confidence in the current approach of using unreserved fund balances to fund capital budgets for 2025. Observing nods of agreement from other Councilmembers, Bowers suggested that one general budget discussion meeting would likely be adequate. Councilmember Jones confirmed her agreement with the plan for one meeting for general discussion on December 2, 2024.

Chairman Schnetzer concluded the discussion, reiterating that questions should be submitted to him by Thursday, November 21, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.

Recommendation: Held in Committee; Further Discussion Scheduled 11/25/2024.

C. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Finance Committee, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 10:05 p.m.

Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

*APPROVED by the Finance Committee, this
day of 2024.*

Michael Schnetzer