



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Finance Committee

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

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

Jeremy A. VanMeter, Clerk of Council

Monday, November 3, 2025

City Hall, Council Chambers

Immediately following the Regular Council meeting at 7:00 PM on November 3, 2025

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Immediately following the conclusion of the Committee of the Whole, Councilmember Stephen A. Renner, Chair, called the Finance Committee to order at 8:11 p.m., November 3, 2025. The agenda was published on October 31, 2025. All members were present for the meeting. There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

B. DISCUSSIONS:

Questions on Public Safety Budget 2026

[ORD-0049-2025](#) AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING APPROPRIATIONS FOR CURRENT EXPENSES AND OTHER EXPENDITURES OF THE CITY OF GAHANNA DURING THE FISCAL YEAR 2026

Senior Director Vollmer explained that Director of Public Safety Tim Becker and Chief of Police Jeff Spence would share information on the proposed 2026 Public Safety Budget.

Chief Spence outlined key priorities for 2026. The transition to the new Civic Center was an initial priority. The move included the Communications Center. Chief Spence also highlighted accreditation that will be attainable due to the transition to 825 Tech Center Drive. A second priority is maximizing training opportunities available in the new facility. There is also a continued focus on employee wellness initiatives and mental health responses through the community liaison officers. Wellness initiatives also include continued work with the peer assistance team and initiatives led by Lieutenant Cohagen. There is also continued

focus on community engagement, such as school resource officers and expanding the block watch program. Finally, Chief Spence highlighted a goal of expanding the Flock camera footprint to neighborhoods in the northeast and development around the Tech Center area.

Director Becker remarked positively on the efforts of the Public Safety Department and expressed gratitude for the support of City Council. He said that Gahanna's culture and city leadership attract candidates to the department's roles, adding that officers know when they have the support of leadership as they do in Gahanna.

Councilmember Jones asked for clarification on the conversion of the mental health liaison to a city employee. Chief Spence explained that the position was originally funded as a city employee, but it was changed to contracted services. The contracted employee moved out of the region, and there was an opportunity to evaluate the program. They believe the position would be best served by an employee. He also explained it was in the 2025 budget as contract services, so the ask was not necessarily new, but the funds would be moved to a different part of the budget. The staff member would not be an officer. Councilwoman Jones appreciated the clarity and for the department's goal in prioritizing the role.

President Bowers asked for additional information on the efficacy of Flock cameras. Chief Spence invited Lt. Cohagen to speak on the subject. Lt. Cohagen shared a particular example of a situation that had occurred earlier that day. There was a call regarding a missing 15-year-old who had left the state. Flock cameras identified a tag in Indiana. The Indiana State Police were contacted, and the missing teen was located within four hours. Lt. Cohagen explained that it may not have been possible without the Flock cameras. He explained the department has access to over 1,700 networks throughout the United States, which is tens of thousands of cameras. Suspects involved in domestic violence and felonious assault cases have been located by use of the cameras. The 2026 budget request is to add them to higher traffic areas, entrances to the city, and some of the parks. President Bowers then asked Lt. Cohagen if he could address any concerns that residents may have regarding privacy. Lt. Cohagen explained that each Flock search that is conducted is audited. The department's policy specifically states that any searches conducted must be for law enforcement reasons, and Flock does not sell third party data. The department does not store Flock data unless it is used as evidence. Flock retains the data for 30 days and it is then deleted from their system. Over one million vehicles have been scanned over the course of the last month, and Lt. Cohagen explained that a very small percentage of those vehicles had been searched. They specifically target suspect vehicles and missing people through the

system. Chief Spence added that in 2023 there was a significant spike in stolen vehicles, and the numbers had been cut to one-third since Flock cameras were installed. He described a situation in which a local single mother's vehicle had been stolen and was in Columbus, and Lt. Cohagen added there had been five arrests the prior weekend, all due to the Flock system. President Bowers remarked on the department's commitment to community-oriented policing and stated the department had earned the trust of the community. She expressed her thanks.

Finance Committee Chair Renner asked staff to elaborate on Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) accreditation. Chief Spence explained that accreditation is a large undertaking. The department sought first-time accreditation and advanced certification at the same time. There are over 450 policies that contain best practices in policing. He explained there are third-party audits and there is extensive compliance documentation to ensure policies are upheld. Accreditation is a continuing cycle that recurs every four years and requires the department to continue to adhere to best practices. Director Becker explained that CALEA stands for the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies. It is an international organization that monitors best practices. Accredited agencies must have policies that comply with set standards. Agencies also must demonstrate that they comply with the policies. Agencies must provide reports and show proof of compliance. Director Becker reiterated that compliance and accreditation is a continual process and does not stop after it is achieved once.

Councilmember Schnetzer inquired about the sworn officer count. He noted that the department operates round the clock. There is reference in the budget to growing demands of the schools and special duties. He wondered whether the number of sworn officers was sufficient, or whether there was still a significant gap in what the department needs. Chief Spence said there are still vacancies in both the sworn-staff and in communications. He also said that CALEA looks at hiring practices during the accreditation process. He explained that there has been success with lateral transfers from other agencies. When hiring, they look for both experienced police officers and officers who are the right fit for the agency and the community. Director Becker echoed Chief Spence's sentiments that they are extending offers to the applicants who are the best fit and remarked on recent hires.

Councilmember Padova confirmed that there are currently four School Resource Officers (SROs) and that there is a request for one more. She inquired about the cost-share of the SRO positions. Chief Spence explained that the school district shares the cost of two SROs anchored

at Lincoln High School. The ask is for a mid-year hire to align with the 2026-2027 school year. He elaborated that SROs must go through specific training for their function. Of the four, two are anchored at the high school, one floats between the three middle schools, and there is one to cover elementary schools. Recently, there has been an increase in calls from the local private schools as well. Chief Spence noted that parents are interested in police presence and safety in elementary schools. The new high school will add over 100,000 square feet, and the department will need to navigate new demands based on the size and enrollment of the school. Councilman Schnetzer asked Chief Spence to clarify which SRO was considered a “rover” that goes between the different schools where needed. Director Becker and Chief Spence explained that the middle school officer is intended to be in that role, though Chief Spence remarked that there is increased demand at the middle school level.

Director Vollmer stated that November 10th would discuss the Department of Administrative Services, which includes IT, Finance, HR, Mayor’s Court. The Mayor’s Office, including Marketing, Communications, and Economic Development, would also be discussed.

C. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Finance Committee, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:41 p.m.

Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

*APPROVED by the Finance Committee, this
day of 2025.*

Stephen A. Renner