



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Finance Committee

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

Michael Schnetzer, Chair
Karen J. Angelou
Merisa K. Bowers
Nancy R. McGregor
Kaylee Padova
Stephen A. Renner
Trenton I. Weaver

Jeremy A. VanMeter, Clerk of Council

Monday, November 27, 2023

City Hall, Council Chambers

Immediately following the regular Committee of the Whole meeting on November 27, 2023

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Councilmember Michael Schnetzer, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:28 p.m. The agenda was published on November 22, 2023. All members were present for the meeting. There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

B. DISCUSSIONS:

1. Continued Discussion on FY 2024 Proposed Budget

Chairman Schnetzer initiated the meeting by outlining the established process of submitting questions that would guide the discussion. Additionally, there was a broader request for a presentation concerning the new positions proposed in the budget. Chairman Schnetzer suggested starting with the staffing presentation, anticipating that it might provide valuable insights for addressing the subsequent list of questions. He acknowledged Director Vollmer as the presenter for this segment.

Senior Director Vollmer offered to present information regarding the staffing proposal, noting that while there were no PowerPoint slides prepared for the current session, she could retrieve and share the ones from a previous presentation if desired. She specifically mentioned org charts as part of the presentation.

Chairman Schnetzer responded that the previous presentation suggestion could help direct everyone's attention, if it did not pose any inconvenience.

[ORD-0080-2023](#) AN ORDINANCE TO MAKE APPROPRIATIONS FOR CURRENT EXPENSES AND OTHER EXPENDITURES OF THE CITY OF GAHANNA, OHIO DURING THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2024

Mayor's Office Staffing Request

Senior Director of Administrative Services, Miranda Vollmer, began by discussing the new positions in the Mayor's office. The first position, a management analyst, was introduced. This role aimed to support sustainable efforts for current and future city projects, with a particular focus on initiatives such as the 825 Tech Center. The management analyst would collaborate with departments to ensure sustainable practices across projects and programs. Additionally, the position would play a key role in the development and implementation of the sustainability plan, the Strategic plan, community surveys, and grant-related activities, including both securing grants and ensuring compliance with grant requirements. The budget included allocations of \$150,000 for the sustainability plan and \$100,000 for the Strategic plan.

Chairman Schnetzer opened the floor to the council members, inquiring about their preferences regarding questions or comments on the presented information. He suggested allowing a brief pause to see if any members wanted to address the topic before moving forward.

The second position highlighted was the administrative coordinator, aimed at supporting the administrative needs of the IT, HR, finance, and Mayor's Court departments. Tasks included handling property damage claims, budget monitoring, managing systems like Munis and a learning management system, and assisting with HR functions. Additionally, there was a request for an additional marketing and communication specialist. This position would manage social media channels, the city's website, and handle marketing needs related to increased Parks and Rec programming and events, as well as economic development promotion.

Councilmember Bowers sought clarification on the need for the three new positions outlined on page 61 of the budget book. She inquired about the specific tasks or projects that are not currently being addressed and necessitated the creation of these positions.

Senior Director Vollmer addressed Councilmember Bowers' question, explaining that the need for the management analyst arises from the city's initiatives to create a sustainable plan and a strategic plan. The analyst would assist in developing and managing these plans. Additionally, the city is looking to bring grant consulting in-house, leading to the need for grant-related responsibilities. Regarding the administrative coordinator, Vollmer emphasized the lack of administrative support for the Departments of IT, HR, Finance, and Mayor's Court, expressing the need for assistance with various high-level administrative tasks to effectively manage the city's operations and risk.

Councilmember Bowers sought clarification from Senior Director Vollmer, asking if Director Bury, Senior Director Vollmer, and Director Schultz currently lacked administrative assistants.

Senior Director Vollmer explained that there is currently no administrative

support for Directors Bury, Schultz, and herself. She highlighted the workload related to managing risks more effectively and the need for assistance in handling administrative tasks for the relevant departments. Regarding the Marketing and Communication Specialist position, she emphasized the significant workload associated with marketing various events, managing the city's website, and handling social media channels. The goal is to efficiently manage these tasks with additional resources to better serve the community.

Vice President Weaver inquired about the salary ranges for the new positions and expressed interest in receiving that information. Senior Director Vollmer responded that she would send the information in a follow-up email. She mentioned that the salary ordinance would also provide details, explaining that budgets are typically set at the midpoint (step five) of the pay grade with family benefits considered.

Councilmember Bowers raised a question regarding the IT department's request for an IT support specialist. She inquired whether this specialist could assist the existing communication staff in managing the website, suggesting a potential cost-saving measure. Senior Director Vollmer clarified that the term "technical" referred to the back end of the website, and the IT support specialist's role would focus on technical aspects, while content updating and other communication tasks would remain the responsibility of the marketing and communications team. Councilmember Bowers acknowledged the distinction.

Public Safety Staffing Request

Senior Director Vollmer proceeded to discuss the Public Safety department's budget requests. She outlined the request for two additional sergeants, emphasizing that these sergeants would be assigned to field services or Patrol. The purpose of these additional positions was to enhance supervisory coverage, addressing the current issue of days without a sergeant on duty. Currently, there are four Patrol sergeants, leading to several days where there is no assigned supervisor. The proposed sergeants would serve as relief supervisors, ensuring that all seven days of the week have coverage from a promoted supervisor. This measure aimed to reduce liability for the city, particularly concerning days led by an officer in charge rather than an assigned shift supervisor. Additionally, the sergeants would play a crucial role in guiding and developing the younger workforce resulting from increased officer hiring. Councilmembers were encouraged to direct additional questions to Chief Spence, who was present for further clarification on public safety matters.

Senior Director Vollmer proceeded to discuss Public Safety's request for an additional High School Resource Officer (SRO). This request would be funded from the Public Safety special fund. The necessity for this additional officer was attributed to the increased number of students and staff in the Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools. Chief Spence's goal was to create a safe educational environment where students could focus on their studies. The additional SRO aimed to keep pace with the growing programs and services within the schools as the student population expanded. Furthermore, the extra

SRO would provide relief coverage when officers took leave, as outlined in their collective bargaining agreement. This measure was intended to ensure sufficient coverage across multiple schools in the district.

Vice President Weaver acknowledged the pending retirement in the School Resource Officer (SRO) position, as indicated in the chart on page 89. Confirming this, Senior Director Vollmer stated that there was indeed a retirement anticipated. Vice President Weaver sought clarification, inquiring if the additional officer's position would be a backfill for the impending retirement. Senior Director Vollmer affirmed this, explaining that the SRO vacancy created by the retirement had already been backfilled. The purpose was to facilitate the training and establishment of the new officer within the school setting.

Information Technology Staffing Request

Senior Director Vollmer proceeded to discuss the request for an IT Support Specialist. This role, as explained, would be responsible for addressing support tickets and providing second-tier support when necessary. The specialist was intended to become a subject matter expert on various technologies employed by the city, assisting network and systems administrators as needed. Additionally, their duties would include support documentation creation, participation in training classes, spearheading computer inventory rollouts, and serving as a project technical specialist on new projects, such as the ongoing implementation of the learning management system.

Councilmember Bowers sought clarification on the current staffing status, specifically if there were any vacancies in the IT department. Senior Director Vollmer responded, indicating that there were no current vacancies in the IT department.

Engineering Staffing Request

Senior Director Vollmer proceeded to discuss the Engineering department's request to add an Administrative Assistant. The role was described as providing support in answering phone calls related to various engineering programs, including street, sidewalk, and utility projects. The assistant was to handle resident communications, assist with accounts payable and receivable, manage complex reporting, and undertake various administrative tasks associated with the increasing number of capital projects in the engineering department. The importance of effective communication, especially during projects that involve street closures, sidewalk repairs, or utility line replacements, was emphasized.

Chairman Schnetzer inquired about the potential for sharing the communication responsibilities with the mayor's office. In response, Senior Director Vollmer explained that the Engineering department required subject matter experts, and the administrative assistant's role involved handling the distribution of these letters to residents and addressing the high volume of phone calls received by the department. This was particularly essential as disruptions were occurring for other personnel and ongoing projects.

Public Service Staffing Request

Senior Director Vollmer proceeded to discuss the Public Service department's requests. She mentioned that questions about the leaf pickup program would be addressed later by Senior Deputy Director Wybensing and Director Anverse. The addition of a maintenance worker I was deemed critical for implementing the leaf collection program, and associated capital funds were allocated for equipment, which would be elaborated on later.

Chairman Schnetzer recalled that in a prior presentation, the intern position was intended to backfill and build a pipeline.

Senior Director Vollmer further explained that the addition of a Fleet Technician was crucial for succession planning due to impending retirements in the fleet department. Three tenured employees had retirement plans and funding a position prior to their retirements allowed for training and preparation. The plan was to revert to four technicians after the retirements, and the addition of a fleet intern supported succession planning and workforce development through collaboration with Eastland Fairfield Career Schools.

Councilmember Bowers raised a question about succession planning and anticipated retirements within the next three years in Public Service and Parks & Rec. Senior Director Vollmer responded, noting one pending retirement in Public Service and no known retirements in Parks & Rec. Councilmember Bowers inquired if the pending retirement in Public Service was considered when generating the graph on page 2. Mayor Jadwin clarified that the reference was to the five-year projection. Councilmember Bowers said it was specifically a little Roman numeral ii.

Director of Finance Joann Bury clarified that Public Service employees, including the one with a pending retirement, are not all paid from the general fund. The retirement is likely from either the proprietary or street fund, and the five-year projection for the general fund assumes that all staffing will remain status quo. The objective of the projection is to ensure operational consistency, even in the event of retirements, by anticipating smooth transitions into vacant positions.

Planning Department Staffing Request

In the Department of Planning, there was a request for an additional building inspector to reduce reliance on third-party consultants, keep permitting costs low, and enhance the city's ability to perform last-minute inspections. While there were no retirements announced, the addition also factored into succession planning, addressing the challenge of filling crucial positions. In response to Vice President Weaver's question, Senior Director Vollmer affirmed that the city was up to date with inspections even with the use of outside consultants.

Councilmember Bowers inquired about potential cost savings associated with

the addition of a building inspector, considering the succession planning aspect. Senior Director Vollmer responded that there should be some cost savings in Contract Services once the vacancy is filled.

Recreation Staffing Request

Senior Director Vollmer presented a request for an additional Recreation Coordinator II for events. This position would offer necessary support to expand special events and the volunteer program, aligning with the Parks Master Plan. Special events mentioned include the farmers market, summer boats at Creekside, and overall event support for various city and departmental events. Additionally, there was a request for the addition of a Project Inspector I. With approximately \$8 million in capital projects in progress or planned for 2024, and the approval of Issue 12, allowing ongoing planning of capital projects as per the Parks Master Plan, this position is crucial for initiating and completing these projects for residents.

Parks Staffing Request

Senior Director Vollmer discussed the need for a Maintenance Worker II in Parks due to the implementation of the next phase of the street tree program. This phase requires additional staff to maintain and expand services. The Maintenance Worker II would be placed on the arbor crew, requiring specific skills and expertise. The current team, consisting of four full-time individuals, is responsible for the care, protection, and expansion of the urban canopy, maintenance of over 14 acres of prairie, health and aesthetics of park trees, invasive and hazard removals, tree inspections, resident communication, and community outreach for Tree City USA designation. This position is crucial for the continuation of these programs.

Chairman Schnetzer inquired about the current work's performance, questioning if it is done through contract services or not at all. Director Ferrell clarified that the work is currently performed, but with the expansion of street trees, the requirements will increase, necessitating additional individuals to accomplish the tasks.

Senior Director Vollmer presented the second request from Parks, which is for a Maintenance Worker I at the golf course. This position is cost-neutral as it involves the elimination of two part-time vacancies. The golf course, open for a majority of the year (typically March to November or even into December weather permitting), requires significant upkeep hours. Succession planning is crucial to ensure proper maintenance of the greens.

Councilmember Bowers inquired about the utilization of staff time during off months at the golf course, considering the identified seasonal downtime. Director Ferrell clarified that there are no actual off months, and during the non-operational periods, staff would be engaged in essential preparation tasks. She emphasized the need for consistent support to Supervisor Joe Hebdo, who works extensively.

Councilmember Bowers further questioned the transition from two part-time

staff to one full-time staff, asking about potential gains or losses in flexibility. Director Ferrell acknowledged that the part-time staffing approach had challenges, particularly in filling the coordinator vacancy due to the specialized skill set required. The shift to a full-time staff member is aimed at expanding skill sets, retaining talent, and addressing the difficulty in hiring part-time employees. Senior Director Vollmer noted this was a challenge experienced globally.

Council Discussion Questions

1. Citywide Strategic Plan

Chairman Schnetzer initiated the discussion on page eight, seeking information on the cost and timeline for the city-wide strategic plan update, along with the inclusion of a community workshop. Senior Director Vollmer provided a preliminary cost estimate ranging from \$80,000 to \$100,000 and confirmed plans for a community workshop and survey. The timeline indicated that the project would commence in quarter 1, with the issuance of a request for qualifications, aiming to kick off the project in quarter 2. Chairman Schnetzer followed up on the expected duration, and Senior Director Vollmer estimated the majority of the next year for completion.

Vice President Weaver raised a question about the potential need for a refresh of the land use plan, considering the changes in property usage post-COVID. Director Bury responded, stating that the request for 2024 includes an economic development strategy refresh. The economic development strategy refresh is considered as part of the planning efforts for the year.

2. Mayor's Advisory Committee

Chairman Schnetzer directed a question regarding the goals and objectives of the Mayor's Advisory Committee, and Mayor Jadwin provided a response. The Mayor explained that the committee functions as a business advisory group composed of representatives from local businesses. The primary focus is to strengthen the connection between the city and local businesses, fostering economic growth. The committee serves as a sounding board to understand the challenges businesses face and how the city can support them, addressing issues such as code changes, permitting processes, and promotion. Mayor Jadwin emphasized the community's commitment to being a welcoming and supportive place for businesses to thrive. Director Hamons, with experience in similar groups, was noted to be involved in this initiative.

Director Hamons elaborated on the nature and purpose of the proposed Mayor's Advisory Committee, emphasizing that it is not a policy-creating board but rather a panel. Envisioning 11 to 15 members appointed by the mayor, Director Hamons highlighted the opportunity for dialogue with a diverse range of employers. The committee aims to understand business trends, communicate directly with businesses, and address their needs. It serves as a means to engage with the community in a different way, especially with small businesses that may have unique requirements.

Director Hamons stressed the importance of balancing resident input with business input to inform policies effectively. Drawing from past experiences in similar initiatives, Director Hamons noted that the committee could act as a quick-response panel, providing timely information to businesses considering locating in Gahanna. The anticipated cost is minimal, involving occasional meetings with refreshments. Director Hamons proposed three to four meetings per year, each lasting approximately an hour and a half, providing a platform for businesses to express concerns that might not be shared in a public setting.

3. Human Resources Decreases

Chairman Schnetzer inquired about the budget decrease and workforce reduction of three and 3/4 full-time equivalents in the Human Resources department, seeking additional context and information on where the existing workload might be redirected.

In response, Senior Director Vollmer clarified that the decrease involved two intern positions that were not requested for 2024. The remaining reduction of 1.75 full-time equivalents was a reallocation of centralized staff to the new Administrative and Operational Services Division in the Finance Department. She emphasized that, despite the change, there was no overall decrease in the Human Resources department. The HR chart on page 69 was referenced to illustrate that key HR positions remained intact, including the HR manager, HR administrators, and HR representative. The reallocated positions now fell under the Finance Division, as previously discussed.

4. 13 Full-Time Hourly Decrease to 7

Chairman Schnetzer inquired about the expected decrease of seven full-time equivalent hourly personnel on page 13 and requested additional context on this change, along with information on where the workload might be redirected.

Senior Director Vollmer explained that the decrease in hourly personnel was a result of a strategic approach to filling vacancies based on the type of work needed. Positions were reimagined and reallocated to better align with the tasks at hand. She provided an example of a previous request to change an administrative coordinator in the Department of Planning to a planning manager, resulting in the reduction of an hourly full-time position and the creation of a salaried full-time position. The movement of staff and positions was reflected in the budget to optimize resource allocation and address specific workload requirements.

5. Citywide Leaf Collection Program

Chairman Schnetzer inquired about the Citywide leaf collection program on page 99, seeking more details on plans, research, the necessity, implementation date, and staffing considerations, including whether staffing would be internal or external and what positions would be needed.

Senior Deputy Director of Administrative Services Corey Wybensing, along with Director Shawn Anverse from Public Service, provided an overview of the proposed Citywide leaf collection program. They outlined that the city currently has a leaf collection program through Local Waste, where residents bag leaves for curbside collection on Mondays. The plan is to expand this program based on increased resident interest and community engagement. They highlighted the objective of efficiently managing and recycling fallen leaves to contribute to a cleaner environment. To achieve this, a pilot program is being considered, serving as a testing ground for fine-tuning strategies based on real-time data and resident feedback. The city is analyzing whether to use internal staff, external collaborators, or a hybrid approach for program implementation. Director Anverse consulted with representatives from similar-sized municipalities, gathering insights into their processes and complexities. The proposed expansion may include more yard waste drop-off options, intermittent bag pickups, and potentially curbside bagless pickup. The major request for 2024 is acquiring the proper equipment, such as vac trucks, to safely work curbside. One maintenance worker is requested in the streets division budget to assist in rolling out the pilot program and addressing other Public Service priorities year-round.

Councilmember Bowers expressed appreciation for the detailed information provided. However, she conveyed her current reluctance to support a curbside vac truck program for leaf collection. Her concerns were rooted in the strain it might put on the general fund budget and proprietary funds, considering other ongoing projects. Despite understanding the challenges of leaf pickup, especially in treed yards, she questioned the alignment of the program with the city's strategic plan and sustainability initiatives, particularly in the context of increasing calls for leaving leaf cover. Councilmember Bowers indicated an openness to hearing more details but asserted that, at present, she did not believe it was the right time to include the program in the 2024 budget. She concluded by thanking the presenters for their presentation.

Councilmember McGregor expressed agreement with Councilmember Bowers. Drawing from past experience, McGregor highlighted the challenges of a city leaf pickup program, emphasizing the difficulty in coordinating pickups due to varied leaf-falling times and potential drainage issues. She indicated skepticism about the feasibility of getting all leaves picked up in a timely manner. McGregor suggested that the program might face resistance from residents who might not want leaves on their tree lawns and may end up raking them into the street, impacting drainage. Concluding her remarks, McGregor stated that it would be a challenging proposition for her to support such a program.

Vice President Weaver thanked the presenters for the detailed presentation and sought clarification on the term "pilot program." He inquired whether it referred to a limited area and requested further explanation of its scope.

Senior Deputy Director Wybensing responded by explaining that the pilot program aimed to evaluate the feasibility of leaf collection in specific areas. He emphasized the need for a fiscally conservative approach, considering the

current limitations in the city's fleet. The program would involve collaboration with the GIS team to identify areas with the most impact, based on tree counts and canopy cover data. The goal was to collect data on collection rates, time per parcel, and other factors before recommending a more robust program. Additionally, he clarified that the specialized equipment for leaf collection was distinct from the standard vac trucks used for water and sewer services.

Vice President Weaver further expressed his understanding of the pilot program but raised the question of whether it made more sense to contract out for such a program, including the use of a vac truck, rather than acquiring one outright.

Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger responded by noting that the specialized equipment for leaf collection was not as costly as a standard vac truck. He highlighted the challenges in outsourcing due to limited vendors capable of handling larger-scale programs. Additionally, he mentioned the potential high costs associated with outsourcing leaf collection on a larger scale, estimating it to be in the seven figures. The city's approach was to explore a long-term solution without committing excessive financial resources.

Vice President Weaver expressed concerns and sought clarification. He articulated his interest in exploring a pilot program similar to the existing relationship with New Albany for administering a mayor's court. Vice President Weaver proposed the idea of testing such a program with Upper Arlington or Westerville, or another municipality with a well-established and robust program. He acknowledged the importance of avoiding the creation of a program from scratch, emphasizing that thorough research had been conducted. Vice President Weaver conveyed sensitivity to costs but also expressed the need to support methods for exploring this initiative for the community, considering it as something residents would likely appreciate.

Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger provided additional insights. He piggybacked on the discussion by mentioning conversations with Upper Arlington and Westerville. While noting that he did not want to speak for Director Anverse, Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger described the existing program in those municipalities as a complex and demanding operation. He highlighted that the current program was significant and challenging to maintain, with limited feasibility for expansion to Gahanna. Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger shared that Upper Arlington and Westerville were operating the program seven days a week, with 10-hour shifts and numerous trucks. Despite its demanding nature, he conveyed that this service was their most substantial contribution and, if given the choice, they would prefer not to manage it due to its considerable scale.

Vice President Weaver responded to Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger's comments, indicating that the information provided addressed his questions and potentially addressed questions from other participants in the meeting.

President Renner sought clarification on the availability of trucks dedicated to the asset management of stormwater systems. He questioned whether the

city possessed vac trucks specifically designated for stormwater purposes.

Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger responded affirmatively, confirming that the city did have trucks dedicated to stormwater management.

President Renner sought further clarification, expressing uncertainty about using those trucks for the proposed purpose. In response, Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger explained that the current truck used for stormwater was not considered ideal for leaf collection based on discussions with the utility superintendent. While exploring the option, it was deemed not suitable for the specific needs of leaf collection.

President Renner acknowledged the information provided and expressed interest in the idea as a thought experiment. However, he voiced concerns about the maturity of the proposal, particularly raising questions about its sustainability. President Renner questioned the claim of sustainability, citing the addition of another large truck that would require fuel. He emphasized existing leaf services and expressed reservations about the potential environmental impact. President Renner also noted Councilwoman McGregor's concern about potential strain on the drainage system, emphasizing the need to address the issue of debris being blown into drains. He questioned the effectiveness of the proposal in alleviating the existing problems, raising concerns about the scope extending to yard clippings and the potential for escalating demands on city services. Turning to Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger, President Renner sought comments on the residents' feedback and the desire for a service similar to other Central Ohio municipalities.

Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger responded that residents had expressed a desire for a service where they could rake leaves to the right of way, allowing the city to vacuum them up-an offering that aligns with services provided by other municipalities in the region. President Renner acknowledged the residents' preferences but reiterated his understanding of the challenges and considerations associated with adding new services, emphasizing that residents often desire various services.

Councilmember Bowers expressed the importance of considering past experiences. She referenced feedback from a prior experiment, predating her residence in Gahanna. Councilmember Bowers highlighted that residents who were present during that time could attest to the fact that the experiment created more problems than it solved. She stressed the need to reflect on historical attempts and obstacles before considering a similar initiative. Councilmember Bowers inquired about the prevalence of leaf collection services in central Ohio communities, mentioning Reynoldsburg, Whitehall, Columbus, and Hilliard. She sought confirmation on whether these communities currently offered such services.

Director of Public Service Shawn Anverse provided insights into the leaf collection services in neighboring municipalities. He mentioned that Gahanna was one of the few communities not providing this service. Reynoldsburg did not offer it, and he was unsure about Whitehall. However, Hilliard, Dublin,

Worthington, Westerville, Grandview Heights, and Bexley did provide this service.

Councilmember Bowers sought clarification specifically on whether these communities had a city-funded vacuum truck. Director Anverse clarified that they did not use a vacuum truck per se. Instead, they employed a vacuum system that pulled behind a dump truck. The leaves were then directed into the back of the dump truck, equipped with a slide-in box.

Councilmember Bowers raised concerns about the cost and burden on city staff associated with providing such services. Director Anverse acknowledged these challenges and explained that the neighboring municipalities had integrated leaf collection into their operational culture over time. Director Anverse provided additional context, sharing his visit to Upper Arlington, which had a comparable size to Gahanna in terms of lane miles and residents. He detailed Upper Arlington's substantial operation, including 17 dump trucks, 20 maintenance workers, and six vacuum units deployed across their zones.

Councilmember Bowers acknowledged the need for accountability to voters and having difficult conversations on the matter.

Director Anverse expressed that inquiries from residents about neighboring municipalities offering leaf collection services prompted the consideration of this proposal.

Councilmember McGregor discussed the impact on residents when the ability to dump yard waste at the city yard was discontinued. She differentiated this from leaf pickup, emphasizing the labor-intensive nature of processing yard waste compared to the relatively simpler process of dropping off extra materials at the city yard.

Chairman Schnetzer raised two questions regarding the exploration of leaf collection services. He recalled past discussions, mentioning Dottie Franey and a previous exploration of a similar initiative with an estimated seven-figure cost for citywide implementation. At that time, the concept involved potentially outsourcing the service to entities like Rumpke or Local Waste Services. The implicit idea was that residents could individually contract for the service if they desired, incurring personal costs. Chairman Schnetzer inquired if the current team had investigated this option and considered offering a bulk contract for interested residents, acknowledging that not everyone has an abundance of trees.

Senior Deputy Director Wybensing responded, noting that some residents already contracted such services independently. While the city hadn't explored becoming an intermediary for pay-for-service arrangements, he acknowledged that residents currently had the ability to contract for leaf pickup individually. Senior Deputy Director Wybensing expressed openness to exploring the option of the city acting as a middleman if deemed feasible, taking into consideration resident feedback and the potential for a more universal program.

Chairman Schnetzer acknowledged the response and suggested a potential role for the city, drawing parallels to municipal aggregation discussions. He proposed the idea of soliciting bids from waste disposal entities based on a guaranteed number of households, allowing residents to sign up through such a program. Chairman Schnetzer then shifted to his second question, addressing concerns raised by a majority of the council. He inquired about the impact on the need for maintenance workers if the leaf collection initiative were to be removed from the budget.

Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger shared his opinion, indicating that the allocation for maintenance workers was a window of time designated for specific programming needs within the city. He highlighted the substantial projects and workload requiring attention at the maintenance worker level, suggesting that the removal of the leaf collection initiative might still necessitate additional maintenance workers to address other pressing needs.

6. ARPA Funds & Community Grant Program

Chairman Schnetzer proceeded to the next discussion item, falling under the ARPA funds, specifically detailed on Pages 62 and 128. Chairman Schnetzer posed questions about which organizations received ARPA dollars through the Community Grant Program in 2023. Additionally, he inquired if there was information available about organizations slated to receive the remaining grant funds to be dispersed in 2024.

Mayor Jadwin responded by informing the council that a spreadsheet containing details of organizations that received funds had been shared earlier. Expressing regret for the delayed distribution, she encouraged the council to refer to the spreadsheet for a comprehensive overview. Mayor Jadwin then deferred to Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger, who oversaw the program and could provide more in-depth information.

Senior Deputy Director Wybensinger proceeded to elaborate on the 2023 Community Grant Program. He mentioned that on September 1st, the grant was made public, and over 30 nonprofits serving or based in Gahanna were directly contacted. Additionally, the information was disseminated through website advertisements and social media boosts. A total of 10 funding applications were received, amounting to \$127,928 in requests. Notably, the 2023 budget allocated for the program was \$50,000. To assess the applications, a Grant Review Committee was formed, comprising two residents and one member of the economic development team. The committee's focus was on prioritizing programs related to food and clothing instability and mental health services, with an overarching emphasis on community improvement in the City of Gahanna. The committee diligently reviewed each request, allocating funds based on the priorities identified. Some applications were partially funded, while others received full funding, with the goal of maximizing the impact of the allocated \$50,000 on the city and its residents.

Chairman Schnetzer noted the list of grant recipients had been emailed to

Council.

Councilmember Padova inquired about the process for the upcoming year, asking if the same approach would be used.

Senior Deputy Director Wybensing responded, stating that the plan was to continue with a similar process. The criteria that had been well-received by local nonprofits included addressing food and clothing instability, mental health services, and contributing to the general improvement of the Gahanna community. He acknowledged that while criteria might be subject to change, these priorities had demonstrated effectiveness. Additionally, Senior Deputy Director Wybensing mentioned the intention to release the grant earlier in the year, considering feedback received, allowing for potential support for summer programming and related initiatives. He noted that the \$100,000 allocation for the grant in the upcoming year was anticipated to be fully allocated by the end, emphasizing that no funds had been pre-assigned for 2024, ensuring a fresh grant application process.

7. Capital Improvement Fund

Chairman Schnetzer directed the discussion to the Capital Improvement fund, specifically referencing a line item on Page 113 for \$500,000 designated for the Woodside Green Pond rebuild project. He sought clarification on the nature of the work, specifically whether it involved mechanical dredging and if there were plans to enlarge the pond.

Director Ferrell provided details on the project, explaining that the primary focus was to dredge the pond at Woodside Green due to a significant accumulation of sediment adversely affecting water quality. The dredging method employed was low-impact and non-mechanical. Additionally, the project included the construction of a small overlook to enhance recreational opportunities, particularly for fishing.

Chairman Schnetzer sought further confirmation, clarifying whether a track hoe would be involved in the dredging process. Director Ferrell affirmed that a track hoe would not be used for the dredging process.

Councilmember McGregor inquired about the disposal of the removed sediment. Director Ferrell explained that a bathymetric survey had been conducted in November to identify sediment levels. The specific method for disposal had not been finalized, but options included using a vacuum to dewater the sediment. This sediment could then be repurposed, either for reinforcing the pond's banks due to erosion or for other purposes within the park, providing a valuable resource.

8. Sewer Fund - Gahanna Lincoln High School Capacity Improvements

Chairman Schnetzer raised the last discussion item of the evening, focusing on the Sewer fund, specifically a \$400,000 allocation for the Gahanna Lincoln High School capacity improvement project. He requested a description of the necessity and scope of work funded by this expenditure.

Director of Engineering Tom Komlanc provided detailed insights into the project. He highlighted the upcoming significant investments in the Hamilton Road Corridor over the next two to three years. This included the Ohio Department of Transportation's rehabilitation of the bridge over I-270 and an urban paving project extending from the city of Columbus northward on 317, covering Hamilton Road and Granville Street to about Lincoln Circle. Director Komlanc explained that the school was undergoing improvements to its site, including the razing of the school building and parking improvements. As part of a holistic approach, the sanitary sewer in the immediate area, dating back 70 plus or minus years, was also being addressed. The project involved condition assessments, recommendations for inflow and infiltration issues, and the relocation of a section of the sewer under the BP gas station fueling canopy to city-owned property. This relocation was coordinated with invert elevations tying into the school project.

Councilmember McGregor sought clarification on whether the school contributed financially to these improvements. Director Komlanc responded that the school, as part of its overall site utility package, would handle storm-related improvements. This included cleaning, televising, and any necessary lining or point repairs within the influence of their site.

Chairman Schnetzer sought a concise summary of the discussion, asking if it was fair to say that the city was taking the opportunity to address necessary repairs while the area was undergoing development. Director Komlanc confirmed a Cliffs Notes summary that while the area was being torn up, the city was taking the opportunity to address and fix underlying issues. Chairman Schnetzer expressed gratitude for the clarification.

Next Steps

Chairman Schnetzer concluded the meeting by addressing the schedule for submitted questions and upcoming meetings. He informed everyone that the next scheduled meeting is on December 4th, one week from the current date. Chairman Schnetzer noted that if additional questions were to be submitted, they should be turned in by Thursday at 5 PM. This timeline allowed for batching the questions and forwarding them to the administration's inbox on Friday morning. He highlighted the existing schedule, indicating meetings on December 4th and 11th, with a presumed vote on December 18th. Chairman Schnetzer suggested that if the council deemed it necessary to meet more frequently, they should start considering this possibility.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 12/4/23 with public hearing scheduled; Further Discussion in Finance Committee scheduled 12/4/2023; Second Reading/Adoption on Regular Agenda with final public hearing scheduled on 12/18/2023.

C. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Finance Committee, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:33 p.m.

Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

*APPROVED by the Finance Committee, this
day of 2023.*

Michael Schnetzer