City of Gahanna

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

Meeting Minutes

Committee of the Whole

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

Jeremy A. VanMeter, Clerk of Council

Monday, July 6, 2026 **City Hall, Council Chambers**

Immediately following the regular City Council meeting beginning at 7:00 PM

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Gahanna City Council met for Committee of the Whole on Monday, July 6, 2026, in Council Chambers. President of Council Trenton I. Weaver, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:36 p.m. The agenda was published on Thursday, July 2, 2026. Vice President Jamille Jones was absent from the meeting. All other members were present. There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

B. ITEMS FROM THE CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION:

2026-0139 Transmittal Memo to Council via Ethan Barnhardt, Chair, 2026 Charter Review Commission

President Weaver recognized several members of the Charter Review Commission who were in attendance and invited them forward to present.

Ethan Barnhardt, Charter Review Commission Chair, thanked President Weaver and Council for the opportunity to discuss the work of the Charter Review Commission. He explained that the Commission considered numerous amendment proposals, including suggestions from Councilmembers and others, and took its responsibility seriously throughout the review process. He stated that the Commission recognized that not every proposal warranted advancement and focused on determining which amendments were appropriate, sufficiently developed, and important enough to recommend to Council and ultimately to the voters.

Carrin Wester, Charter Review Commission Vice Chair, provided an overview of the Charter Review Commission's process and timeline. She explained that the Commission consisted of seven members, with four appointed by Council and three appointed by the Mayor, and that the Commission held 11 public meetings during which public comment was accepted at every meeting. Ms. Wester stated that the Commission held its organizational meeting in February, elected its leadership, and established its rules of procedure. She explained that the Commission received presentations in late February and early March, including information about local government and the City's strategic plan, to ensure that members shared a common understanding before beginning deliberations. Ms. Wester reported that during March the Commission adopted its review process and framework, cataloged correspondence, and reviewed suggested charter amendments submitted by the administration, Council members, and members of boards and commissions. She stated that in April the Commission focused on deliberating the necessity of proposed amendments, considering the potential consequences of changes, and consistently asking what issue the proposed amendment was intended to address. She explained that the Commission evaluated and scored the remaining amendments before forwarding them to the City Attorney for draft language. Ms. Wester reported that during May the Commission reviewed draft language and the rationale for each proposed amendment. She noted that the Commission removed some proposed amendments when it determined that sufficient evidence or support for the changes did not exist. She stated that in June the Commission finalized and revised the proposed language, discussed single-subject rule requirements, clarified the rationale for the recommended amendments, and concluded its work at its June 8 meeting. She noted that the recommendations submitted to Council reflected the Commission's final work, with only a few subsequent changes.

Mr. Barnhardt explained that the Charter Review Commission developed and adopted an evaluation framework to review and filter the proposed charter amendments submitted for consideration. He stated that the Commission first determined whether each proposal belonged at the charter level, recognizing that some proposals were more appropriately addressed through Council legislation or administrative rules. He explained that the Commission also sought sufficient information to fully understand each proposal before making recommendations. He noted that Commission members relied on presenters and the City Attorney to provide background information and legal context because the members did not possess subject matter expertise in every area under review. He added that the Commission also considered whether each proposal was ready for drafting. Mr. Barnhardt stated that the Commission adopted scoring criteria as part of its evaluation framework, although the scores themselves did not determine whether a proposal advanced. Instead, the Commission used the framework as a tool to guide discussions and evaluate proposals through the lenses of governance relevance, public impact, governance clarity and effectiveness, alignment with the City's Strategic Plan, legal risk, and whether the proposal could be clearly communicated to voters and prepared for the ballot. He explained that the framework provided a consistent approach for evaluating proposals throughout the review process.

Ms. Wester summarized the Commission's 10 recommended charter amendments by grouping them into four categories. She explained that the first category modernized and aligned charter language by updating administrative department titles to reflect the City's current organizational structure and by incorporating cleanup revisions submitted by the City Attorney, including typographical corrections and other minor language changes. Ms. Wester stated that the second category clarified and standardized charter language by addressing elected official qualifications and the abstention process for Councilmembers during voting. She explained that the third category focused on reducing costs and eliminating duplication. She noted that the proposed amendment regarding the mayoral primary election would eliminate the requirement to hold a primary election when only two candidates filed for the office of Mayor, explaining that the existing requirement could result in unnecessary election costs. She stated that the 2023 mayoral primary election had cost the City more than $300,000. She added that the second amendment in this category would transfer Board of Zoning and Building Appeals responsibilities to the Planning Commission, as recommended by the administration. Ms. Wester reported that the final category addressed accountability and stewardship. She stated that the proposed amendments established a process for adjusting ward boundaries, clarified Planning Commission attendance requirements, changed the Charter Review Commission review cycle from every five years to every 10 years, and updated the charter's nondiscrimination clause to use more inclusive and current language.

Mr. Barnhardt stated that the Charter Review Commission had completed its substantive work and that Council would now determine whether to advance the Commission's recommendations. He explained that each recommendation reflected meaningful public discussion, thorough legal review, and careful consideration. He stated that the Commission took its responsibility seriously, devoted significant time and effort to its work, and concluded that the proposed amendments represented its final recommendations to Council and ultimately to the voters. He thanked Council for its consideration and stated that the Commission was available to answer questions.

President Weaver thanked Mr. Barnhardt and Ms. Wester for their presentation and invited the City Attorney to provide an overview of the procedural process before Council began asking questions of the Commission.

City Attorney Tamilarasan explained the Council's role in considering the resolutions before it and scheduled for introduction at the next meeting. She stated that the Charter mandated that any recommendations certified by the Charter Review Commission be submitted to the electorate. She explained that the Council's role did not include evaluating the appropriateness of the resolutions, modifying the recommended language, or determining whether the proposals served the community's best interests because the Charter assigned those responsibilities to the Charter Review Commission. She reminded Council that its role was to acknowledge receipt of the recommendations, approve the final drafted language, and direct the Board of Elections to place the measures on the ballot. City Attorney Tamilarasan also reported that staff had corrected two clerical errors before submitting the resolutions. She explained that one resolution contained an incorrect article number in columns two and three of the exhibit, although column one contained the correct title, and staff corrected that error. She also explained that the proposed non-discrimination clause in Article 23.07 accidentally duplicated four categories. Staff removed the duplicate language, and she emphasized that the correction did not change the substance of the proposal.

President Weaver thanked City Attorney Tamilarasan for her guidance throughout the Charter Review Commission process and opened the floor for questions and comments.

Councilmember McGregor thanked the Charter Review Commission for its work. She said she attended the Commission's final meeting when members selected their recommendations and described the discussion as lively. She remarked that she believed she chose a good meeting to attend. She thanked the Commission members for the significant amount of time they devoted to the process and noted that, although they did not always agree, they worked well together, which she said was important.

Councilmember Renner thanked the Charter Review Commission members for the time and effort they devoted to the charter review process. He stated that, having served on Council for many years and participated in several charter review cycles, he believed this Commission's process distinguished itself by approaching the work thoughtfully and methodically. He commended the Commission for using a process that emphasized presenting changes in a manner that voters could understand and stated that the Commission's process would be an important part of explaining the proposed amendments to the electorate.

Mayor Jadwin expressed her sincere appreciation to the Commission members for their service and commitment throughout the review process. Having attended the Commission meetings, she remarked that members demonstrated thorough preparation, extensive research, and thoughtful consideration before each meeting. She acknowledged that members did not always agree but consistently conducted their discussions professionally and respectfully. She emphasized that the City Charter serves as the foundation for the City's government and establishes transparency and accountability to residents. She thanked the Commission for its careful stewardship of that responsibility and expressed her gratitude for its service.

Councilmember Bowers thanked the Commission members, including Mr. Hill who was also in attendance, for their service. She asked about the Commission's consideration of the City's form of government, noting that the topic arose during the Commission's organizational meeting, appeared in subsequent correspondence received by the Commission, and generated discussion during the review process. She asked whether the Commission believed it would be prudent to establish an ad hoc committee or study group to examine the issue further.

Mr. Barnhardt responded that the Commission discussed the topic after receiving correspondence and hearing presentations but did not identify a sufficiently strong rationale to recommend further action. He stated that, aside from Councilmember Padova's presentation and additional pieces of correspondence, the issue did not emerge as a significant concern during the Commission's review. He added that while Council possessed the authority to pursue additional study if it chose, the Commission did not believe it had sufficient support or information to recommend further examination.

Ms. Wester added that the Commission sought to evaluate every proposal objectively and consistently asked proponents to explain what problem a proposed amendment would solve. She recalled asking follow-up questions about the form of government proposal in an effort to understand why such a significant change should be considered. She stated that the Commission repeatedly returned to the question of identifying a clear need for change and determining the consequences of altering the existing charter language. She explained that the Commission anticipated receiving additional information to support the proposal but did not receive sufficient substantive information to justify advancing the discussion.

Councilmember Bowers stated that the responses clarified the Commission's position on why it had not recommended additional study of the City's form of government despite receiving correspondence from residents on the subject. Councilmember Bowers then asked the Commission to elaborate on its recommendation to change the Charter Review Commission's meeting frequency from every five years to every 10 years. She noted that Ms. Wester had indicated the proposed change aligned with practices in comparable communities and asked her to explain the Commission's reasoning and discuss what options remained available for Council or residents to propose future charter amendments.

Ms. Wester explained that the Commission reviewed charters from surrounding communities and found that a 10-year review cycle represented the more common practice. She stated that the Commission believed frequent charter revisions could gradually alter the foundational document through incremental changes made during each review cycle.

She explained that the Commission wanted to avoid making changes simply because a Charter Review Commission had convened and sought instead to recommend amendments only when a clear need existed. She added that the Commission concluded a 10-year review cycle more closely aligned with surrounding communities and reduced the temptation to make unnecessary changes.

Mr. Barnhardt added that the Commission observed inconsistencies within the Charter that resulted from the frequency of past reviews. He explained that each five-year review introduced additional revisions that sometimes created new inconsistencies requiring future correction. He stated that the Charter should remain a foundational governing document that should not be amended too frequently. He noted that the City Charter had been amended more than 80 times since the 1960s and stated that the Commission concluded the current five-year review cycle was less efficient than the 10-year review cycle used by most comparable communities.

President Weaver thanked the Charter Review Commission members for their service and expressed appreciation for the contributions of the entire Commission. Referring to the procedural guidance provided by the City Attorney, he asked whether Council wished to place the Commission's 10 proposed charter amendments on the consent agenda at the next meeting.

Councilmember Bowers asked the City Attorney to confirm whether Council possessed the authority to place additional charter amendments on the November ballot beyond those recommended by the Charter Review Commission. City Attorney Tamilarasan confirmed that Council could advance a charter amendment at any time with five affirmative votes. Councilmember Bowers stated that she wanted to gauge the interest of her colleagues in considering additional charter amendments that the Commission had not recommended. She specifically referenced the organizational meeting date, noting that Senior Director Vollmer, Mr. Barnhardt, and she had each raised the issue during the Charter Review Commission process. She explained that the Charter currently established January 2 as the organizational meeting date and suggested allowing the meeting to occur during the first week of January instead. She stated that this change would permit the meeting to occur on a regular Monday rather than, in some years, on a Saturday, such as in

2027. She stated that the proposed change would maintain transparency because meeting dates would continue to be publicly announced in advance while also improving consistency by allowing the organizational meeting to occur on the City's regular meeting day. She also noted that the change could reduce the need for staff to work on weekends and observed that, historically, the organizational meeting had not involved significant legislative business and that newly elected officials could be sworn in earlier if necessary.

Councilmember Schnetzer stated that the seven members whom Council had jointly appointed to the Charter Review Commission had completed a thorough, process-oriented review. He noted that several speakers had expressed appreciation for the Commission's process and said he was inclined to defer to the Commission's lack of a recommendation. He recalled that one concern involved the remote possibility of an emergency occurring before the newly elected officials had been sworn into office, which could create an issue if the government was not fully constituted. He reiterated that he would defer to the Commission's decision not to recommend a change.

President Weaver asked when a term of office officially begins. He referenced presidential inaugurations, noting that a new president assumes office at noon even if the oath has not yet been administered. He observed that the City Charter and the certificate issued by the Board of Elections state that the term begins on January 2 but do not specify the organizational meeting. He asked whether administering the oath or holding the organizational meeting affected the official start of the term.

City Attorney Tamilarasan explained that the Charter specifies the date on which each elected official's term begins but also provides that an official continues to serve until a successor is elected and qualified, meaning sworn into office. She stated that if the organizational meeting date changed, the term would still begin on January 2 as prescribed by the Charter. However, she clarified that an elected official assumes the duties of office upon taking the oath, and service continues until a successor is elected and qualified.

Councilmember McGregor stated that she agreed with Councilmember Schnetzer. She noted that Council had appointed the majority of the Charter Review Commission members, who had completed the work and reached their conclusions, and she saw no reason to add another proposal. She also recalled that the Commission had discussed ballot fatigue during its previous meeting and noted that the ballot already contained 10 items. She said she did not see the value in adding another item and observed that the organizational meeting typically lasts about 30 minutes, making the specific day of the meeting insignificant.

Councilmember Renner thanked the City Attorney for her interpretation of the Charter. He remarked that the Board of Elections had informed him for years that his term expired on December 31, which he found somewhat puzzling, although he said he would defer to the City Attorney's interpretation. He also said he found the discussion worthwhile and believed a committee provided an appropriate forum for considering ideas and offering opinions. Regarding the proposal, he stated that he leaned toward making the process more efficient by holding the meeting on a Monday. While he acknowledged the importance of deferring to the Charter Review Commission's work, he emphasized that the seven Councilmembers had been duly elected and that Council also had a responsibility to question and consider the proposal. He said he looked forward to further discussion.

Councilmember Padova stated that she preferred the consistency of holding the organizational meeting on a Monday. She recalled that the previous year's meeting had occurred on a Friday at approximately 4:00 p.m. because holding the meeting at the normal 7:00 p.m. time on a Friday would have been inconvenient, particularly for staff, and a Saturday meeting would also have been difficult for staff. She said she remained mindful of respecting staff members' time. She added that many residents associate Council meetings with Mondays, and even the summer meeting schedule sometimes causes confusion, making a different day for the first meeting of the year more difficult for the public. She acknowledged the work and deliberations of the Charter Review Commission but echoed Councilmember Renner's point that Council also had the authority to consider the issue independently. She said the matter was not one she felt strongly enough to insist upon, but she preferred maintaining consistency by holding the meeting on a Monday rather than changing the day each year. She also questioned how officials could be sworn into office in the unlikely event of an emergency before the organizational meeting if they had not yet taken the oath, asking whether they could be sworn in outside of an official meeting that required 24 hours' notice.

City Attorney Tamilarasan explained that officials could participate in a private swearing-in ceremony, provided an individual authorized under the Ohio Revised Code to administer oaths, such as a notary public or an elected official with jurisdiction, administered the oath. She stated that officials did not need to take the oath during a public meeting and could instead hold a private ceremony before the formal organizational meeting.

Councilmember Padova asked whether officials could assemble, take the oath, and respond to an emergency without waiting 24 hours for a publicly noticed meeting. City Attorney Tamilarasan confirmed that a private swearing-in ceremony would not require public notice or a public meeting.

Councilmember McGregor asked whether Council intended to move all meetings to Mondays, including meetings that fell on holidays, to maintain consistency. Councilmember Padova replied that she envisioned only the first meeting of the year following the existing holiday schedule. She explained that if January 1 fell on a Monday, Council would meet on Tuesday, consistent with the current practice for Monday holidays.

Councilmember McGregor questioned why Council would not hold all meetings on Mondays, regardless of holidays, if consistency remained the primary objective. Councilmember Bowers responded that staff scheduling factored into the discussion because staff would not need to work on holidays. Councilmember McGregor replied that staff did not need to attend the organizational meeting. Councilmember Bowers acknowledged that point but noted that Council often paired the organizational meeting with the first regular meeting of the year. Councilmember McGregor observed that the first meeting of the year typically included little business. Councilmember Bowers agreed that it often did not but noted that some years included more business. She explained that she wanted to hear her colleagues' perspectives because several individuals had raised the issue, and she wanted to understand whether Council considered the matter important. She thanked Councilmember McGregor for the discussion.

President Weaver thanked Councilmember McGregor and stated that he had watched or attended all of the Charter Review Commission meetings, which he described as healthy discussions. He expressed interest in continuing the conversation and agreed with Councilmember Renner that, although the Charter authorizes the Charter Review Commission to make recommendations, it also authorizes Council to consider charter amendments. He encouraged additional discussion, particularly because one Charter Review Commission recommendation proposed changing the review cycle from every five years to every ten years. He stated that declining to exercise Council's authority to consider recommendations solely because the Commission had not recommended them would amount to an abdication of Council's duty. He said he looked forward to additional discussion if members wished to propose draft language.

City Attorney Tamilarasan added that although Council could advance a ballot measure at any time, the Board of Elections must receive the final ballot language at least 90 days before the election. She stated that the deadline would likely fall during the first week of August. President Weaver observed that if Council chose to move the proposal forward, it might not appear on the current ballot.

Ms. Wester thanked Council for its thoughtful discussion. She recalled raising the issue several times during the Charter Review Commission meetings and stated that individuals involved in local government often hold differing opinions, which she considered beneficial because healthy debate leads to better decisions. She explained that Commission members with experience in local government, including current and former officials, needed to distinguish between personal preferences and objective analysis. She said she had challenged herself to determine whether she supported or opposed proposals because of personal preference rather than an objective need. She acknowledged the appeal of holding meetings on a particular day or avoiding weekends but explained that she had evaluated charter changes by asking what objective problem they solved. She stated that the Commission did not reject many proposals because of significant objections but because they did not address issues fundamental to the Charter.

Mr. Barnhardt stated that he had initially supported changing the organizational meeting date because previous governments where he had worked followed that practice. However, he explained that he had entered the Charter Review process intending to consider unintended consequences carefully because of the importance of amending a foundational document. He said that after further discussion, he became concerned about a potential gap between the expiration of a mayor's term and the swearing-in of a successor, particularly if an emergency such as severe winter weather occurred during that period. He stated that concerns about maintaining continuity of operations caused him to reconsider his original position. He added that discussions throughout the Charter Review process had changed his thinking on several issues as members carefully evaluated possible unintended consequences, and he wanted to clarify the reasoning behind his change in perspective.

Councilmember Bowers thanked Mr. Barnhardt for explaining his thought process. She stated that one benefit of Gahanna's current practice involved swearing all elected officials into office together, which fostered unity. She acknowledged that both changing and retaining the current process carried advantages and disadvantages, which prompted her to raise the issue with her colleagues. She reiterated that Council also had an obligation to consider the matter, expressed appreciation for the Charter Review Commission's discussion, and said the conversation among elected officials had also been valuable. She thanked everyone for their patience during the discussion.

President Weaver thanked Ms. Wester, Mr. Barnhardt, and Mr. Hill for their service, commitment to the community, and attendance. He concluded by summarizing that Council intended to place all ten Charter Review Commission recommendations on the consent agenda for the next meeting.

RES-0026-2026 A RESOLUTION TO PROVIDE FOR THE SUBMISSION TO THE ELECTORATE AN AMENDMENT TO THE GAHANNA CITY CHARTER PERTAINING TO THE MAYORAL PRIMARY ELECTION

Recommendation: Introduction/Vote on Consent Agenda on 7/20/2026.

RES-0027-2026 A RESOLUTION TO PROVIDE FOR THE SUBMISSION TO THE ELECTORATE AN AMENDMENT TO THE GAHANNA CITY CHARTER PERTAINING TO QUALIFICATIONS FOR ELECTED MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS

Recommendation: Introduction/Vote on Consent Agenda on 7/20/2026.

RES-0028-2026 A RESOLUTION TO PROVIDE FOR THE SUBMISSION TO THE ELECTORATE AN AMENDMENT TO THE GAHANNA CITY CHARTER PERTAINING TO WARD BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENTS

Recommendation: Introduction/Vote on Consent Agenda on 7/20/2026.

RES-0029-2026 A RESOLUTION TO PROVIDE FOR THE SUBMISSION TO THE ELECTORATE AN AMENDMENT TO THE GAHANNA CITY CHARTER PERTAINING TO LEGISLATIVE PROCEDURES FOR COUNCIL MEMBER ABSTENTIONS

Recommendation: Introduction/Vote on Consent Agenda on 7/20/2026.

RES-0030-2026 A RESOLUTION TO PROVIDE FOR THE SUBMISSION TO THE ELECTORATE AN AMENDMENT TO THE GAHANNA CITY CHARTER PERTAINING TO THE ORGANIZATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENTS

Recommendation: Introduction/Vote on Consent Agenda on 7/20/2026.

RES-0031-2026 A RESOLUTION TO PROVIDE FOR THE SUBMISSION TO THE ELECTORATE AN AMENDMENT TO THE GAHANNA CITY CHARTER PERTAINING TO THE OFFICE OF THE CITY ATTORNEY

Recommendation: Introduction/Vote on Consent Agenda on 7/20/2026.

RES-0032-2026 A RESOLUTION TO PROVIDE FOR THE SUBMISSION TO THE ELECTORATE AN AMENDMENT TO THE GAHANNA CITY CHARTER PERTAINING TO PLANNING COMMISSION ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

Recommendation: Introduction/Vote on Consent Agenda on 7/20/2026.

RES-0033-2026 A RESOLUTION TO PROVIDE FOR THE SUBMISSION TO THE ELECTORATE AN AMENDMENT TO THE GAHANNA CITY CHARTER PERTAINING TO THE CONSOLIDATION OF PLANNING COMMISSION AND ZONING APPEAL FUNCTIONS

Recommendation: Introduction/Vote on Consent Agenda on 7/20/2026.

RES-0034-2026 A RESOLUTION TO PROVIDE FOR THE SUBMISSION TO THE ELECTORATE AN AMENDMENT TO THE GAHANNA CITY CHARTER PERTAINING TO THE CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION CONVENING CYCLE

Recommendation: Introduction/Vote on Consent Agenda on 7/20/2026.

RES-0035-2026 A RESOLUTION TO PROVIDE FOR THE SUBMISSION TO THE ELECTORATE AN AMENDMENT TO THE GAHANNA CITY CHARTER PERTAINING TO THE CITY'S NON DISCRIMINATION PROVISIONS

Recommendation: Introduction/Vote on Consent Agenda on 7/20/2026.

C. ITEMS FROM THE SENIOR DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS:

2026-0144 Gahanna Civic Center (825 Tech Center Drive) Construction Update 2026-07-06

Senior Director of Operations Kevin Schultz announced that the City would begin moving from City Hall at 200 S. Hamilton Road to the new Gahanna Civic Center at 825 Tech Center Drive during the week of July 27. He recalled presenting the same transition schedule earlier in the year and stated that the move would proceed as planned. He displayed a recent photograph of the completed building and described it as a well-designed facility that reflected the character and aspirations of the Gahanna community. Senior Director Schultz reviewed the move schedule, explaining that staff would begin relocating bulk items, records, storage units, shelving, and similar materials during the week of July 27. During the following week, staff would move furniture, office materials, and workspaces. He stated that City operations would begin from the new facility during the week of August 10. He explained that City Hall would close on Monday and Tuesday of that week, operate by telephone only on Wednesday, and reopen to the public in the new building on Thursday, August 13. Senior Director Schultz explained that departments would transition into the building over the following three to four weeks. He stated that the Communications Center would relocate before other departments so staff could become familiar with the building and police department operations. He added that Information Technology staff would also move early to prepare their workspaces and provide technical support as employees arrived. He noted that the Police Department's Field Services Division, including road patrol, would relocate during the week of August 17.

Senior Director Schultz stated that the City planned to hold a building dedication during the week of August 24, noting the significance of scheduling the dedication on August 25 at 825 Tech Center Drive. He explained that senior activities would likely begin during the same week with tours, coffee, and light activities before formal programming started the following week. Senior Director Schultz reviewed the transition schedule for boards and commissions. He stated that the Planning Commission would hold its final meeting in the current Council Chambers on August 12, City Council would hold its final meeting there on August

17, and the Parks and Recreation Board would hold its final meeting there on August 19. He reminded Council that August included a fifth Monday while Council remained on its summer meeting schedule, resulting in only two Council meetings during the month. He stated that the first City Council meeting in the new facility would occur on Tuesday, September 8, following Labor Day. Senior Director Schultz announced that Councilmembers would have opportunities to tour the completed building on July 21 and July 23. He added that boards and commissions, including the Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Board, would tour the facility on July 29. He concluded by stating that the move schedule remained firm and that the administration looked forward to occupying and enjoying the new building.

Councilmember Bowers asked whether the building dedication would occur after normal work hours. Mayor Jadwin replied that the City wanted the community to participate in the celebration and that holding the event during the day would make community attendance difficult.

Councilmember Bowers asked for additional information regarding the project delays. She acknowledged the administration's discretion in addressing the matter but stated that Council had an obligation to inquire about the project's status, particularly because residents had raised the issue during the meeting. Senior Director Schultz explained that the City had previously discussed electrical issues during public meetings and had identified them as a reason for delaying the move. He stated that the administration focused on two priorities: ensuring the safety and reliability of the building. He emphasized that the facility would house the Police Department and Communications Center and therefore needed to support public safety operations reliably. He explained that the administration chose to delay occupancy until electrical issues had been resolved to ensure both safety and reliability. He clarified that the work primarily involved areas that general staff would not regularly occupy. He stated that Elford completed the corrective work at no cost to the City and noted that although the move had been delayed, the project budget had not increased.

Mayor Jadwin added that the City faced no pressure to vacate the existing buildings because it did not pay rent for those facilities. She stated that the City had the flexibility to wait until the new building met its expectations before moving and reiterated that the delay had not affected the project budget.

Councilmember Bowers thanked Senior Director Schultz and Mayor Jadwin for the clarification. She stated that she recalled previous discussions regarding the electrical subcontractor and the general contractor's responsibility for resolving those issues. Councilmember Bowers asked whether the administration had established a timeline or begun preliminary discussions regarding the future of the 200 S. Hamilton Road and Rocky Fork properties. Senior Director Schultz responded that the administration continued evaluating the property and considering appropriate future uses. He stated that staff had discussed the matter but had not yet devoted significant attention to it because other priorities required their focus. He added that those discussions would accelerate in the coming weeks and months. Councilmember Bowers asked whether Council could expect further discussion within the next quarter. Mayor Jadwin responded that the administration hoped to begin that discussion within the next quarter but expected to do so by the end of the year. She stated that the administration's immediate priority involved completing the move into the new building and then focusing on the Capital Improvement Program and budget process. She explained that those discussions would provide a more appropriate opportunity to evaluate the future of the property. She added that the administration continued evaluating potential future uses for the property, considering what would best serve the City, its residents, and future municipal needs, and noted that Director Gottke also continued working on those evaluations.

Senior Director Schultz stated that the Capital Improvement Program Advisory Committee would meet later in July and suggested including a discussion of the future of the 200 S. Hamilton Road property on the agenda. He explained that the meeting would provide an opportunity for the three Councilmembers serving on the committee and the administration to discuss possible directions and review the range of options available for the property. He added that staff could provide a more detailed discussion once they had additional time to prepare.

Councilmember Bowers asked whether staff would follow up by email to schedule the upcoming building tours for Councilmembers. Senior Director Schultz confirmed that staff would send an email. He stated that Council-only tours were tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, July 21, and

Thursday, July 23, at approximately 5:30 p.m., although staff remained somewhat flexible with the time. He added that the tour for boards and commissions was tentatively scheduled for July 29. He stated that the email would include the dates and times. He initially indicated that Councilmembers would not need to RSVP for the tours and noted that the July 21 and July 23 tours were reserved for Councilmembers, while the July 29 tour was intended for boards and commissions. Mayor Jadwin suggested that Councilmembers RSVP for either the July 21 or July 23 tour so staff would know whether anyone planned to attend each date.

President Weaver asked whether anyone had additional comments regarding the update. He thanked Senior Director Schultz for the presentation and reflected that one of his first discussions as a newly elected Councilmember, along with Councilmember Padova, involved the City's facilities and the need for a new building. He stated that it was exciting to see the project nearing completion, acknowledged that staff looked forward to moving into the new facility, and expressed Council's eagerness to occupy the building and see the benefits it would provide to the community. He thanked Senior Director Schultz for the update.

D. ITEMS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGINEERING:

ORD-0024-2026 AN ORDINANCE TO LEVY SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS FOR CERTAIN REAL ESTATE WITHIN THE 2025 SIDEWALK MAINTENANCE PROGRAM, TO APPROVE COSTS AND QUANTITIES, AND TO DECLARE AN EMERGENCY

Senior Director Schultz explained that Engineering Director Hossein Naraghi had taken additional time off around the Independence Day holiday to return to Iowa and would return to Ohio the following day. He stated that he was presenting the Engineering Department items in Director Naraghi's absence and that Director Naraghi would attend a future Council meeting for an introduction. He noted that the Department of Engineering had three items on the agenda and that he would present the first two, which related to the 2025 Sidewalk Maintenance Program and the 2025 Sidewalk Maintenance Lookback Program.

Senior Director Schultz explained that the City must submit the special assessments to the Franklin County Auditor for placement on the property tax duplicate. He stated that the City mailed notices to affected property owners on June 29 and notified them of the public hearing scheduled for July 20. He explained that the City Code required these procedural steps. He stated that after the public hearing, property owners would have 30 days to pay the assessment in full, which would prevent the assessment from appearing on their tax bills. If property owners chose not to pay within that period, the City would certify the assessments to the County Auditor, who would include them on the next five annual tax bills. He requested emergency legislation authorizing the City to levy assessments for the 2025 Sidewalk Maintenance Program and the 2025 Sidewalk Maintenance Lookback Program, explaining that the City needed to submit the assessments to the County Auditor before September 8, 2026.

Councilmember McGregor asked whether property owners paid interest on assessments that appeared on their property tax bills. Senior Director Schultz responded that the assessments did not accrue interest over the five-year repayment period. Councilmember McGregor referred to language in the legislation directing the Clerk to certify the assessment amount, effective date, and rate of interest to the County Auditor. She asked whether that language referred to something different. Senior Director Schultz asked which paragraph she referenced and, after locating it, stated that the language matched the previous year's legislation except for updated dates. He said he would need to review the reference to the interest rate but reiterated that property owners did not pay interest simply because they elected to spread the assessment over five years. He explained that interest would apply only if a property owner failed to pay the tax bill on time, in which case the special assessment would incur the same interest charges as the delinquent taxes.

Councilmember McGregor then asked why some properties listed different amounts for the total cost of work performed and the owner defect aggregate cost. She cited one example in which the amounts differed. Mayor Jadwin identified the example as a property with a total construction cost of $2,780 and an owner defect aggregate cost of $2,180. Councilmember McGregor observed that most properties listed identical amounts, while only a few differed. Senior Director Schultz explained that some situations required the City to assume responsibility for portions of the work. He gave the example of a corner lot where the City replaced a curb ramp and the adjacent sidewalk panels. He stated that staff would need to review individual properties to determine the specific reason for each discrepancy. He added that in some cases the City may have determined that grinding the sidewalk rather than replacing it resolved the issue. Councilmember McGregor asked whether damage caused by City trees could also account for the difference. Senior Director Schultz replied that it could not. He explained that although the Parks Department sometimes trimmed tree roots during maintenance, property owners remained responsible for sidewalk damage caused by trees located on their property.

President Weaver asked whether Council had any further discussion. Hearing none, he stated that both ordinances would receive a first reading on July 20 in conjunction with the required public hearing and would appear on the regular agenda for adoption on August 3. He thanked Senior Director Schultz for the presentation.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 7/20/2026; Second Reading/Vote on Regular Agenda on 8/3/2026.

ORD-0025-2026 AN ORDINANCE TO LEVY SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS FOR CERTAIN REAL ESTATE WITHIN THE 2025 SIDEWALK MAINTENANCE LOOKBACK PROGRAM, TO APPROVE COSTS AND QUANTITIES, AND TO DECLARE AN EMERGENCY

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 7/20/2026; Second Reading/Vote on Regular Agenda on 8/3/2026.

ORD-0026-2026 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH GLAUS, PYLE, SCHOMER, BURNS & DEHAVEN (GPD GROUP) FOR DESIGN AND ENGINEERING SERVICES FOR THE HAMILTON ROAD URBAN PAVING PROJECT (TR-26-02); WAIVING SECOND READING; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY

Senior Director Schultz presented the third Engineering Department action item concerning the Hamilton Road Urban Paving Program, Capital Improvement Project No. TR-26-02. He explained that the project appeared in the City's current Capital Improvement Plan and included resurfacing Hamilton Road from the City's southern boundary to the Granville Street and Havens Corners intersection. He stated that the City planned to apply to the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) for matching funds and explained that ODOT had changed the program into a competitive grant process requiring a formal application. Senior Director Schultz explained that two amounts remained blank in the legislation because the City had selected a consultant but had not completed contract negotiations. He stated that ODOT required a stamped engineering estimate before the application deadline, which necessitated completing the procurement process before finalizing the cost. He advised that staff expected to complete negotiations later that week or early the following week and would provide the finalized amounts to Council before first reading. He noted that the professional services contract would exceed the City's $150,000 procurement threshold.

Senior Director Schultz stated that the Engineering Department had solicited proposals from prequalified firms for design services and had received two proposals. He explained that staff selected GPD Group (Glaus, Pyle, Schomer, Burns & DeHaven) as the preferred consultant. He stated that the project included roadway resurfacing, curb and gutter improvements, and sidewalk replacement for eligible residential properties. He clarified that commercial property owners remained responsible for sidewalk repairs adjacent to their properties. Senior Director Schultz requested legislation authorizing the Mayor to enter into a contract with GPD Group for design and engineering services for the Hamilton Road Urban Paving Program. He requested emergency legislation and a waiver to allow the City sufficient time to obtain the stamped engineering estimate and submit the grant application before the anticipated August 28 deadline. Senior Director Schultz also recognized Sean Bock for identifying grant opportunities, coordinating application requirements and deadlines, and preparing legislation necessary for Council's consideration. He stated that those efforts allowed the City to pursue third-party funding to support capital projects.

President Weaver thanked Senior Director Schultz for clarifying the reason for the requested waiver, noting that the report initially appeared to request a waiver for future grant opportunities through 2028. Senior Director Schultz clarified that the design work would begin immediately while construction would occur in 2028. He explained that successful grant applications often require significant design work in advance, including a stamped engineering estimate prepared and certified by a professional engineer. He stated that the application requirements illustrated the extensive preparation necessary even before applying for grant funding. President Weaver thanked Senior Director Schultz for the explanation and asked where the Hamilton Road improvements would occur. Senior Director Schultz reiterated that the project extended from the City's southern boundary north to the Granville Street and Havens Corners intersection. President Weaver asked whether Council had any additional questions. Hearing none, he stated that because the legislation requested a waiver, Council would consider the ordinance on the July 20 regular meeting agenda. He thanked Senior Director Schultz for the presentation.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading with Waiver of Second Reading/Vote on Regular Agenda on 7/20/2026.

E. ITEMS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY:

ORD-0028-2026 AN ORDINANCE AMENDING PART 3, TRAFFIC CODE; TITLE 9, PEDESTRIANS, BICYCLES AND MOTORCYCLES; CHAPTER 373, BICYCLES AND MOTORCYCLES, OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF GAHANNA BY ADDING SECTION 373.11, "RIDING BICYCLES; HELMETS"

Chief of Police Jeff Spence stated that he had discussed e-bike regulations with Council leadership and noted that e-bikes continued to increase in popularity both locally and nationwide. He explained that although the State of Ohio continued to consider legislation, the City Attorney was preparing amendments to the traffic and criminal codes for local consideration. He stated that the Police Department wanted to discuss a proposed helmet requirement as part of its continued educational efforts. He explained that the proposal would amend Chapter 373 by adding Section 373.11 to require individuals under the age of 18 to wear helmets while operating bicycles, electric bicycles, and powered scooters. He stated that the proposal also specified helmet standards and established responsibilities for parents and guardians. He noted that the language closely mirrored ordinances adopted by neighboring communities, including New Albany and Westerville, with minor revisions for consistency. Chief Spence stated that the Police Department continued its educational outreach efforts by partnering with the City's two bicycle retailers, engaging with residents throughout the community, and producing educational videos featuring himself and School Resource Officer Gillespie. He explained that the videos would launch as part of a three-part series. He also clarified that electric motorcycles differed from electric bicycles because they lacked pedals and instead used foot pegs. He stated that riders often confused electric motorcycles with electric bicycles, even though electric motorcycles could travel between 40 and 50 miles per hour and frequently involved underage operators without driver's licenses. He explained that the proposed helmet requirement would apply throughout the City's 325 lane miles of roadways, 192 miles of sidewalks, and 20.3 miles of shared-use paths.

President Weaver thanked Chief Spence for the community engagement efforts and invited questions from Council.

Councilmember Bowers thanked Chief Spence for responding promptly to Council's previous discussion. She stated that extending helmet requirements to all bicycles without regard to classification represented an important step and expressed appreciation for both the legislation and the planned public education campaign.

Councilmember Padova thanked Chief Spence for preparing the legislation and stated that, as a parent, she appreciated having a legal requirement to reinforce the importance of wearing helmets. She asked whether Class 3 electric bicycles included speedometers. Chief Spence replied that many newer Class 3 electric bicycles connected to smartphone applications that displayed speed, route tracking, and other information. He explained that although many devices also included onboard displays, riders commonly relied on connected applications. Councilmember Padova remarked that relying on a phone display seemed more concerning than she had expected. Chief Spence acknowledged the concern and stated that some applications locked the phone display to navigation and speed information. Councilmember Padova asked whether scooters qualified as mobility devices under the City's code. Chief Spence explained that scooters already fell within the traffic code and remained subject to existing regulations, including operation on sidewalks. He distinguished scooters from assisted mobility devices, such as electric wheelchairs, which the code treated separately. Councilmember Padova asked whether assisted mobility devices could operate on sidewalks. Chief Spence confirmed that they could and described an example involving a resident who operated a recumbent-style electric mobility device that fit within that classification. Councilmember Padova thanked Chief Spence for clarifying the distinction and expressed appreciation for the proposed helmet requirement.

Councilmember Schnetzer asked how the Police Department intended to enforce the proposed helmet requirement, noting that the Department had previously emphasized education over enforcement for similar issues. He gave the example of a child who accidentally forgot a helmet at a friend's house and rode home without it. Chief Spence stated that the Police Department would continue emphasizing education and positive reinforcement. He described existing partnerships with Nationwide Children's Hospital and community outreach efforts that rewarded helmet use with positive interactions, including distributing ice cream. He explained that the proposed requirement would provide officers with another enforcement tool, particularly when encountering young operators riding electric motorcycles without helmets. He stated that officers would generally use those contacts to educate riders and parents, issue warnings, and encourage compliance. He noted, however, that repeated violations could result in enforcement action. He described one incident involving a 14-year-old operating an electric motorcycle at a high rate of speed while wearing large headphones and committing additional traffic violations after receiving two previous warnings. He stated that officers impounded the vehicle and met with the rider's parents because the vehicle qualified as an electric motorcycle rather than an electric bicycle. He added that the Department would continue educational efforts through the schools, School Resource Officers, the Junior Police Academy, and additional outreach targeted toward middle school students. He stated that enforcement would focus on repeated noncompliance after educational efforts had failed.

Councilmember Renner thanked Chief Spence and Mayor Jadwin for bringing the legislation forward. He stated that he had supported the proposal during leadership discussions because he strongly believed in promoting safety. He cautioned against overregulating technology and emphasized that mobility promoted healthy and sustainable lifestyles. He stated that education and addressing risky behavior represented the appropriate approach and expressed appreciation that the Police Department had adopted that strategy.

Councilmember Padova asked whether resources existed for children who could not afford helmets. Chief Spence stated that the Police Department had distributed helmets in the past and maintained strong partnerships with Bicycle One and Trek Bicycle Store, both of which promoted safety education. He noted that pending state legislation would require safety information at the point of sale for electric bicycles. He stated that officers had also personally purchased helmets when necessary, provided bicycles to children in need, and hosted bicycle repair clinics to support the community.

Councilmember Padova asked whether the Police Department had conducted outreach through organizations such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. Chief Spence replied that officers had recently met with a Boy Scout troop and used the opportunity to discuss bicycle safety. Mayor Jadwin added that officers had visited or planned to visit all City summer camps because they provided opportunities to reach large groups of children. She stated that School Resource Officers and Community Liaison Officers had also contacted youth organizations throughout the City and planned to continue educational outreach in partnership with schools once the academic year began. Chief Spence added that the Community Paramedic Program with Mifflin Township Fire Department also supported the outreach effort. He stated that staff distributed educational materials at the Pride Festival and that Community Paramedic Beth DeConnick and Mifflin Township Fire personnel helped educate residents through those community interactions. Councilmember Padova thanked Chief Spence for the information.

President Weaver asked whether Council had any additional comments. Hearing none, he confirmed Council's consensus to schedule the ordinance for first reading on July 20 and place it on the August 3 consent agenda for adoption. He thanked Chief Spence for the presentation.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 7/20/2026; Second Reading/Vote on Consent Agenda on 8/3/2026.

F. ITEMS FROM THE CITY ATTORNEY:

ORD-0027-2026 AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CITY OF GAHANNA CODIFIED ORDINANCES SECTION 133.08 REGARDING COPY CHARGES TO AUTHORIZE FEES FOR THE PRODUCTION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT VIDEO RECORDS CONSISTENT WITH OHIO REVISED CODE SECTION 149.43

City Attorney Tamilarasan requested an amendment to the City's copy charge provisions. She explained that the Ohio General Assembly had authorized police departments and prosecutors' offices in 2025 to include staff time when calculating the actual cost of fulfilling certain public records requests for cruiser camera and body-worn camera footage. She clarified that the authority did not apply to criminal discovery requests, officer-involved incidents, or other exempt records identified in the legislation. She stated that the amendment primarily addressed requests submitted by automated systems that generated large volumes of requests for body camera footage involving particular offenses, creating significant administrative burdens without any mechanism to recover costs. She explained that the Records Commission would establish the specific policy and fee schedule and that the proposed amendment would simply authorize the Commission to do so without conflicting with the City's existing code.

Councilmember Bowers stated that she recalled significant opposition to the state legislation from civil rights organizations and members of the plaintiffs' bar. She expressed concern that charging staff time for public records requests could undermine public policy because responding to such requests constituted part of public service.

City Attorney Tamilarasan responded that the proposed fees would offset the substantial staff time required to review and redact extensive video footage. She explained that the legislation included numerous exemptions to ensure that individuals with legitimate needs for the records could receive fee waivers. She added that both the Chief of Police and the City Attorney retained discretion to waive fees when doing so served the public interest. She stated that the proposal sought to balance transparency and public access to records with the need to prevent excessive administrative burdens on staff.

Councilmember Bowers asked how the policy would apply to allegations of excessive use of force that did not result in death, noting that such incidents did not appear to qualify for an exemption. Chief of Police Jeff Spence responded that the Police Department had an interest in releasing information related to those incidents as quickly as possible. He explained that the proposal sought to address situations in which automated systems generated large numbers of public records requests by using actual case numbers and defendants to submit valid but burdensome requests through online portals. He stated that one Franklin County agency had received 20 such requests within a single minute, requiring staff to spend many hours reviewing and redacting footage. He explained that the proposal sought to address technology-driven requests intended to burden agencies rather than legitimate requests submitted in the interest of transparency. He added that although many public watchdog requests served legitimate purposes, some individuals used the process to slow government operations or impose unnecessary administrative burdens. Councilmember Bowers asked whether the administration would consider expanding the exemptions to include all use-of-force incidents rather than limiting them to incidents involving firearms or fatalities. Chief Spence stated that he understood her concern but cautioned that expanding the exemption could create opportunities for abuse if automated systems submitted requests for every use-of-force incident over an extended period. He reiterated that the proposal sought to balance transparency with protecting staff resources from excessive administrative burdens.

Councilmember Bowers observed that limiting requests based on requester identity presented challenges because requesters could remain anonymous, making it difficult to identify or aggregate repetitive requests. Chief Spence agreed that anonymous requests complicated enforcement of the policy. He stated that staff had worked diligently to develop a policy that promoted transparency while preventing abuse. He expressed openness to considering amendments but emphasized the need to ensure that any changes did not create opportunities for the process to become overly burdensome.

City Attorney Tamilarasan added that the Ohio Revised Code already established several statutory exemptions. She explained that victims as defined under Marcy's Law, victims' advocates, victims' attorneys, and victims' insurance companies remained exempt from the proposed fees. She noted that if an individual qualified as a victim under Marcy's Law in an excessive use-of-force case, that person would already receive a statutory exemption. She stated that she would revise the proposed language to make those statutory exemptions more explicit.

President Weaver stated that the clarification would be helpful and asked City Attorney Tamilarasan to provide the proposed fee schedule in redlined form because he had not seen it included in the attachments. City Attorney Tamilarasan explained that the ordinance represented the first step of a two-step process. She stated that Council first needed to amend the code to authorize a fee schedule and that the Records Commission would subsequently establish the actual fees during a public meeting. She noted that the preliminary discussion had contemplated a fee of $38 per hour of footage for an initial request, with subsequent requests based on one-quarter of the time required to reproduce the records. She emphasized that the Records Commission would determine the final fee schedule, explain the methodology used to calculate the fees, and discuss the rationale during its public meeting.

President Weaver asked whether Council had any additional questions or discussion. Hearing none, he stated that the ordinance would receive a first reading on July 20 and return for consideration on the regular agenda on August 3.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 7/20/2026; Second Reading/Vote on Regular Agenda on 8/3/2026.

G. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Committee of the Whole, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:17 p.m.

Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

APPROVED by the Committee of the Whole, this
day of 2026.

Jamille Jones