



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Committee of the Whole

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

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

Jeremy A. VanMeter, Clerk of Council

Monday, July 15, 2024

City Hall, Council Chambers

Immediately followed the regular Council meeting which began at 7:00 PM on July 15, 2024

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Vice President of Council Trenton I. Weaver, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:17 p.m. The agenda was published on July 12, 2024. All members were present for the meeting. There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

B. ITEMS FROM PLANNING COMMISSION:

[ORD-0047-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE OFFICIAL ZONING MAP OF THE CITY OF GAHANNA ADOPTED BY ORDINANCE 0007-2024 ON APRIL 1, 2024; CHANGING THE ZONING DISTRICT OF 2.58 +/- ACRES OF PROPERTY LOCATED AT 5061 SHAGBARK RD; PARCEL ID 027-000117; CURRENT ZONING ER (FORMERLY ER-2); PROPOSED ZONING L-R-4 (FORMERLY L-MFRD); HC SHAGBARK REAL ESTATE LLC; CHRISTOPHER CHRISTOFF, APPLICANT

Michael Blackford, Director of Planning, presented the item that was recently heard on June 26, 2024, by the Planning Commission, which was unanimously recommended for approval. He showed the location and zoning map of the parcel in question, highlighted in yellow and marked with a red star. The 2.5-acre parcel, currently zoned as estate residential, was proposed to be rezoned to multifamily for 14 units. Director Blackford explained that multifamily zoning is prevalent in the area, with many properties designated similarly. The parcel does not have frontage or direct access to Hamilton Road, but, can be accessed through Shagbark Road and an adjacent property. This adjacent property was developed a few years ago, providing interconnectivity to a signalized intersection, at Hamilton and Vista.

The request before the Council was to rezone the property from estate residential to R-4 multifamily with a limited overlay (L). During the review, staff

worked with the applicant to recommend a limited overlay text, which restricts what the City code would allow by right, but cannot be more permissive than the code. Highlights of the overlay text include limiting density to 14 units, height to two stories, and prohibiting non-residential uses, such as senior living facilities or childcare, thereby allowing only multifamily townhome-style homes. Director Blackford noted that although the site plan was difficult to see on screen, due to technical issues, the conceptual plan showed the anticipated location of units and roads. The rear portion of the property, affected by a creek and topography, was designated as open space.

Director Blackford explained staff evaluated the rezoning request for consistency with the land use plan, which designated the property as Professional Office. He noted that Professional Office use is quite intense compared to the proposed multifamily project, which is more consistent with the character of the area. Staff believed that the property's unique lack of frontage and access made residential use more appropriate than Professional Office use. Director Blackford pointed out that the Land Use Plan, although recommending Professional Office, also recognized the need for additional housing opportunities. The plan emphasized modern housing, due to the aging housing stock in Gahanna. If the rezoning is approved, the next steps include a public hearing application, further staff review, and a Planning Commission evaluation for a Development Plan, which includes detailed aspects like site layout, building design, and landscaping.

Director Blackford shared that staff recommended approval of the rezoning request. The Planning Commission also unanimously recommended approval, finding the application consistent with rezoning criteria and, to some extent, the Land Use Plan. The proposed development was deemed compatible with the surrounding area, which includes similar multifamily properties with densities ranging from 5 to 16 units per acre. The proposed development's density, of 5.5 units per acre, aligns well with neighboring properties, such as *The Woods at Shagbark*. Director Blackford and the applicant were available for questions.

Councilmember McGregor expressed her support for the proposed zoning change, stating that it seemed to fit well with the surrounding properties. She noted that when Shagbark was built, an easement was needed through the property in question to hook into the gravity sewer. However, an agreement could not be reached with the property owner, resulting in the construction of a lift station, which is not preferred. She expressed hope that with the development of this property, the issue could be resolved by tying into the gravity sewer, thus eliminating the need for the lift station.

Director Blackford responded, that while only preliminary engineering had been done at the rezoning level, details regarding the sewer connection would be addressed in future development stages, if the rezoning is approved. He shared Councilmember McGregor's hope that the issue would be resolved.

Councilmember McGregor inquired about the area with the topography change, asking if it was along the creek.

Director Blackford confirmed, explaining that the last third or half of the site had a significant topography change, dipping down about 20 feet. This area was not easily developable, leading to a clustering of development towards the north and western borders of the site, near the two auto-related uses.

Councilmember McGregor noted the impact of the development on people living downstream and expressed relief that the less developable area would remain largely untouched.

Director Blackford agreed and added that the adjacent development would be considered. If the rezoning is successful, landscaping plans would include buffering and landscaping to provide privacy and aesthetic improvements for the neighbors to the west and east.

President Bowers expressed her general agreement with the proposed rezoning application, noting that it made sense for this use. She emphasized the importance of addressing the need for "missing middle" housing in the region, which she believed the proposal would support. She echoed Councilmember McGregor's concerns about water management. President Bowers highlighted that creek and roadway flooding is a significant issue in Gahanna, exacerbated by frequent high-volume rain events. She suggested considering rain gardens, permeable surfaces, and other water management solutions as important factors going forward. President Bowers then inquired if the area in question was part of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district or a Community Reinvestment Area (CRA).

Director Blackford responded that the property is located in the North Triangle TIF but not in a CRA.

President Bowers asked if the TIF was a non-school TIF or if it impacted schools. Director Blackford stated that he did not have that information at that time.

Councilmember Padova requested clarification on the map shown during the presentation. She wanted to confirm that the discussion was focused on the area marked with a star and not the yellow area across the street. Director Blackford confirmed that the rezoning did not include the parcel across the street, indicating it was a separate parcel.

Vice President Weaver thanked Director Blackford and the applicant for the presentation. He admitted that he had some confusion regarding the access points and asked for clarification on whether access was through Shagbark Road.

Director Blackford clarified that the proposed access would be off Shagbark Road, a bit farther south than shown in the Conceptual Plan. He explained that there would be interconnectivity through the Valvoline site, allowing access to the traffic signal at Hamilton and Vista Road intersection, facilitating easier southbound traffic movement.

Vice President Weaver echoed President Bowers' comments on water

management, expressing appreciation for the applicant's willingness to work with surrounding residents to preserve trees and nature. He mentioned his passion for nature preservation and acknowledged the recommendation for fees-in-lieu of pocket parks, although he thought pocket parks would make sense in the area. He communicated understanding the maintenance challenges for staff but believed the proposal matched the six criteria for rezoning applications. He emphasized the need for a diverse housing supply and agreed that the land use plan's call for office space did not make sense for this location, particularly post-COVID. He concluded by thanking everyone again for their efforts.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 8/5/2024; Public Hearing and Second Reading/Adoption on Regular Agenda on 8/19/2024.

C. DISCUSSIONS:

1. Gahanna Area Arts Council Presentation

[2024-0135](#)

Gahanna Area Arts Council (GAAC) Presentation 7.15.2024

Christian Peck, President of the Gahanna Area Arts Council, addressed the City Council, expressing gratitude, on behalf of his colleagues, to all elected officials and staff, for the opportunity to speak. He introduced the Arts Council as a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to connecting and enriching the community through participation in and engagement with the arts. He introduced two board members, Amy Miller, Vice President of the board, and Janelle Hallett, both with extensive backgrounds in arts and community engagement.

Mr. Peck shared the history of the Arts Council, noting that it began in 2016 under Mayor Kneeland's administration. At the time, the community faced financial uncertainties, leading to the formation of the Arts Council to explore alternative funding for arts initiatives. The Arts Council officially launched in 2018, establishing its 501(c)(3) status and initiating its first public project, "Arts in the Alley." He explained that "Arts in the Alley" was a summer festival featuring vendors who sold handmade items, interactive art exhibits, and various arts activities. The festival ran in 2018 and 2019 but was repurposed in 2020 due to COVID-19. The Arts Council then developed "Bright Blocks," a visual art initiative involving mobile mural panels displayed in parks, and "Live in Gahanna," a performing arts series featuring groups like the Columbus Symphony and the Columbus Jazz Orchestra.

In addition to these core programs, the Arts Council made smaller investments in community projects, such as supporting the "Chalk It Up" festival, the Big Walnut Country Club historical marker, a kids' creation station at the new library branch, and a field trip for first graders to see Ballet Met's performance of The Nutcracker. Mr. Peck discussed future goals, including commissioning a bronze sculpture of the founders of the Big Walnut Country Club and exploring funding for creating public spaces, similar to projects in Westerville and New Albany. He emphasized that the Arts Council aims to

enhance rather than draw from the City's resources, focusing on mutual goals of ensuring proper oversight of arts programs and aligning them with state and federal funding processes. Mr. Peck then turned the discussion over to Janelle Hallett for further details.

Funding Process:

Janelle Hallett, Grants Specialist for the Gahanna Area Arts Council, began discussing the funding process with the state of Ohio. She explained that the state legislature sets the budget for the Ohio Arts Council, the state's arts agency. The Ohio Arts Council's annual budget is determined through the state operating budget process, which concluded in June, 2024. The legislature appropriates money to the Ohio Arts Council, which then allocates funds for grants and administrative costs through a public panel review process involving arts experts. Their board approves the funding recommendations. Ms. Hallett noted that the Ohio Arts Council's budget saw a significant increase in the last biennium, resulting in more funds available for grants, particularly operating support grants. The Gahanna Arts Council aims to access these funds to bring tax dollars back into Gahanna. They have been working towards eligibility for the Ohio Arts Council's sustainability program.

Mr. Peck highlighted two important distinctions. First, the Ohio Arts Council oversees the spending of state budget dollars on arts and culture without reporting to another body like an Ohio Arts Commission; the oversight comes from the Ohio Arts Council's board, which is appointed by the governor. Second, the goal of the Gahanna Area Arts Council is to secure state funding, to support arts and culture in Gahanna. Currently, Gahanna could draw about \$75,000 annually from the system, but is currently not near to utilizing that full potential amount. Aligning community arts programs with state funding guidelines, could facilitate access to this funding source and contribute to the city's arts and culture.

Ms. Hallett explained that the Ohio Arts Council's granting process requires building a funding history and adhering to guidelines before an organization can apply for operating support. The Gahanna Area Arts Council received two Art Start Grants for Arts in the Alley, which helped establish their funding history. They also applied for funds through the Ohio Artist on Tour program and the Arts Access program, which supports organizations with budgets under \$50,000. The sustainability program, which serves organizations with budgets over \$50,000, offers significant benefits. It involves a four-year grant period where an organization applies once and then submits annual updates without the need for reapplying for the grant each year. This reduces administrative burden and provides a consistent funding stream. This consistency also lends resilience and stability to programming.

Mr. Peck emphasized the difference between general nonprofit grant opportunities and the specific support available through the Ohio Arts Council. Once the Gahanna Arts Council reaches the sustainability program level, they will receive nearly guaranteed grants, submitting budget requests and program plans for approval without the need for annual reapplications.

Ms. Hallett added that operating funds are particularly challenging to secure through grants. The Ohio Arts Council's sustainability program is unique in offering grants for operating costs with minimal restrictions, making it a valuable opportunity for the Gahanna Arts Council to support its operations and programs.

Programming Timeline:

Mr. Peck continued his presentation by providing a timeline of the Gahanna Area Arts Council's progress. He noted that the Arts Council officially launched in 2018 and received its first Art Start Grant in 2019 in support of Arts in the Alley. They received their second Art Start Grant in 2020, also in support of Arts in the Alley. Mr. Peck shared unfiltered comments from the Ohio Arts Council's panel review process, highlighting the Arts Council's accomplishments and areas for improvement. He expressed pride in the 2019 review, where the council earned the third-highest score in the state. He invited Board Member Kevin Dengel to elaborate.

Kevin Dengel, Board Member for the Gahanna Area Arts Council, provided insights into the panel review comments, which praised the Arts Council for its thoughtful planning, dedication to fairly compensating artists, and extensive measures of success. The comments also highlighted the diverse and impressive makeup of the board in terms of age and artistic expertise. He emphasized the Arts Council's efforts to recapture lost tax revenue allocated to the Ohio Arts Council. He pointed out the increase in the current fiscal year's budget and their aim to reclaim the funds contributed by Gahanna residents. Mr. Dengel also mentioned the positive feedback received for their grant history, particularly with the Ohio Artists on Tour program, where the Ohio Arts Council covers one-third of the talent cost, without questions, due to their successful grant history. He read comments from the 2021 Operational Support Grant, which commended the Arts Council for its thoughtful balance of programming, diverse board, and positioning to add a paid employee.

Mr. Peck noted that in addition to operational support, the Arts Council received grants beyond the scope of the Ohio Arts Council's programs. They also earned a capacity-building grant, allowing them to work with Measurement Resources, a data analytics and envisioning firm, to plan future growth. In 2023, the Arts Council received sustainability support for small organizations and continued participation in the Ohio Artists on Tour program. Mr. Peck highlighted the significant progress made since the Arts Council's formation in 2016, when the community received no state funding for arts and culture programs. He expressed hope for continued growth and emphasized the need for assistance to maintain the upward trajectory.

Request:

Mr. Peck concluded the presentation by summarizing the recent achievements of the Gahanna Area Arts Council. He highlighted that in the past few years, the Arts Council has secured more than \$43,000 in grant

funding. He clarified that while grants are not their only revenue stream, this amount mainly comes from the Ohio Arts Council. Despite this success, he noted that Gahanna is still receiving only a fraction of the benefits allocated for the city. According to data from Measurement Resources, Mr. Peck explained that the Arts Council is potentially leaving \$53,000 on the table each year because they are not maximizing their draw from the Ohio Arts Council's grant programs. He expressed the Arts Council's desire to address this shortfall.

Mr. Peck reiterated their request for a partnership with City leadership. Mr. Peck shared he sought a meeting with City leadership to discuss the pro forma plan provided by Measurement Resources. The goal of this meeting would be to explore realistic and mutually beneficial ways to work together, access more grant dollars, and ease the financial burden on the City budget. He concluded by inviting questions from the City Council, acknowledging that he had provided a lot of information and had exceeded the time allotted. He thanked everyone for their patience and offered to answer any questions.

Questions from City Council:

President Bowers thanked Mr. Peck and the Arts Council board members for their presence. She asked if any board members received remuneration for their service or were funding recipients from the Gahanna Area Arts Council. Mr. Peck responded with a definitive "no" to both questions.

President Bowers asked Ms. Hallett to clarify the qualifications for the sustainability program; specifically, what was required to qualify as a sustainable entity to access the potential \$75,000.

Ms. Hallett explained that the Ohio Arts Council has general guidelines for eligible organizations, which include being a 501(c)(3) or having nonprofit intent. Additionally, organizations must have a funding history with the Ohio Arts Council, typically requiring two grants within a four-year period that have gone through their public panel review process. Grants such as the Ohio Artists on Tour would not count towards this requirement since they are not reviewed by a public panel. For sustainability, there are additional budget requirements, and the grant amount is calculated based on the organization's operating revenue.

Mr. Peck added that once an organization has a history of project support and proven itself through applying for projects, the Ohio Arts Council prefers to fund programs or operations on a longer-term basis rather than on an individual project basis. This reduces the administrative burden on the Ohio Arts Council and ensures continued compliance with guidelines.

Ms. Hallett further explained that once an organization is in the sustainability program, it submits annual documentation and updates rather than reapplying for grants each year. This process ensures the organization remains compliant while providing a steady funding stream.

President Bowers asked if the required two grants within a four-year period

reviewed by a public panel process could come from entities other than the Ohio Arts Council.

Ms. Hallett clarified that the grants must be from the Ohio Arts Council. Mr. Dengel interjected, noting that the grant money becomes amplified. Project grants are often one-to-one matches, and additional funds can be accessed through regional and national grants, such as from Arts Midwest and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Mr. Peck emphasized, that achieving the \$53,000, currently being left on the table, is just the next step. There is potential to amplify that amount with additional regional and national funding. He clarified that the Arts Council does not aim to draw from existing City funds but to grow the budget for arts and culture without negatively impacting other community organizations.

President Bowers asked about the Arts Council's future plans, given their successful artistic engagement and performance events. She sought to understand their vision for the next two to three to five years.

Mr. Peck explained that the Arts Council's future depends on their ability to secure sustainability funding this year. If successful, they plan to focus on capital improvement projects and setting the groundwork for larger initiatives. Without this partnership, they will maintain their current programs but will be limited in capacity. He emphasized that the Arts Council members all have full-time jobs and volunteer their time to the Arts Council, highlighting their current limitations.

President Bowers inquired about the Arts Council's decision not to apply for the City's Community Grant funded through ARPA dollars, questioning if it was due to capacity issues.

Mr. Dengel acknowledged capacity issues in the first year but emphasized that the Arts Council's mission is to contribute to the City's budget, not to draw from it. They aim to secure funding from state and national sources rather than local funds meant for other community organizations.

Mr. Peck clarified that their decision not to apply for the Community Grant was not due to a lack of belief in the process or a desire to disengage with the City. It was a strategic choice based on their role and how they can best meet the community's needs.

President Bowers summarized that the Arts Council's request was to continue engaging with City leadership to achieve mutual success and advance arts programming in Gahanna.

Mr. Peck agreed, noting that recent conversations with City senior directors, Vollmer and Schultz, were productive. He expressed the need for continued partnership and requested a meeting to discuss the findings from Measurement Resources and develop a collaborative plan for the future.

Councilmember Renner expressed his gratitude to the Arts Council, particularly noting his enjoyment of the big yellow duck featured in the slides,

which he had followed globally. He inquired about the reporting stipulations for grants given by the Ohio Arts Council, asking which agency handled the reporting and what it entailed.

Ms. Hallett explained that the Ohio Arts Council is a state agency, similar to the Ohio Department of Health. The grant application process typically involves presenting a budget, supporting documents, letters of support, and a narrative about planned activities. These applications are reviewed by a public panel process, scored, and then recommended for funding based on available funds and the number of applications. The Arts Council board approves the funding recommendations. Once a grant is awarded, recipients must sign a contract with the Ohio Arts Council, often requiring a one-to-one match with other non-state funds. Recipients must submit a final report detailing actual budget numbers and program reviews. For operating support, additional documents, like income and expense statements, and tax documentation, are required. While receipts are generally not required, recipients must have them available, if requested. The final reports are reviewed by program coordinators, to ensure compliance.

Councilmember Renner asked if there was any final analysis or report from the Ohio Arts Council after the reports were submitted.

Ms. Hallett explained that final reporting is not a public process, but the Ohio Arts Council, being a state agency, is subject to public records requests. The panel review process and the board meetings where grants are approved are open to the public.

Councilmember Renner sought to understand the nature of the partnership the Arts Council was proposing.

Mr. Peck explained that the partnership would involve aligning City-administered arts programs with the Arts Council to leverage the amplification process available through the Ohio Arts Council. Mr. Peck explained his view that this partnership would help ensure that arts programs in Gahanna receive more funding and support. He mentioned that the Arts Council has had productive conversations with the City administration and senior directors, Vollmer and Schultz, and sought to continue these discussions, to develop a plan that benefits both the City and the Arts Council.

Councilmember Renner acknowledged the complexity of the amplification process and expressed interest in further discussions.

Mr. Peck reiterated the need for a meeting to discuss the pro forma plan from Measurement Resources and develop a collaborative strategy.

Councilmember Renner referred to the Public Arts Advisory Committee (PAAC) formation and its scope, questioning if it was Peck's understanding that it only dealt with public property.

Mr. Peck acknowledged that the PAAC's scope primarily covers public property or public-facing property, such as murals on the sides of buildings.

He clarified that the Arts Council's core programs currently take place on public property, such as Creekside and public parks.

President Bowers noted that the PAAC's focus was on permanent visual installations on City property, while the Arts Council's activities have been historically more transient or impermanent.

Mr. Peck agreed with this characterization, noting that if the Arts Council's funding were to increase, they could expand their programs to include more temporary *and* permanent installations. This would depend on the nature of their funding and the community support they could secure. Mr. Dengel added that with increased funding, the Arts Council could bring more permanent projects to Gahanna, similar to the public mural program in Cincinnati.

Councilmember Jones sought clarification regarding the partnership with the City. She expressed concern about understanding how the partnership could ensure that the funds allocated for art projects, which might not pass through the Council, could be accessed effectively. She sought to understand how this partnership would prevent money from being left unutilized and emphasized that her question was not meant to be confrontational.

Mr. Dengel confirmed that if the allocation of funds is managed differently, it could unlock significant amounts of money for community programs. Ms. Hallett added that the sustainability program's formula includes the operating budget and annual revenue. Therefore, a larger budget would result in a larger share of the available funds.

Councilmember Jones confirmed that a larger operating budget, facilitated by partnering with the City, could potentially unlock more funds.

Mr. Peck explained that discussions with the administration have been productive and collaborative. The goal is to find a middle ground that benefits both the PAAC and the City without enforcing a rigid process.

Councilmember Padova thanked the participants for their efforts and sought further clarification on how the partnership would enhance the budget without diminishing it. She referenced the Creekside Live performances by Parks and Recreation as an example. She inquired if these events, if managed by the Arts Council, could reduce the City's costs by leveraging grants.

Mr. Peck responded that while specific details would need adjustment, the principle was correct. Ms. Hallett noted that the Ohio Artist on Tour Grant could cover a third of the contract fee, depending on the timeline of artist bookings and contracts.

Councilmember Padova asked if the Arts Council would need to apply for grants for each performance or as a whole program for the summer.

Mr. Peck clarified that they would need to submit paperwork for each performance, but their operations funding status would facilitate this process. Ms. Hallett stated that a signed contract with a performer would secure a third

of the performance fee from the grant.

Councilmember Padova reflected on the current allocation of \$53,000 left unutilized and sought clarification on the amount per resident.

Mr. Peck explained that it was not entirely accurate to say residents were "paying" the amount, as it came from state tax revenue. He detailed how the state allocated arts and culture funds per resident and how these calculations were made. Mr. Dengel added that the initial allocation was \$1.23 per resident, which had increased to \$2.19 due to a significant increase in the Ohio Arts Council's budget.

Councilmember Padova asked about the four-year grant application and the implications if nothing changes.

Mr. Peck stated that if nothing changes, they would continue to receive the same level of support and return on investment, although they had reduced the unutilized amount from \$75,000 to \$53,000. He noted that further improvement was unlikely without changes. Mr. Dengel highlighted that it would take four years to level up again in funding.

Councilmember Padova asked about the operating cost levels and the next steps.

Ms. Hallett clarified that the calculation of awards depended on whether the annual revenue was under or over \$50,000. Mr. Peck mentioned that if they surpassed the \$50,000 mark, they would reach the highest level of support from the Ohio Arts Council, beyond which, only statewide programs existed. He emphasized their mission to serve the Gahanna community.

Councilmember Padova acknowledged the efforts to address the area's status as an arts desert and expressed appreciation for making Gahanna more vibrant and colorful.

Councilmember Schnetzer thanked everyone for attending and expressed appreciation for the Gahanna Area Arts Council (GAAC) and the work they had accomplished in their relatively short existence. He noted the discussions about past history and future partnerships and emphasized the importance of explaining the GAAC's objectives not only to the City Council members but also to the viewing public. He had several questions for clarification and hoped that in addressing his queries, the GAAC representatives would also inform the public. His first question concerned the availability of grant dollars from various sources, including the State of Ohio, and how those funds could be captured.

Ms. Hallett succinctly responded that the funds were captured primarily through grant funding.

Councilmember Schnetzer inquired if there were any stipulations associated with these grants.

Mr. Dengel explained that the National Endowment for the Arts, for example, offered grants with a one-to-one match requirement and necessitated a partnership between a city and the local arts agency, which in this case would be the GAAC. He noted that a formal written agreement was required, and that regional and state funding often followed community investment.

Councilmember Schnetzer acknowledged the explanation and asked about the GAAC's goal of alleviating pressure on the City's budget. He wanted to understand how this process worked and what the outcomes would be.

Mr. Peck provided an example involving performance art programs run by the City. He explained that while the City could offset some costs through sponsorships and grants, it was not eligible for the same grants as the GAAC. The Arts Council, partially funded by grants, carried a percentage of administrative costs, thereby reducing the financial burden on the City. Through a partnership, the City could lessen its costs, potentially by 10%, 20%, or 30%, depending on the scope of work.

Councilmember Schnetzer appreciated the explanation and noted that it led to his final question about the nature of the proposed partnership with the City. He was curious about the City's role and asked if the GAAC had a specific program in mind that they were better suited to handle.

Mr. Peck was hesitant to mention specific programs in the public forum, to avoid singling out individuals or programs. However, he cited the Dublin Arts Council as an example, explaining that they managed all arts programming for Dublin and captured nearly all the appropriated funds. He mentioned that Gahanna had a similar contract with the Convention and Visitors Bureau, which managed marketing and tourism. He suggested that a partnership with the GAAC could follow a similar model, transitioning the all-volunteer organization to a more structured entity based on successful examples like Visit Gahanna.

Vice President Weaver thanked everyone for their presentations and attendance. He mentioned that many of his questions had already been addressed during the earlier discussion and appreciated the informative session. He looked forward to any necessary follow-up.

D. ITEMS FROM THE SENIOR DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS:

1. 825 Tech Center Drive Update

[2024-0134](#)

Gahanna Municipal Complex (825 Tech Center Drive) Construction Update Presentation 7.15.2024

Senior Director Kevin Schultz provided his first official construction update for 825 Tech Center Drive City Hall development project, which he intends to present monthly, throughout the construction process. He emphasized the importance of reviewing the project's objectives at each update, to ensure that the finished facility aligns with the set goals. The update included a

three-minute presentation, with a time-lapse of the construction progress since the beginning of May 2024, approximately 45 days prior to the meeting. Schultz highlighted the role of the drone pilot, Joe Colin, who captures aerial footage of the building twice a week, weather permitting. Although the images did not display well on the projector, they are attached to the electronic agenda item on the City website, and show the building's transformation. Schultz noted that the project is not a simple renovation but a complete transformation of the existing building into a new facility. This renovation will add approximately 40,000 square feet to the building.

The initial phases focused on demolition and site preparation. Schultz showed slides demonstrating the future footprint of the building and its transformation over the past 45 days. Internal images revealed significant progress, with the demolition largely complete and the basement fully excavated. Concrete and foundation work are expected to begin soon, with steel structures projected to be erected by the end of August. Schultz emphasized the project's progress, noting that no additional funds have been requested and the project remains on schedule. He attributed this success to favorable weather conditions and effective construction management. He concluded by opening the floor for questions.

There were no questions from Council.

2. Annual Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Update

[2024-0133](#)

2023-2027 Capital Improvement Plan Annual Update and 2025 Capital Projects List (Draft)

Senior Director Schultz presented the second item regarding the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). He noted that there would be no extensive presentation tonight. Schultz clarified that the in-depth presentation would occur at the first Committee of the Whole meeting in August. Tonight's focus was the delivery of the annual update of the CIP. The document had been largely updated, with project worksheets revised to include new projects and related information reviewed by the CIP Advisory Committee over the past two or three meetings. Schultz emphasized that the full CIP document and the project worksheets were very current. Additionally, Schultz provided a list of 2025 projects, which would eventually be incorporated into the 2025 capital budget request later in the season. He mentioned that the narrative portion of the document had seen minimal changes, mainly in punctuation, while the most significant updates were in the project lists. These lists had not changed dramatically from the previous year and remained largely the same. Schultz concluded by reiterating that a more detailed discussion on the CIP update would take place at the next Committee of the Whole meeting in August. He thanked the Council and reiterated that more information would be provided at that time.

3. Sustainable Ohio Public Energy Council (SOPEC) Membership:

[ORD-0048-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO THE SUSTAINABLE OHIO PUBLIC ENERGY COUNCIL ("SOPEC"), THE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF THE AGREEMENT ESTABLISHING SOPEC, AND APPROVING THE BYLAWS OF SOPEC

Senior Director Schultz provided an update on the Community Choice Aggregation program. A few weeks prior, Senior Deputy Director Wybensing and Senior Director Shultz presented the Request for Information (RFI) results for the program to Council, who passed the resolution. Ordinance # 0048-2024 would cause Gahanna to become members of the Sustainable Ohio Public Energy Council (SOPEC). Schultz emphasized that this ordinance only involved membership in SOPEC and did not include adopting an operations and governance plan, setting rates, or starting aggregation immediately. This membership was the first step in a series of steps required for the process. Schultz reviewed the legislative authority for this action, originating from Senate Bill 3 in 1999, which deregulated the electrical industry in Ohio. In 2000, Gahanna voted on Issue 27 to become a municipal electrical aggregator, and in 2001, an operations and governance plan was adopted and certified by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO). The current effort was to resume from where the City had left off in 2001.

The membership with SOPEC would provide access to aggregation programming, community energy planning, community grant programming, and a sustainability focus. Schultz highlighted that SOPEC, along with its exclusive energy provider AEP Energy, was certified and regulated by PUCO. He noted that other energy sellers who approached residents door-to-door might not be certified by the PUCO and their programs might not be eligible for certain customer benefits. Schultz mentioned ongoing communication with SOPEC regarding specific programs, such as medical certificates and reconnects, which might be offered through AEP Ohio rather than AEP Energy.

The next steps include introducing an ordinance for the City of Gahanna to become members of SOPEC, with the first and second readings in August 2024. The Council would discuss whether to pass this ordinance with an emergency clause, due to its nature as a membership issue. In September 2024, staff would introduce the operations and governance plan, which required two public hearings and further discussion on program details and communication strategies. The focus would also be on community communication and outreach to inform residents about the upcoming program. The rate setting and program activation would be determined later, ensuring the rate is set at an optimal time. SOPEC would assist in this process once they had access to resident data, which would only be possible after Gahanna became a member. Schultz reminded everyone that the RFI details were available from the June 24, 2024 Council meeting and concluded by opening the floor for questions.

Councilmember Schnetzer asked for a return to a particular slide and thanked Senior Director Schultz for providing visibility on the next steps.

Councilmember Schnetzer expressed that this information was anticipated by both the Council and the public. Schnetzer clarified that the City was not adopting rates that day and noted that the referenced resolution passed a few weeks ago was not an adoption of a contract. He inquired about which specific step would lock the Council into a program and determine the rates residents or consumers would ultimately pay.

Senior Director Schultz confirmed that none of the steps listed would lock Council into a program or set the rates. He explained that adopting the operations and governance plan would position them to lock a rate at the most appropriate time based on market conditions. After the adoption of this plan, the rate could be set at any time moving forward, making it unnecessary for Council to adopt the rate immediately. He emphasized the importance of setting the rate when market conditions are favorable and maintaining informal communication with the Council and public through community outreach.

President Bowers addressed the question of whether it was appropriate to advance the agreement to join SOPEC and expressed her support for moving forward with emergency designation. She acknowledged the additional public steps taken to ensure transparency and considered the Resolution 0028-2024 adopted on July 1, 2024 as part of this effort. Bowers stated that this transparency helps residents understand the Council's intention to move forward and viewed the resolution as effectively replacing the 30-day hold period. She supported moving forward promptly to secure a lower rate for the community.

Vice President Weaver expressed appreciation for Director Schultz's efforts and inquired about the timing and the community's representation on the SOPEC board. Weaver noted that Gahanna would be the third largest community, by population, and would get a seat on the board. He asked when this seat would become active.

Senior Director Schultz did not have that information at the time.

Vice President Weaver asked if the City Attorney had any concerns with the documents presented.

City Attorney Tamilarasan confirmed that she had reviewed everything, discussed it with SOPEC's attorney, and had no concerns.

Councilmember Padova sought clarification on the process of setting the rate and communicating with residents. She wanted to confirm that residents would know the rate before deciding to opt out.

Senior Director Schultz confirmed that residents would have a 21-day opt-out window once the rate and contract terms with SOPEC and AEP Energy were set. He mentioned plans for additional communications before setting the rate, including fact sheets, web pages, and potentially direct mailers. He noted that SOPEC provided marketing materials to facilitate these communications.

**Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 8/5/2024;
Second Reading/Adoption on Regular Agenda on 8/19/2024.**

E. ITEMS FROM THE COUNCIL OFFICE:

[RES-0029-2024](#) A RESOLUTION DESIGNATING AUGUST 2024 AS SHARE THE ROAD AWARENESS MONTH IN THE CITY OF GAHANNA

President Bowers introduced a resolution designating August 2024 as "Share the Road Awareness Month" in the City of Gahanna. She noted that the City had previously passed a similar resolution, addressing distracted driving, but wanted to focus specifically on sharing the road this time. She highlighted the return of Pelotonia through Gahanna this year, emphasizing the importance of awareness as cyclists, runners, and pedestrians continue to use the roads. She mentioned that Pelotonia had been invited to join the Council for a presentation of the resolution on August 5, 2024. She encouraged everyone to cheer on the Pelotonia riders on August 3, 2024 as they pass through Gahanna and asked for any edits, corrections, or suggestions to the resolution.

Councilmember McGregor expressed her approval of the resolution, despite its length. She shared a recent incident where an employee of Bicycle One was hit in a hit-and-run accident while riding home from work. The driver fled the scene, leaving the injured cyclist unconscious on the road. An ambulance, responding to another call, found the cyclist and transported him to the hospital. McGregor emphasized the seriousness of such incidents and the timeliness of the resolution. The rerouted ambulance coordinated efforts with the emergency communications office to get another ambulance out to respond to the other initial emergency call.

President Bowers thanked Councilmember McGregor and took the opportunity to highlight the attention given to crossing signals and the improvement of pedestrian and cyclist crossings in the active transportation plan. She appreciated this focus, noting that it could be more cost-effective and impactful than constructing new infrastructure. She mentioned her recent run through Olde Ridenour and observed that people enjoyed the single-lane stretch marked as 15 miles per hour, which connects to Carlin Court in Woodside Green South. Bowers suggested adding "Share the Road" signage to that specific stretch, acknowledging the high usage by pedestrians and cyclists.

Recommendation: Introduction/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 8/5/2024.

F. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Committee of the Whole, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:07 p.m.

Jessica Hilts
Clerk

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

Trenton I. Weaver
Chair