

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: What is a City Charter?

A: A charter is a governing document that a city can adopt under the Ohio Constitution to establish its local government. It serves as a local constitution. Cities without a charter operate under the Ohio Revised Code and derive power from Chapter 7 of the Ohio Revised Code. Non-charter cities are also known as statutory governments. A city with a charter operates under "home rule" (Article XVIII of the Ohio Constitution) meaning it has the authority to govern itself on local matters. Charter cities derive power from a charter enacted pursuant to the Ohio Constitution. The City of Gahanna adopted its current City Charter January 2, 1962.

Q: Why have a City Charter and operate under Home Rule?

A: A charter provides cities with greater flexibility in defining how a local government functions. It allows the community to self-govern matters specific to its needs, enabling the city to tailor its operations to better serve residents and to address local concerns.

Q: What is the Charter Review Commission and Why is the City Charter being reviewed?

A: Regular charter reviews are routinely done throughout Ohio. The Gahanna Charter stipulates a Charter Review Commission be held every five years to review the City Charter. The Charter Review Commission's role is to recommend any updates or changes to the City Charter that they deem fit (within State and Federal law). Over time, a charter may need to be updated to improve government services, increase efficiency, or to adapt to changes in other laws. Amending the charter ensures it stays relevant, reflects current practices, and meets the evolving needs of the community. These changes could be structural, to resolve conflicts with state law, to ensure the City Charter reflects current practices, or to remove outdated provisions.

Q: Who determines whether the City Charter is changed?

A: The citizens of Gahanna have the final say on any changes to the City Charter. All proposed amendments must be voted on during a special or general election, where voters within the City of Gahanna will decide whether to adopt the proposed amendments.

Q: Who sits on the Charter Review Commission?

A: The Charter Review Commission is a public body composed of seven commission members. Four (4) are appointed by City Council and three (3) are appointed by the Mayor. The commission members cannot be current city employees or sit on any other boards or commissions.

Q: How will voters be informed about the proposed City Charter amendments before the election?

A: The full text of the proposed City Charter amendments must be published for two consecutive weeks, fifteen days prior to the election in which they appear, in a newspaper as provided in Ohio Revised Code Section 7.16. The City will also hold several public meetings and disseminate information regarding the proposed City Charter amendments through various media and other means.

Q: What happens if a proposed City Charter amendment does not pass?

A: If a proposed amendment does not receive the necessary majority vote in the election, it will not be incorporated into the City Charter. The existing provisions of the City Charter will remain in effect. The City Council and residents may consider revisiting the issue in future reviews or elections if it remains a concern.

Q: When would the amendments go into effect?

A: If approved by the voters, the City Charter amendments must be certified to the Ohio Secretary of State within thirty (30) days of the election, as required by Ohio Constitution Article XVIII, Section 9 before going into effect.

Q: Where can I find more information or ask questions about the proposed City Charter amendments?

A: Additional information about the proposed City Charter amendments can be found on the City of Gahanna website, at City Hall, or by attending public meetings where these City Charter amendments are discussed. Residents can also contact the Clerk of Council's Office at councilstaff@gahanna.gov, call 614-342-4090 or connect with their City Council representatives with any questions or concerns.