



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

City Council

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

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

Jeremy A. VanMeter, Clerk of Council

Tuesday, September 5, 2023

7:00 PM

City Hall, Council Chambers

The Regular Meeting date was moved to Tuesday, September 5, 2023 in observance of Labor Day. City offices were closed on Monday, September 4, 2023.

A. CALL TO ORDER: Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance, Roll Call

Gahanna City Council met in Regular Session on Tuesday, September 5, 2023, in Council Chambers. President of Council Stephen A. Renner called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Vice President of Council Trenton I. Weaver delivered an Invocation and led members in the Pledge of Allegiance. The agenda was published on September 1, 2023.

Present 7 - Karen J. Angelou, Merisa K. Bowers, Nancy R. McGregor, Kaylee Padova, Stephen A. Renner, Michael Schnetzer, and Trenton I. Weaver

B. ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA:

Councilmember Padova requested that Ordinance 0067-2023 be moved from consent agenda to regular agenda due to the public hearing.

C. HEARING OF VISITORS:

Christian Peck of 122 Oklahoma Avenue, Gahanna, OH spoke on the topic of an arts policy and Bright Blocks.

Mr. Peck is speaking as the board president of the Gahanna Area Arts Council regarding the Bright Blocks project. Mr. Peck inquired about progress on the anticipated public arts policy. The Bright Blocks project allowed for the creation of a series of mini, mobile arts murals to be painted by local artists during the Blues and Jazz Festival. The anticipated result was for the murals to be displayed in local public parks, as has been the case in the past. The project has been stalled due to the lack of public arts policy. Mr. Peck stated that the pause was preventable, and that many members of the Gahanna Area Arts Council are knowledgeable in the area of public arts policies and have attempted to connect with the administration regarding the policy's progress. Peck stressed that the lack of policy has the potential to impact many events in the area, as well as the livelihoods of local artists who

participate in Bright Blocks and other events. Peck addressed the Mayor directly, asking where the administration is in the process and again questioned when progress would be made on the policy.

Rose Hawk of 611 Camilla Lane, Gahanna, OH, spoke on the topic of art.

Ms. Hawk has led and organized the Bright Blocks project for two years in a row. She has worked on various projects in the region and shared that it has been a dream of hers to foster the arts community in Gahanna, where she grew up. She stated that summer months are the busiest for artists and pointed out that professionals chose to work in Gahanna for this project. She expressed appreciation to the artists for spending their time in Gahanna that weekend. Several Gahanna residents, one a recent Gahanna High School graduate, were involved in the project. Ms. Hawk listed several artists, both local and outside the city and Ohio, who participated in the project and would like to know the status of the murals as well. She stressed that they are professionals who spend their time mindfully, and their murals deserve to be displayed. Ms. Hawk is disappointed that she cannot answer the artists' questions as to when their artwork will be shared with the community.

Councilmember McGregor asked if there as an agreement with the Parks Department before the project, in which the murals would be put up in the Parks. Peck replied that the project is a continuation of the 2020 project in which the Parks Department solicited ideas for programming that could safely continue during Covid times. McGregor asked if there was an agreement this time. Peck stated that there was a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in place the first time, and that the project has changed since the original MOU. Last year, the project was operated without an MOU in collaboration with the Parks Department. This year, the Arts Council was told they would be given an MOU that would be reviewed by the City's legal team, and then they were later notified that the display would be put on hold. He assumes there is a draft but does not have a copy of it. City Attorney Mularski shared that, yes, legal responded to the Arts Council and told them they could proceed with the Bright Blocks project, but it could not be displayed on public property until there was a public arts policy. He takes offense to the presentation of this issue tonight. Mr. Peck agreed that the Arts Council did know ahead of time and decided to proceed because of the passion behind the project. Peck stated that the group is not suggesting that they should be permitted to put up the art in public spaces in the absence of a public arts policy. Rather, the group has been inquiring since May what the process for creating a public arts policy is and would be. It was outlined for the group in July and is not being adhered to. McGregor stated that it felt as though the Arts Council blamed Council for the Arts Council's choice to move forward with the Bright Blocks project without permission. Peck replied he is not telling the artists the Council is at fault. Mr. Peck added that he is at Council tonight not to make a point, but to ask for answers.

Kevin Dengel, on behalf of the Gahanna Area Arts Council at 81 Mill Street, Suite 300, Gahanna, OH spoke about the Bright Blocks and arts policy.

Mr. Dengel stated that prior to the Council meeting he shared a slideshow

with Council depicting the 2023 Bright Blocks event. The project features professional artists that are locally and regionally significant. Dengel opined that the murals are beautiful, bright, and engaging, and he hopes that City Council can help the Arts Council achieve its goal of displaying the murals in City Parks. The Arts Council has consistently received praise from community partners, regional organizations, state granting authorities, residents, business owners, and artists. Dengel read aloud an email that the Arts Council received from a local artist participating in Bright Blocks. The artist, whose name is Madison, went on to receive a grant from the Greater Columbus Arts Council to continue working as a professional artist. The Bright Blocks program was her entry point. Dengel noted that the Bright Blocks project originated from a partnership with the Parks & Rec Department. Madison and the other artists who participated are looking forward to seeing their work around the parks in the coming months.

Vice President Weaver asked Mr. Dengel if the relationship between the Arts Council and the Parks Department had continued year after year. Dengel replied that, yes, the relationship began with the Parks Department reaching out to the Arts Council for ideas, which resulted in the 2020 signed agreement. The agreement continued through the subsequent years.

Kevin McGinn of 200 Lintner Street, Gahanna, OH, spoke about a Public Arts Policy and Bright Blocks.

Mr. McGinn is a local business owner, designer, and educator. He has been running his business out of Gahanna for about seven years. He has a studio here and expressed his love for Gahanna. He stated that his business is beginning to be affected by the lack of public arts policy in the city, and he regrets not coming forward sooner. His role as a resident and business owner is to be proactive about it; however, the Arts Council and City Council are the ones who can make progress on it. For the second year in a row, the Bright Blocks project has not been put up. He helped orchestrate the first project, which is still up in Woodside Green. He expressed embarrassment over the lack of policy and added that other cities are exceeding Gahanna in this area. He believes and trusts that the Arts Council is advocating for both himself and fellow creatives. He also believes and trusts that City Council and the Mayor are advocating for the community. He feels that there needs to be cohesiveness and that differences in the past must be put down. He believes everyone involved - the Mayor, City Council, and the Arts Council - wants the same thing, which is to make Gahanna better by having a policy that works and that is progressive. He noted it has already been written, the questions have been answered, and other communities are doing this. He ended by stating that we all need to be transparent.

Mr. Peck asked for an additional 30 seconds to address a previously asked question. In response to whether the group proceeded without permission, he noted that they do not do the events alone. The event's supporters include the Ohio Arts Council, local sponsors, and are done with local artists. They are done as part of the Blues and Jazz Festival for the past two years, which has its own planning committee. The Bright Blocks are assembled and prepped for the artists by the Parks Department. Permission was given and

expression of excitement was done to proceed with the Bright Blocks project, with the exception of permission to install the blocks in the Parks after the festival was over. Peck stated that the Arts Council was informed that the Bright Blocks would be installed in the Parks once the art policy was adopted. He noted that the project was done in concert, in partnership, with many members of the administration.

Mayor Jadwin thanked the Arts Council and supporters for coming to be heard and thanked Mr. Peck for creating the opportunity for gaps to be filled. The Mayor stated that the administration has been working with internal and outside counsel to outline what the process for the arts policy will be. She met with Mr. Peck and Mr. Dengel after the discussions in May to discuss policies that were researched by the Arts Council to accelerate what the process. The Mayor stated that the conversation did not center around those policies and welcomed the Arts Council to share them with the administration if they are available. She shared that the policy is still underway and hopes to share the process with City Council next week. She acknowledged that government sometimes moves slowly. She wants to ensure the administration gets the policy right to protect the interests of the taxpayers. Liability exposure can be costly. She also acknowledged that arts create a more vibrant community and she respects the works of the Bright Blocks program. As soon as an arts policy is in place, the work will go out into the community as a more permanent installation. The City has been forced to turn down other artwork in public forums. She reminded the Arts Council that until the public arts policy is passed, they are welcome to use private property to display the work as long as they have the necessary permissions. It is her goal to have a policy passed within the next 60 days.

President Renner thanked the Mayor. He asked for one clarification, which was whether next week the process would be shared. The Mayor stated that, yes, she would share it with Council in an email.

D. PRESENTATIONS:

[2023-0153](#)

Northeast Ohio Public Energy Council (NOPEC) - Electric and Gas Aggregation Presentation 9.5.2023

Councilmember Angelou introduced this portion of the meeting. She thanked Clerk VanMeter for his participation in organizing it. She also thanked Derrick Clay and Anthony Jones for inviting her to the June 20th NOPEC MORPC lunch and learn. Representatives from Lancaster and Reynoldsburg were at the program and are now members of NOPEC. She turned the meeting over to Brenda Fargo, Josh Burns, and Anthony Jones. Mr. Jones introduced himself and shared that the group has been speaking to communities in Ohio on the reasons for participating in energy aggregation. He turned the presentation over to Brenda Fargo.

Ms. Fargo introduced NOPEC as the Northeast Ohio Public Energy Council. She stated that while NOPEC still uses its acronym, it services a much wider region than Northeast Ohio. The group formed in Northeast Ohio 20 years ago. A previous electric aggregation ballot issue was passed in Gahanna in

2000. Ms. Fargo stated that they are there to talk about whether reinstating an energy aggregation program would be right for Gahanna and if NOPEC would be a good fit. She proceeded to review and discuss presentation slides.

Energy Deregulation in Ohio

Energy deregulation began in Ohio with gas in 1997 followed by electric in 2001. Both included provisions for opt-out aggregation for communities. This allows communities to select a supplier on behalf of the eligible accounts within their city. The goal is to provide a way for the community to have savings and an alternate supplier to the utility.

Ohio Energy Market

According to Ms. Fargo, energy prices have increased since then. New prices went into effect June 1st of this year. This is an unusual circumstance, and these rates will be in place until 2024. They will probably not go back to previous levels. However, it is uncertain if they will remain as high as they are now. NOPEC is now starting to talk to communities about opt-out aggregation.

Opt-Out Aggregation

Eligible accounts for opt-out aggregation include those not on any kind of payment plan (PIPP), and those who do not already have an alternate supplier. All accounts are in the program unless they affirmatively opt-out. Communities must pass a ballot issue to participate. Gahanna passed ballot issues in 2000 and 2003 for electric and gas, respectively. Then, communities must adopt a Plan of Operation and Governance and be certified by the PUCO.

Benefits of Aggregation

Ms. Fargo stated that one benefit of aggregation is cost savings. There is also the ability to negotiate better terms and conditions and have more pricing options. Aggregation can also help communities meet their sustainability goals and can protect participants from confusing or misleading offers. Ms. Fargo directed councilmembers to a spreadsheet in their packets that showed a comparison provided by Apples to Apples and provided an example on reading the comparisons. She shared that Reynoldsburg recently joined opt-out for gas and electric. There are approximately 14,000 households in Reynoldsburg. On the electric alone, there were 12,000 eligible accounts. Ms. Fargo suggested there is a similar percent of residents in Gahanna who are still with the utility and eligible for aggregation. Reynoldsburg had a retention rate of 86% that have stayed with the program.

Results of Aggregation

Sixty-one percent of accounts that switch to an alternate supplier are through community aggregation programs. Forty-two percent switching in Columbia territory. NOPEC serves 240 communities in 19 counties and accounts for 44% of the total aggregation programs in Ohio.

Who is NOPEC?

NOPEC is a non-profit council of government that is run by its members. There are 9 board meetings per year. It is the largest aggregator in Ohio and since the beginning has saved its members over 300 million dollars. The NOPEC mission is to Aggregate, Educate, and Advocate. It aggregates by providing the program to eligible residents. NOPEC believes in education. They provide educational material to residents on how to reduce energy costs. They connect with consumers in numerous ways. NOPEC also advocates at the state and federal level to work toward low costs for consumers.

NOPEC Values

Ms. Fargo outlined NOPEC's values, which include serving the communities; robust sustainability and consumer advocacy; dedicated relationship management; customer care; transparency, longevity, and financial stability; and developing products and programs based on outreach and research with customers and communities.

NOPEC Membership Benefits

Member benefits include grant programs, sponsorship awards for local events, and a "Do Not Knock" program, which prevents salespeople from contacting consumers. A PACE & STEP program, which provides for funding for small businesses that may have an energy project that they do not have the funding for. Energy Advisor Program and Preferred Pricing Programs are also member benefits.

Ohio Renewable Projects

NOPEC works with NextEra on renewable projects. As a public entity, NOPEC goes through the RFP process, so its members do not have to. Ms. Fargo shared that NextEra is a leader in sustainability and is committed in assisting any community in meeting its needs.

Choosing a Supplier

Ms. Fargo went through the process of choosing a supplier. Talking to others is a starting point. Issuing an RFP, hiring a consultant to issue an RFP, or joining NOPEC are the three main paths to find a supplier.

Next Steps

Fargo outlined the steps to move forward with NOPEC membership and provided a sample timeline.

Councilmember Schnetzer pointed out that the meeting is livestreamed and there may be community members at home who are unaware of Apples to Apples. He requested that Ms. Fargo to explain the difference between Apples to Apples and the aggregation program being proposed tonight. Fargo stated that Apples to Apples allows residents to view all options and then connect with the supplier and sign an individual contract. With the aggregation program, there is an opt-out letter which a consumer has 21 days to review, and they will be automatically enrolled if they choose not to opt out. There will be an additional opportunity to opt out via notice from the supplier. Members can leave the program and come back. Fargo encouraged Council and community members to look at their current bills to

determine if they have inadvertently been paying more than their initial agreement. She said many of them have what is called an “evergreen clause” during the initial signing, and when this runs out consumers end up paying more than the initial agreement. Schnetzer asked if NOPEC handles its agreements and what the rate is right now. Fargo replied that the current rate is 6.45, which is nearly half of what the utility is offering. Fargo said that when the city previously did an aggregation program, it was done differently. The city had entered into a locked rate around the time of Hurricane Katrina, when the cost was 13 cents per ccf. After that, the market caused the rate to go down to about 6 while the City was still locked into 13. It was a bad model for the community. Now, the program follows the market, never above or below more than about 5-10%. There is a product that allows members to lock in a rate they are comfortable with. There is also a product that offers a percent off of what the utility offers. And there is a product that is 100% renewable that can be locked into a period of 12 or 24 months.

Councilmember Angelou asked if there ever needs to be another ballot issue to begin an aggregation program. Fargo stated that since electric and gas aggregation has already been passed, it does not need to be on the ballot again. It can be reinstated without having to have another vote.

Councilmember Bowers asked if Council could choose a supplier that had renewable energy, and what the rate would be. Fargo said yes, and that all renewable is currently 6.875 for the standard rate, 7.3 for a 12-month fixed rate, and 24-month fixed rate is 7.2. There are communities that have chosen to have 100% renewable as the opt-out option. Fargo acknowledged that there is a premium for 100% renewable that community members must pay. Therefore, Council may want to weigh this option. Bowers asked if someone opts out, can they still use Apples to Apples? Fargo replied that, yes, if someone is comfortable with their supplier or does not feel comfortable shopping for one, they can stay with their supplier.

President Renner noted that in 2016, he bought an electric car. It was important to him to power it with only renewable energy. He is an avid user of Apples to Apples and is currently paying for renewable at an average of 6.6 cents per kw/h. He feels that the deregulation in Ohio has given customers a choice. He noted that there are more and more solar projects, so the future for the International Energy Agency and others are saying that the long-term cost will change. He asked Fargo what the benefit of working with an aggregator such as NOPEC will be. Fargo replied that in Reynoldsburg there were 12,000 accounts that were eligible for aggregation. They were consumers who were not utilizing Apples to Apples, and most stayed in the Reynoldsburg program.

Councilmember McGregor asked if this was just for the generation cost and if consumers would still receive an AEP bill. Fargo replied, yes, and that consumers would still receive their same bill. Everything else remains the same.

E. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. ORD-0067-2023 Special Assessments for 2021 Sidewalk Maintenance Program

President Renner identified the public hearing purpose and read the rules for the hearing as follows: "Pursuant to Council Rules 9.10 & 9.11: The President of Council shall give a brief statement or explanation of the item under hearing. Prior to the opening of the public hearing, the administration may make a presentation of slides, videos, photos, staff comments, or combination thereof, regarding the application in question. The public hearing shall be opened with any proponents being allowed seven minutes, opponents ten minutes, then three minutes for rebuttal by the proponents. Such time schedule shall prevail unless extended by the President without opposition by a Council member. Everyone addressing Council will approach the lectern and state their names and addresses for the record." President Renner then offered time for the Administration to share any comments or presentation on the hearing topic. Mayor Jadwin indicated there were no comments at this time.

President Renner opened the public hearing for comment at 8:05 p.m., first calling for any proponents, then any opponents, and then for any proponents to speak again.

There were no speakers.

President Renner closed the public hearing for comment at 8:06 p.m.

F. CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Minutes - To Approve:

[2023-0150](#) CN Minutes 8.21.2023

The minutes were approved on the Consent Agenda.

[2023-0151](#) COTW Minutes 8.28.2023

The minutes were approved on the Consent Agenda.

2. Ordinances for Second Reading:

[ORD-0062-2023](#) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO PROVIDE CONSENT AND ENTER A PARTICIPATORY AGREEMENT WITH THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR JOINT PLANS FOR REHABILITATION OF THE HAMILTON ROAD BRIDGE OVER INTERSTATE 270

The Ordinance was adopted on the Consent Agenda.

[ORD-0063-2023](#) AN ORDINANCE ACCEPTING PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE TECH CENTER DRIVE EXTENSION (ST-1086)

The Ordinance was adopted on the Consent Agenda.

3. Ordinances for Waiver, Adoption:

[ORD-0065-2023](#) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS; WAIVING SECOND READING - Capital Improvement Fund, Water Capital Fund, and ARPA Fund for 2023 Capital Projects

The Ordinance was adopted on the Consent Agenda with waiver of second reading.

End of Consent Agenda

The clerk noted that Councilmember Angelou was not present in Chambers during the roll call for the Consent Agenda.

A motion was made by Schnetzer, seconded by Bowers, to Pass the Consent Agenda. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 6 - Bowers, McGregor, Padova, Renner, Schnetzer and Weaver

Absent: 1 - Angelou

G. ORDINANCES FOR INTRODUCTION / FIRST READING:

[ORD-0066-2023](#) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS - General Fund for Risk Insurance Renewal

President Renner introduced the Ordinance and read it by title.

H. ORDINANCES FOR INTRODUCTION, WAIVER & EMERGENCY ADOPTION:

[ORD-0064-2023](#) AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR THE ISSUANCE AND SALE OF NOTES IN THE MAXIMUM PRINCIPAL AMOUNT OF \$8,500,000, IN ANTICIPATION OF THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS, FOR THE PURPOSE OF ACQUIRING, CONSTRUCTING, RENOVATING AND IMPROVING MUNICIPAL FACILITIES, INCLUDING CONSTRUCTING, RENOVATING AND IMPROVING ADDITIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITIES FOR POLICE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS; FURNISHING AND EQUIPPING THE SAME; IMPROVING THE SITES THEREOF; ACQUIRING LAND AND INTERESTS IN LAND IN CONNECTION THEREWITH; AND ALL NECESSARY APPURTENANCES THERETO; WAIVING SECOND READING AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY

Vice President Weaver stated that he understands the need for the notes

and supports the project. His issue is with the request for waiver. As a city, we have known that the current notes mature for one year and that timeframe was coming to an end. Outside counsel advised on the options and these things take time. He understands that there was a decision to go for another period of one-year notes as planning for the project is ongoing, even though this was not the original intent. He believes the ordinance could have received a second reading, and pointed out that our code requires all ordinances to receive two readings unless there is a vote for an emergency passed by six members of council when all are present. The purpose is to give the public the opportunity to participate, and even if they do not participate, it is important that the chance is provided. This is good for process and transparent. He added that if the item is not passed, the City faces a disadvantage in navigating the market to ensure the notes get issued in time. This would be unfavorable to the city and he will not vote against it; however, he wanted to ensure his concerns were noted.

A motion was made by Schnetzer, seconded by McGregor, that the Ordinance be Introduced, Second Reading Waived, and Adopted as an Emergency. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Angelou, Bowers, McGregor, Padova, Renner, Schnetzer and Weaver

[ORD-0067-2023](#)

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE LEVYING OF SPECIAL ASSESSMENTS FOR CERTAIN REAL ESTATE WITHIN THE 2021 SIDEWALK MAINTENANCE PROGRAM; WAIVING SECOND READING AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY

A motion was made by Schnetzer, seconded by Angelou, that the Ordinance be Introduced, Second Reading Waived, and Adopted as an Emergency. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 7 - Angelou, Bowers, McGregor, Padova, Renner, Schnetzer and Weaver

I. CORRESPONDENCE AND ACTIONS:

1. Clerk - None.

2. Council

President Renner informed Council that he appointed Councilmember Bowers to the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Advisory Committee, which had its first meeting today. It was productive and Mr. Renner will report back officially in one month.

J. REPRESENTATIVES:

1. Community Improvement Corporation (CIC) - Renner, Weaver

Vice President Weaver shared that the next meeting will be Tuesday, September 19th at 8:00 a.m. in the Committee Room.

2. Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) - Angelou

Councilmember Angelou reported that the next meeting will be Thursday, September 14th.

3. Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) - Padova

Councilmember Padova reported that the CVB and Herb Center have welcomed many visitors. The Gahanna Parks & Trails Guide is the most distributed marketing piece aside from the Gahanna Visitor's Guide. Visit Gahanna has released two new blogs. The Fall Activity Guide features a list of fun things to do during September and October and the Fall Herbal Cocktail Trail describes and promotes the herbal cocktails currently offered at 9 Gahanna establishments. Both can be found on Visit Gahanna's website. The CVB and Creekside District Alliance are sponsoring a cornhole league held on Wednesday nights at Creekside. It starts on Wednesday, September 20th, the same night that Honey & Blue will be playing. Registration is full but the community is welcome to cheer on players. Amanda Ferguson, coordinator of the Ohio Herb Center, was recently featured on *Herbology Talk* podcast. It can be found on the Ohio Herb Center's website. The Creekside Boutique Hop takes place on Thursday, September 7th from 5:00-8:00PM at The Fabled Collection. It features many different vendors.

4. School Board (SB) - Bowers

Councilmember Bowers welcomed two school board members in attendance at the meeting. She congratulated Gahanna Lincoln athletic teams, especially football and soccer teams who played in new stadiums over the weekend. The football team secured a win in the new stadium the previous Friday.

K. OFFICIAL REPORTS:

1. Mayor

Mayor Jadwin shared that the pools are officially closed after Labor Day. She thanked the seasonal staff for a great season, and the pool members for cooperation with new rules. Guests enjoyed a non-disruptive environment. The splash pad will remain open through the end of September from 8:00AM to 8:00PM. The Mayor congratulated school board members and the district on the opening football night in the new stadium, calling the win "gutsy." She thanked the volunteers, event organizers, and businesses on the Supporting Gahanna Together activities. Events included Touch-A-Truck, a block party held by Jason Ruark, and live music at Creekside. Representatives from Realtor.com and Columbus Realtors were also present to help Gahanna celebrate its designation as the "Hottest Zip Code." The Mayor congratulated the Gahanna Chamber of Commerce on its Taste of Gahanna event that included diverse restaurants at Edison Brewing Company. Lastly, Creekside

Hops and Vines, the Parks & Rec Foundation's biggest fundraiser is upcoming on September 16th.

2. City Attorney

Attorney Mularski took a moment to clarify statements made during the Bright Blocks commentary. Mr. Mularski said: "If you remember, we had a very significant issue arise about First Amendment, Freedom of speech, and public art. Because of that, our city is somewhat vulnerable to being sued. I don't like my city in that position so I have taken a firm stance to do everything I can to prevent that from happening. Contrary to what was being alluded to, there is no continuing act that has been going on for four years with Bright Blocks. When they presented that document to us this year, first the Parks and Rec Department listened to us and they crossed out half of what was in that document and then I crossed out the other half. We literally ripped that document up and started anew. What we said was going to happen was, we would provide you with the boards and we would anchor them for you because we felt that was a health and safety issue. We would not provide one speck of paint or anything else. They were specifically told that they would not be displayed. In fact, they were not displayed in 2020, obviously or in 2022." The Mayor added, "I think Mr. McGinn stated they were not displayed in 2022." Mularski continued, "So only one out of the last four years they were displayed. They were specifically told they would not be displayed and there was no, um, idea that this would happen. And the idea for that was because we need to have a public art policy in place. That public art policy is very difficult to make sure it is done correctly. We want to make sure it is done correctly. That is where - ask Bloomington, Indiana how easily you can get sued if you don't have a proper policy in place. And so, I believe the Mayor said she was going to be presenting this next week and we're moving forward after a long battle. But they were never told, as a matter-of-fact Mr. Peck admitted, 'Oh yeah, you said we couldn't do it but we decided to go forward with it anyways.' So, I want you to know, as Councilmember McGregor said, it's not the city's fault. We did nothing wrong. We told them from day one how things were going to work, and they proceeded as they felt fit and now are trying to blame it on us. And it did not sit well with me. So, I'm sorry if I got a little heated when that came up but that is not the way it happened and I want you to know what happened. I will be happy to provide that document to anyone who wants to see it. They were told we'll give you the plywood, we'll anchor it to make sure it's secure, then you're on your own, we do not guarantee that anything else will happen from there. That is what happened. Thank you."

L. **COUNCIL COMMENT:**

Councilmember Angelou thanked Mr. Mularski for his comments. She hopes everyone has a wonderful end of summer.

Councilmember McGregor commented that she and her husband celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary over the weekend. She commented on a snapping turtle her family found over the weekend while exploring in McKenna Creek.

Councilmember Bowers shared that she is grateful to the community members tonight who attended regarding the public arts policy. She looks forward to reviewing the policy in the coming months.

Councilmember Padova thanked the Arts Council and volunteers who spoke this evening. She stated that while there was an issue with public art this year, she is unsure why only one was installed from 2022. She stated they are a great addition to Creekside Blues & Jazz festival and the festival goers enjoyed the Bright Blocks. She commented on the passion of the artists, who worked so hard and were not able to display their work. She understands that the Arts Council knew this prior to the festival, but that the Arts Council is a volunteer organization that is passionate about the city. She hopes the Bright Blocks will be able to be installed in the parks, where they can be viewed and inspire people who visit.

Councilmember Schnetzer said that two Sundays ago the Gahanna Junior Lions football league commenced. While coming off the field that day, tragedy struck at Easton. The juxtaposition of a wholesome event of children coming together to play a game next to an event in which a 15-year-old lost his life and two 13-year-olds were charged, was jarring to him. He wanted to thank the Parks volunteers all the way down to the lifeguard staff, teachers, coaches, and those who provide outlets for children in the community. He referenced the adage, "Idle hands are the devil's playground" and noted that children need constructive outlets to get out energy. He mentioned various athletic teams, clubs, and camps and also thanked camp counselors and the YMCA. He stressed the importance of getting the kids involved in something to grow the community. His heart goes out to the families involved in the tragedy.

Vice President Weaver thanked the members of the Arts Council and the artists and community advocates who attended the meeting. He looks forward to working with the administration on the public arts policy. He also thanked the school board members for attending. He commented on the excitement of Friday night's football game and seeing the community involvement.

President Renner thanked those who attended to speak their hearts. He felt Councilman Schnetzer's comments on wanting to build something were well-said, and that the community members who attended tonight's meeting wanted to build something. He appreciates professionalism from the fellow elected leaders. He knows personally that sometimes the public comes in and it is hard to hear what they have to say. But the Council Chambers must be a place where people can speak their minds. If we do not have a safe place where people can speak their minds, then the local government is failing. The leaders' jobs are then to listen, understand, and think about how their jobs can be done better. How can all stakeholders, residents, groups, and policies and procedures be considered to move forward. It takes compromise and hearing things we do not like. It is the core sense of democracy.

M. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Council, President Renner adjourned the meeting at 8:34 p.m.

Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

*APPROVED by the City Council, this
day of 2023.*

Stephen A. Renner