



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, April 14, 2025

7:00 PM

City Hall, Council Chambers

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Gahanna City Council met for Committee of the Whole on Monday, April 14, 2025, in Council Chambers. Vice President of Council Trenton I. Weaver, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. The agenda was published on April 11, 2025. Councilmember Nancy McGregor was absent. All other members were present for the meeting. There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

B. ITEMS FROM THE SENIOR DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS:

1. Gahanna Civic Center - 825 Tech Center Drive Update

[2025-0086](#)

Gahanna Civic Center (825 Tech Center Drive) Construction Update
4.14.2025

Exterior, Interior, Upcoming Updates

Senior Director of Operations Kevin Schultz provided the monthly update on the 825 Tech Center Drive renovation and expansion project. He was joined by Police Chief Spence to highlight progress specific to the Police Department's facilities. Schultz noted that February had been relatively slow for construction, largely due to winter weather. However, in March of 2025, the pace picked up significantly, and progress resumed across multiple areas of the site. He reported that all utility work on the site, including water, sanitary, and storm systems, was complete and the team had begun site grading. All main rooftop heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) units were installed during a Saturday lift, and the building was prepared for conditioning. The HVAC system was scheduled to be operational by mid-to-late May of 2025, and the building was expected to be fully dried in by the end of April of 2025.

Interior progress included ongoing drywall finishing on the second and third floors. Schultz noted that the north-south wing of the third floor was drywalled,

patched, and painted. Ceiling grid installation began in that wing, and the contractor planned to continue working from that area into the Police Department wing and down through the second and first floors. He provided updates on key infrastructure elements, including the installation of electrical switchgear, information technology (IT) cabinets, and shaft wall reconstruction. The interior shaft wall was removed and rebuilt to meet current code requirements, addressing a previous issue. Progress also continued in the Police Department's holding facility. Schultz shared that he, Chief Spence, and several officers planned to conduct a walkthrough later in the week to finalize design and layout details, such as wall heights and the flow of space dedicated for mugshots and fingerprints. On the first floor, mechanical and electrical rough-ins were ongoing. Schultz confirmed that good progress continued and emphasized that the project remained on schedule.

Senior Director Schultz stated that the furniture, fixtures, and equipment (FF&E) procurement process was underway, with responses due to the architect, MSA, by the end of the week. The Administration anticipated presenting the results at the second committee meeting in May of 2025. The City also issued a separate request for proposal (RFP) for moving and logistics, with proposals received the previous Friday, April, 11, 2025. To date, the project reached 61% completion and experienced 24 weather-related delay days. Schultz shared recent photos showing various areas of the building. These included the newly poured first-floor concrete in the future Mayor's Court and City Council Chambers, painted walls in third-floor study rooms, rooftop HVAC units, an IT closet under construction, and newly installed electrical switchgear in the main electrical room. He noted that while some images might seem routine, they represented essential systems necessary for the building's long-term functionality.

March Financial Updates

Senior Director Schultz continued the 825 Tech Center Drive project update with a review of the overall construction contract and financing structure. He presented a summary table showing the Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) components of the construction contract. The total project construction cost, comprising GMP 1 and GMP 2, was \$59,627,855. As of the February pay application, 46% of the construction costs were invoiced, totaling approximately \$27.5 million. The March invoice was not approved yet.

Schultz reviewed the status of allowances and contingencies, reporting that \$867,000 spent to date, representing approximately 26% of the total \$4.7 million allocated for those items. He then addressed a request from Councilmember Schnetzer to revisit original project assumptions. Schultz explained that the construction cost breakdown remained consistent with previous reports. Each GMP contract included construction expenses and costs related to allowances, contingencies, construction management fees, insurance, bonding, and commercial activity taxes (CAT). These components collectively comprised the \$59.6 million total.

Schultz moved on to a full project summary, outlining all costs beyond

construction. The City purchased the 825 Tech Center Drive building for \$8.75 million, including a \$250,000 down payment noted on a subsequent slide. Design and pre-construction services were included, along with the \$59.6 million construction figure. The FF&E (Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment) budget stood at \$1.6 million and was increased by \$500,000 using funds from a health and wellness refund. The additional funds supported staff wellness improvements such as height-adjustable desks across the facility. Additional project-related costs included third-party inspections (e.g., for steel and concrete), builder's risk insurance, permitting and inspections, an easement agreement with American Electric Power (AEP), and the acquisition of two acres of land at the rear of the 825 property.

Schultz concluded with a review of project financing. He explained that \$3.3 million in prior-year cash reserves, identified by the Finance Department in 2021-2022, funded early planning efforts, including consultant MCP's budget validation and the building's down payment. Legal and consulting costs related to the property acquisition were also covered from this amount. He noted that the building purchase was ultimately rolled into the first bond issuance of \$18.2 million, which also incorporated a 2012 bond refund. Although the refunded amount was not specified, Schultz clarified that the reduced total was not an error but an intentional accounting measure to avoid duplicating the building purchase in the financial summary. The second bond issuance occurred in June and totaled \$33.5 million, covering the remaining project costs. The City also committed \$10 million in cash to the project—\$3 million from the Capital Fund and \$7 million from the General Fund, to support FF&E and contingency budgets. Schultz explained that any unused contingency funds would return to the cash allocation rather than the bond proceeds.

Questions from Council

Councilmember Schnetzer asked for clarification regarding the two bottom-line items on the financial summary slide, specifically, the \$3 million and \$7 million cash-funded contributions. He requested an explanation of why these amounts were funded with cash rather than through bonds. He noted his understanding that FF&E was excluded from bond funding due to its shorter life cycle, which did not align with the 28-year term of the bonds. He also asked for further clarification on the \$7 million portion.

Senior Director Schultz responded that, in consultation with Finance Director Joann Bury, the Administration determined that bringing \$10 million in cash to the project was appropriate. Of that, \$4.7 million was allocated for contingencies, \$1.6 million for FF&E, and the remainder was rounded to an even \$10 million to balance bond issuance and repayment considerations. He explained that FF&E expenses could not be financed through bonds because such items do not meet the minimum 28-year life span required for bond-funded capital expenditures. As a result, FF&E had to be funded with cash.

Councilmember Schnetzer noted that contingency funds might ultimately go unspent. He emphasized that funding these amounts with cash instead of

bonds avoided the risk of borrowing money that may not be needed and then paying interest on it for 28 years. Schultz confirmed that this was correct and added that the same principle also applied to the allowance line.

Senior Center Covered Entryway

Senior Director Schultz provided an update regarding ongoing discussions about the potential addition of a covered walkway at the entryway to the Senior Center portion of the 825 Tech Center Drive facility. He referenced the upper portion of a site drawing as the focal area for the discussion. Schultz reviewed the parking layout, noting that the facility included approximately 350 to 360 total parking spaces. According to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, a facility of that size must have at least eight handicap-accessible spaces. The site currently includes 17 designated handicap parking spaces distributed throughout the lot. In addition, the City established a series of "limited mobility" parking spaces, shown in lighter blue on the drawing. These spaces are not legally enforceable but are intended as a courtesy to provide easier access for individuals with mobility limitations. Schultz explained that these spaces offer priority proximity to the building, although anyone may park there without penalty. A few of these limited mobility spaces were relocated from the front to the rear of the building, where access is actually closer. In total, 21 such spaces were provided, split roughly evenly between the front and back of the building.

Schultz then focused on the proposed covered walkway at the Senior Center entrance. Staff engaged with the architect and construction manager, Elford, to obtain a rough order of magnitude (ROM) cost estimate. The estimated cost to design and construct the 23-foot-long covered walkway was between \$300,000 and \$350,000. Schultz illustrated the 23-foot distance by referencing the approximate space from Vice President Weaver's seat to the front row of Council Chambers chairs. He explained that the team also evaluated the usage of the existing portico at the current Senior Center. Staff estimated that it was used for two to four drop-offs per week, though it often functioned more as a parking space than a dedicated drop-off area. Schultz stated that conversations with members of the Senior Center suggested that while the issue was important to a few individuals, it was not a widely shared concern among the membership as a whole.

Schultz provided comparisons to similar facilities. Recently completed or soon-to-open senior centers in Westerville, Upper Arlington, and Hilliard do not feature covered walkways or porticos. In Upper Arlington, members must walk a considerable distance from a parking garage to the building. In Westerville, the uncovered distance to the entrance is approximately 30 to 35 feet. He noted that cost, aesthetics, and functionality were key considerations in the evaluation. The architect expressed concern that a covered walkway added post-design could appear as an afterthought and detract from the building's overall design. As an alternative, staff began exploring the idea of planting trees to form a natural canopy over the walkway rather than installing a structural one. Schultz concluded his remarks by inviting Police Chief Spence to speak on the public safety implications related to the proposed covered walkway.

Police Chief Jeff Spence provided remarks regarding public safety concerns related to the proposed covered walkway at the Senior Center entry of the 825 Tech Center Drive facility. He noted that although the building appeared large from the street, it became more scaled and compressed in appearance upon closer approach due to the curtain wall design and layout. He emphasized that the structure was multi-story, requiring accommodation for larger fire apparatus and emergency vehicles. Chief Spence explained that the curved roadway in front of the main entrance, where the covered walkway was proposed, was a very short and confined space. He expressed concern about the ability of a 60-foot ladder truck to navigate the space, calling it difficult if not impossible. He added that standing vehicles in that area would further complicate access for fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) vehicles, including squads, first responder engines, and others responding to detainee or walk-in medical emergencies. He pointed out that a key fire hydrant with direct connectivity to the building was located near the lower edge of the proposed area, as shown in the site rendering. This further limited feasible vehicle staging in front of the building.

Chief Spence contrasted the proposed layout with the current Senior Center, where the existing overhang is located off the main travel way, allowing drop-offs to occur without obstructing circulation. In contrast, the front area of the new facility is part of a main travel way and serves as a primary circulation route around the building. He concluded by noting that, under existing conditions, the current Senior Center's covered area was often used for parking rather than drop-off. This pattern further highlighted concerns that a new covered structure could become similarly misused and pose challenges for emergency access.

Questions and Comments from Council

Vice President Weaver thanked Senior Director Schultz and Chief Spence for their detailed follow-up on the proposed covered walkway at the Senior Center. He noted that he and several colleagues had previously reached out with questions and appreciated the consideration of potential alternatives to find the best possible solution.

Councilmember Schnetzer raised concerns about the estimated cost of the walkway, noting that the back-of-the-envelope math suggested approximately \$15,000 per linear foot. He asked what the primary cost drivers were. Schultz responded that the primary factor was that the structure was not part of the original construction plan. He explained that the cost of steel, which continued to rise, significantly impacted the estimate. Additionally, the design would require the installation of four footings, two bollards, and electric wiring in the roof structure. Schultz emphasized that electrical components in particular added substantial costs. He acknowledged his own surprise when the cost estimate came back at \$300,000 to \$350,000.

Councilmember Padova sought clarification on the public safety concerns. She asked whether the issue was the physical presence of the canopy structure or the likelihood that cars would stop and block access. Chief

Spence responded that it was a combination of factors. He noted that the drawing illustrated two parked vehicles measuring about 22 feet each. The total distance between the southernmost car and the apex of the roadway curve was less than 40 feet, making it extremely difficult-if not impossible-for large emergency vehicles to navigate the area. He clarified that the structure under consideration would not extend out far enough to function as a traditional overhang or portico, as site constraints would prevent that. The canopy would stop at the sidewalk, and the area would remain a main circulation route around the building. Spence emphasized that any vehicle stopping there, even briefly, would likely cause obstruction. Schultz added that in practice, a second vehicle would not likely stop where one was shown in the illustration. Instead, it would pull up behind the first car in the designated drop-off lane, which was constructed specifically for that purpose. He highlighted the curve of the roadway and the proximity to pedestrian areas as key design factors that guided the layout.

Councilmember Padova asked about the nature and frequency of drop-offs at the current Senior Center. She inquired whether the facility regularly received vans or buses transporting groups of people, such as residents from assisted living facilities. Schultz responded that the two to four weekly drop-offs monitored by staff reflected individual drop-offs-not group trips. For larger trips or excursions, staff coordinated passenger loading away from high-traffic areas, though not necessarily under a covered structure. Padova clarified her question, asking whether the new facility would receive group drop-offs from assisted living communities, particularly those transporting individuals with mobility devices. Director of Parks and Recreation Stephania Ferrell confirmed that the city staff maintained partnerships with assisted living providers. She explained that these partners sometimes sponsored events and brought residents to attend. Ferrell stated that she did not view the lack of a covered walkway as a barrier. She emphasized that appropriate access to the facility was available, and that staff could provide accommodations during inclement weather as needed.

Vice President Weaver referred to a prior walkthrough of the 825 Tech Center Drive facility with Senior Director Schultz, during which they discussed the feasibility of constructing a covered walkway at the rear of the building, near the dedicated Senior Center entrance. He asked Schultz to summarize those considerations on the record. Schultz explained that creating a similar covered structure at the rear of the building would require approximately double the distance compared to the proposed front walkway. He indicated on the site plan the location of the rear Senior Center member entrance and explained that the distance from the door to a potential drop-off point was significantly greater than the 23 feet required at the front. He added that the primary challenge with constructing a covered structure at the rear was related to traffic flow. The area immediately outside the rear entrance was part of a key north-south travel lane. Stopping or standing vehicles in that location would block most or all of the travel lane, creating significant disruptions to site circulation and posing safety concerns.

Councilmember Padova followed up by asking whether any form of shelter would be provided at the rear entrance, especially since members would be

required to use a badge or fob to access the door. Schultz confirmed that a small three- to four-foot overhang would be affixed to the building above the entrance. This structure, supported by the building itself, would provide minimal coverage for individuals as they accessed the entrance, protecting them from the elements while using their access credentials.

Police Department

Senior Director Schultz introduced the next portion of the presentation, focused on the Police Department's training and operational facilities at the new 825 Tech Center Drive building. He noted that the layout emphasized efficiency, future expansion capacity, and the creation of a safe and secure facility. Schultz emphasized the intentional design separating staff and public spaces to enhance safety for employees, officers, and visitors alike. He then turned the presentation over to Police Chief Jeff Spence.

Chief Spence began with an overview of the Police Department's lower-level training center, located on the west side of the building. He described the first set of images, including an observation area with large windows looking into the range, the range itself with its backstop, and a storage area for equipment such as lane dividers. Adjacent to these areas were the simulator room and armory, as well as restrooms and secured storage space. The training center included multiple doors and features to maintain positive HVAC pressure, essential for safe environmental conditions. He also noted that this lower level, including its stair tower, served as the designated storm shelter for the entire facility-an important feature not available in current city buildings.

Spence continued with the second section of the training center, highlighting the multi-functional training room, which will also serve as the City's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) during major weather events or other emergencies. Additional images showed the fitness center and defensive tactics room. The defensive tactics room would allow for simulation-based training under stress, including scenarios like applying a tourniquet, where officers' fine motor skills may be tested. He noted that this type of high-stress, realistic training could help identify and resolve equipment or procedural issues in a controlled environment before they occur during actual calls for service.

Spence then described the "monument stair," a central stairwell connecting all three floors of the Police Department. This stairwell would serve as a unifying space linking the field services and training areas on the lower and first floors to investigative services and administrative offices on the second and third floors. He noted that other police departments, such as those in Westerville, Hilliard, and Dublin, have done an excellent job preserving agency history, and the new monument stair would allow Gahanna to do the same. The stairwell would feature plaques honoring retirees and officers who served, including one who died in the line of duty and two who died while serving the City of Gahanna.

To provide context for the improvements, Spence shared current images of the existing police facility across the street, focusing on the female locker

room. The existing locker room included one stall, one shower, and one sink. Lockers were so closely spaced that two people could not open adjacent lockers at the same time. The lack of benches and storage space made the area cramped and inefficient. The space also doubled as gear storage, contributing to further congestion. In contrast, the new facility would separate gear storage into its own dedicated space near deployment areas, improving organization and operational efficiency. The locker rooms under construction would feature dedicated restroom facilities and a new HVAC system that circulated air not only into the room but directly into the lockers. This system would help dry wet equipment more effectively, reducing mold and odors, an important consideration given the challenging environmental conditions officers often face. Spence emphasized that these improvements would support both hygiene and overall staff well-being.

Questions & Comments from Council

Councilmember Schnetzer asked Chief Spence to comment on the importance of the structural hardening of the new police facility at 825 Tech Center Drive. He emphasized the need for the facility to remain operational in the event of a disaster, such as a tornado, and requested a summary of relevant design features for the public record.

Chief Spence affirmed that the building will be constructed as a fully hardened public safety facility. He acknowledged that certain design improvements were made to the existing structure during both design and construction phases to enhance its durability and operational resilience. He confirmed that the facility will include a storm shelter and other components necessary to maintain functionality during emergencies. Spence recounted a prior incident from 2006 when a derecho storm caused two main doorways in the current police facility to blow out due to inadequate door strength. At the time, the facility was equipped with basic storefront doors that were neither hardened nor commercial grade, leaving the building unsecured. He further explained that the current facility contains additional vulnerabilities, including hollow core doors and unsecured window areas. In contrast, the new facility is being constructed with safety and security as top priorities. Design elements include standoff distance to control approach access, secure parking, and reinforced materials throughout. Spence noted that the Police Department would have two lobby areas: a hard lobby for initial public access and a soft lobby for secondary purposes such as taking police reports or conducting interviews. The new facility also includes a designated safe room for individuals in crisis who require immediate separation and protection. This room can be secured with minimal staff involvement and is designed to ensure occupant safety. He concluded by stating that the hardened design and emergency features would benefit the Police Department and other City staff working in the building.

2. Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Update

[2025-0087](#)

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Presentation and Update 4.14.2025

Senior Director of Operations Kevin Schultz provided an update on the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for the Committee of the Whole. He noted that the CIP Advisory Committee met in March of 2025, to begin reviewing the timeline and framework for the 2026 CIP update. Schultz reviewed the published CIP adoption timeline, noting that the draft CIP report would be introduced to Council on August 11, 2025, with final adoption targeted for September 2, 2025, following a second reading and public hearing. He reiterated that adoption of the CIP was not a formal approval of the capital budget itself. However, the 2026 CIP was expected to reflect approximately 85-90% of the actual capital budget, with changes later presented as amendments during budget deliberations. In response to previous Council feedback, the Administration aimed to shift most capital-related presentations into August and September to reduce presentation time during October and November budget discussions.

Schultz then discussed the continued evolution and maturation of the CIP document. He explained that while the document's intent remained consistent, the city administration updated project phases and terminology to reflect clearer planning expectations and eliminate confusion. In the past, project phases were labeled numerically by year groupings, Phase 1 (Years 1-5), Phase 2 (Years 6-10), and so forth; this often led to misunderstandings about when projects were expected to begin. Instead, city administration proposed new terminology for project phases, aimed at better reflecting a project's status rather than a specific year:

1. **Actionable** - Projects currently in design and scheduled for construction. These projects were financed and were progressing, such as 825 Tech Center Drive.
2. **Assessment** - Projects undergoing feasibility analysis, including evaluation of cost, design, and funding needs. An example was the Clark State Road multi-use trail feasibility study with the Franklin County Engineer's Office.
3. **Identified** - Projects that were recognized but not yet evaluated for feasibility. These remained on the long-range planning list and could be promoted in the future.
4. **Visionary** - Long-term conceptual projects, such as a hypothetical 100-acre solar farm. These projects were aspirational and unlikely to proceed in the near term.

Schultz emphasized that projects could move fluidly between categories as more information became available or as resources were allocated. He stressed that the key goal was not to tie project status to a rigid timeframe, but to maintain a clear categorization system that reflected feasibility, planning stage, and readiness for execution. He concluded by explaining that while some wording in the published document might still reflect the older "Phase 1-4" terminology, staff will update the language in consultation with the Advisory Committee and Council. The core intent of the plan, to identify, prioritize, and phase projects appropriately, would remain unchanged.

Questions & Comments from Council

Councilmember Jones asked whether the newly proposed terminology—such as "Actionable," "Assessment," and "Identified", would replace the "Start Year" currently shown in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) document. She asked if city administration would no longer include specific start years for projects. Senior Director Schultz confirmed that the shift in terminology would replace the use of a literal start year for most projects. For actionable projects, a start year such as 2025 would still be included, but for projects in the "Identified" phase, the column would instead show the label "Identified." Schultz added that the heading for the "Start Year" column may also be updated to reflect this change.

President Bowers followed up, asking whether allocating funding for feasibility assessments would automatically move a project from the "Identified" category into the "Actionable" category. Schultz clarified that it would not. He gave the example of the Clark State Road multi-use trail, noting that even with allocated funding for feasibility work, the project would only advance to the actionable category if Council explicitly authorized it. He emphasized that feasibility alone did not guarantee advancement to construction. President Bowers noted that the CIP Advisory Committee discussed the topic of feasibility extensively and found it to be a productive conversation. She highlighted that feasibility assessments should examine more than just cost and include considerations such as land availability and location constraints. Schultz agreed, citing the City's service complex as an example. While the project remained a high priority, it remained in the assessment category due to the ongoing challenge of locating 10 to 12 acres of available land for the facility.

Overview of Projects

Senior Director Schultz continued the Committee of the Whole update by reviewing the nine largest capital projects currently identified within the City of Gahanna's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). He noted that while the following slides used an older nomenclature, referring to "short," "mid," and "long-term" project phases, he would update the terminology to reflect the revised "Actionable," "Assessment," "Identified," and "Visionary" phases prior to distributing the final slide deck. Schultz explained that the nine projects represented a collective investment range of approximately \$85 million to \$105 million in today's dollars. He clarified that while many of these projects were well-defined in terms of scale and scope, their prioritization and implementation varied. He also noted that some projects contained subcomponents with differing priority levels. For example, the **Creekside Garage and Plaza** project included a portion deemed imperative and therefore classified as a Priority 1 project, while other components were lower in priority. He further explained that the "**Westside Utility Improvements**" project, frequently referred to as the "Westside Sewer Project", was renamed to better reflect its inclusion of water and storm sewer improvements in addition to sanitary sewer. The estimate of \$12-16 million applied to Phase 1 only and did not account for future phases that would increase the total

investment further.

Schultz then introduced the individual project slides, each of which included a project description, CIP phase (to be updated), priority level, detailed cost estimates for design, pre-construction, and construction, and potential funding sources. He informed the Council that the slide deck would be available for review and encouraged members to interrupt with questions as needed. The first detailed project discussed was the **Big Walnut Trail**, a multi-phase, long-term initiative more than ten years in the making. Schultz noted ongoing work to traverse I-270 via an Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) bridge project and stated that the City of Gahanna applied for LinkUS funding to help close the gap in the \$4.35-\$5.9 million project cost range. Estimated costs were broken out by easement acquisition, design and pre-construction, and construction phases.

The next project highlighted was the **Link to Literacy Trail**. This trail would connect Hamilton Road to Creekside by way of Shull Park. Schultz explained that this project was currently classified as "Actionable" and "Essential," due in part to the City's leveraging of NatureWorks grant funding. He presented the full cost estimate of \$2.1-\$2.65 million, with breakdowns for land acquisition, design, and construction.

President Bowers inquired about the grant funding associated with the Link to Literacy Trail project. Director Ferrell confirmed the City of Gahanna secured \$500,000 in Clean Ohio Trail funding for the project. When asked whether the funding carried a timeline for use, Ferrell explained that while the funding was secured, the agreement was not initiated yet. Once a signed agreement was in place, the project timeline for construction would be determined.

Senior Director Schultz then transitioned to an overview of the **Creekside Garage and Plaza** project. He noted that although the project was currently categorized under "Facilities," it could also be considered a Parks project. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) mandated that the City of Gahanna mitigate flooding at the Creekside Garage; the City was working with Fishbeck to develop mitigation strategies. Schultz emphasized that FEMA's requirement pertained only to flood mitigation, not to water seepage or waterproofing of the plaza itself, though those enhancements were also explored as a potential opportunity. The project was classified as "Actionable" due to its current status in the design phase and carried a Priority Level 1 designation because of the FEMA flood mitigation requirement. Schultz noted, however, that only a portion of the project was truly imperative, while other components, such as plaza enhancements, could be considered discretionary. The scope of the project included garage and trail improvements, plaza reconstruction, streetscape enhancements, and ADA accessibility upgrades. The portion referred to as "garage and trail improvements" (shown in gray on the visual provided) would address FEMA-required mitigation and include ADA switchback ramps and stair access from the lower trail to the upper plaza. Schultz emphasized that this portion alone was estimated at \$6.25-6.8 million.

Senior Director Schultz further explained that the red and green portions on

the slide represented the lower and upper plaza reconstructions, respectively. Councilmember Padova asked for clarification on what the green portion included. Schultz stated that it encompassed complete reconstruction of the plaza area, replacing street furniture, lighting, pavers, and railings, and installing new design elements such as decorative coverings and a fireplace feature. The upper plaza enhancements would also waterproof the garage ceiling beneath it. Padova confirmed with Schultz that the full \$18.9-\$22.3 million project estimate reflected a complete reconstruction of the Creekside Plaza, not general maintenance, and matched the concept renderings that were shared with the public at the Mill Street Market. She requested that those renderings be shared with the Council again for reference, noting that some members may not have seen them.

Senior Director Schultz also discussed anticipated funding sources, which included capital funds, TIF funds, and private investment. He explained that private investment was being sought in part to support utility relocation for the adjacent commercial buildings. In addition, the City recently applied for federal earmark funding to support the FEMA-required flood mitigation component. Mayor Jadwin added that this was the first year Ohio's U.S. senators opened the opportunity for federal appropriations requests. The City of Gahanna submitted one application the previous Friday, April 11, 2025, and planned to submit two more in the upcoming week, including one through Congresswoman Beatty's office.

President Bowers asked whether the earmarked federal funds would apply to the FEMA-required mitigation. Schultz confirmed that they would and that the \$6.25-6.8 million estimate for the garage and trail improvements was the portion for which earmark funding was requested. In response to a final question from Bowers, Schultz noted that there was no specific maximum award cap for this type of member-directed spending.

West Johnstown Road Transportation Improvements

Schultz presented the planned improvements for West Johnstown Road, including the segment from James Road to Goshen Lane. Although the map used during the presentation erroneously extended toward the interchange, the actual project limits ended at Goshen. The project, developed by Director Komlanc, included land acquisition, design and pre-construction, and construction phases. Schultz noted that this project would be coordinated with both the Westside Utility Improvements project and a Columbia Gas project scheduled for 2026 in the same corridor.

Westside Utility Improvements

Schultz outlined the scope and funding of the Westside Utility Improvements, emphasizing that the project addressed sanitary, stormwater, and water infrastructure simultaneously. The slide provided a detailed breakdown of funding allocations for each utility. Schultz noted that, since this work involved utility infrastructure, the project would be eligible for funding from specialized sewer, water, and stormwater capital funds, in addition to Tax Increment Financing (TIF) dollars. He added that completing all three utilities

concurrently would provide long-term service improvements and avoid repetitive construction disruption.

Service and Parks Garage Relocation

Schultz discussed the proposed relocation of the service and parks garage. The current facility, situated on approximately 10 acres just north of Friendship Park, was inadequate. The City determined that relocating the facility would require 10 to 12 acres, but identifying suitable land within Gahanna remained a challenge. For this reason, the project remained in the "assessment" phase. Schultz explained that land acquisition costs in Central Ohio were driven up due to regional development pressures, including the regional Intel project, and estimated the cost of the acquisition at \$1.5 to \$2.5 million for the needed acreage. Construction and pre-construction estimates were drawn from a past facility study by Pizzuti and updated using recent cost data from Elford, the City's partner on the 825 Tech Center Drive project.

Aquatics Master Plan Implementation

Schultz provided an overview of the Aquatics Master Plan, referencing a conceptual rendering of a potential new aquatic facility at Gahanna Swimming Pool (GSP). He clarified that the total project cost estimate of \$21 to \$26 million only applied to reconstruction at GSP and did not include upgrades to the Hunter's Ridge pool. Features in the conceptual design reflected community priorities, such as a relocated competition pool, zero-depth entry, slides, and a lazy river. The project remained in the "identified" or "midterm" phase of the Capital Improvement Plan. Schultz stated that the next step would be conducting a feasibility assessment to determine the viability of constructing the proposed facility.

Councilmember Jones asked for clarification regarding the categorization of the Aquatics Master Plan project. She inquired whether, under the newly introduced CIP terminology, the project should be considered "visionary." Senior Director Schultz responded that the project currently resided in the "identified" category, which is the third level of project readiness in the new framework.

Stygler, Agler, US 62

Senior Director Schultz then presented the final capital improvement project, the Stygler Road, Agler Road, and U.S. 62 intersection improvements. He acknowledged that while the community previously engaged in various planning efforts for the area, there remained no clear consensus or finalized direction. Schultz summarized that although several designs were presented in the past, the project ultimately lacked momentum and needed reinvigoration. He noted that Burgess & Niple were contracted through the City's Comprehensive Transportation and Mobility Plan and were evaluating options for the intersection as part of their broader analysis. However, Schultz emphasized that the project lacked a defined scope or strategy at present and therefore remained in the "identified" category.

Concluding Remarks

Senior Director Schultz concluded by explaining the next steps for the administration. The City of Gahanna's leadership team, including the Mayor, Director of Finance Joann Bury, and department directors, would begin internal discussions regarding potential funding strategies for the nine major projects. These discussions would precede and inform future meetings with the CIP Advisory Committee. Schultz suggested one possible strategy: implementing a multi-year capital budget approach. This approach would involve projecting and allocating revenue beyond a single fiscal year, enabling the City of Gahanna to begin financing longer-term projects by anticipating revenues from subsequent years. He clarified that this was only one example and that no decisions were made. He noted that these strategic conversations would continue during the June 2025 CIP Advisory Committee meeting, with the intent of advancing practical funding pathways for the larger capital priorities. He closed by noting that, while not one of the nine core projects discussed in detail, Academy Park was another large capital initiative and was already fully funded for 2025.

Councilmember Padova thanked staff for the comprehensive information and noted that while some projects were familiar to her due to her participation on the Aquatics Steering Committee and her previous viewing of the Creekside concept at Mill Street Market, others might not be as familiar to her colleagues or members of the public. She asked whether the Council would receive additional presentations or updates on these projects prior to July of 2025. Senior Director Schultz responded that July would likely be the next opportunity to revisit these items unless a project needed advanced more quickly. He explained that, because the highlighted projects are large and will require long-term funding strategies, additional time is needed for planning. He also noted that while renderings can be helpful, they can also lead to confusion about the phase or status of a project. For that reason, staff have been careful to label renderings as "conceptual" and to refrain from showing them publicly until the appropriate stage of planning and funding.

Councilmember Schnetzer thanked Senior Director Schultz for the overview and suggested the administration consider treating the Westside Utility Improvements project differently from a funding perspective. He noted that water and sewer-related infrastructure can legally be funded through revenue-backed bonds, which are secured by water and sewer charges and may allow for an alternative financing path if cash funding is not feasible.

Councilmember Jones thanked staff for the presentation and asked for clarification on how the city administration will transition from the nine highlighted projects to the next set of projects, especially as the new CIP format moves away from assigning specific "start years." She asked how projects like the community center would now be tracked. Schultz explained that each of the nine current projects addresses a specific and often urgent need, such as aging infrastructure, FEMA-mandated improvements, or long-term gaps in park facilities. He noted that the community center project is a good example of a long-range initiative that remains important but currently falls into the "visionary" category due to the cost, complexity, and

land requirements involved. He added that being categorized as “visionary” does not preclude a project from moving forward as funding strategies or community priorities evolve. Councilmember Jones followed up, confirming that the community center project, while previously listed with a dollar amount, was not currently categorized under the new framework. Schultz confirmed that it will be placed in the “visionary” category in the updated plan.

C. ITEMS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGINEERING:

Returning for further discussion (Wynne Ridge Bridge):

[RES-0015-2025](#)

A RESOLUTION DECLARING THE CITY OF GAHANNA'S INTENT TO PARTICIPATE FINANCIALLY IN THE WYNNE RIDGE COURT BRIDGE REPLACEMENT PROJECT (ODOT PROJECT NO. 116417) AND AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO A PARTICIPATORY AGREEMENT WITH THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

City Attorney Tamilarasan provided an update regarding the Wynne Ridge Bridge project, which is being completed in conjunction with the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT). She explained that ODOT originally submitted a sample resolution for the City's consideration, which appeared on the original agenda for first reading. However, Attorney Tamilarasan requested that the item return to Committee due to procedural concerns regarding the form of the legislation and potential conflicts with an ordinance previously passed in October of 2025. Attorney Tamilarasan noted that the resolution format was inconsistent with the type of authority being granted and that additional clarity was needed regarding what the City was authorizing ODOT to proceed with. She shared that she met earlier that day with ODOT's Assistant Chief Counsel to clarify the required documentation. As a result of that meeting, a revised ordinance was created and uploaded that afternoon. The new ordinance replaces the resolution and amends the prior ordinance to reflect updated project estimates and contractual requirements. Two distinct documents were attached to the ordinance: a new Local Public Agency (LPA) contract and an amendment to the original LPA agreement. Both documents serve separate functions in enabling the City of Gahanna to move forward with the project. Because the ordinance authorizes a construction project, it would take effect upon signature. However, Attorney Tamilarasan advised that a waiver of second reading would be necessary in order to meet ODOT's April 25, 2025 deadline.

President Bowers thanked the City Attorney for her additional review and efforts.

Vice President Weaver confirmed that both the resolution and ordinance would appear on the agenda for the upcoming meeting. Attorney Tamilarasan clarified that her recommendation was for the resolution to be tabled indefinitely, followed by a vote on the ordinance waiver, and then a vote on the ordinance itself. Vice President Weaver confirmed the process with Clerk VanMeter and thanked both Senior Director Schultz and Attorney Tamilarasan for their work on the matter.

Recommendation: Postpone Indefinitely on Regular Agenda on 4/21/2025.

[ORD-0017-2025](#) AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND ORDINANCE 0058-2024 AND TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR TO PROVIDE CONSENT AND ENTER PARTICIPATORY AGREEMENTS AND ANY NECESSARY AMENDMENTS WITH THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR BRIDGE REPLACEMENT ON WYNNE RIDGE COURT; AND WAIVING SECOND READING

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda with Waiver and Adoption on 4/21/2025.

Request for Council Action (Fishbeck Engineering Services Proposal):

[ORD-0018-2025](#) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH FISHBECK FOR UTILITY ENGINEERING SERVICES; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY

Senior Director of Operations Kevin Schultz reported that on February 26, 2024, the city issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for engineering services. He explained that the RFQ served as a general solicitation covering various disciplines within the Engineering Department. Schultz stated that the city entered into a staff-type contract with Fishbeck for utility engineering services in 2024. This contract remains in effect until May 2, 2025. The purpose of the contract was to provide services previously handled by the city's former Senior Utility Engineer. He noted that the position remained vacant since the departure of the previous engineer, despite continuous job postings and active efforts to recruit a replacement. He emphasized the critical importance of utility engineering to city operations. Schultz recommended entering into a new agreement with Fishbeck to continue providing utility engineering services. He clarified that the RFQ process from 2024 remained valid and competitive, covering a two- to three-year period and still serving as a basis for contractor selection. He requested an ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into the agreement with Fishbeck. Given the upcoming expiration of the existing contract, Schultz also requested that the Council pass the legislation as an emergency measure.

President Bowers asked for clarification on whether the Fishbeck utility engineering contract was related to the water engineering position the City previously experienced difficulty filling. Senior Director Schultz explained that the former Water Resources Engineer position was reclassified as the Senior Utility Engineer position several years ago, and confirmed it was the same role. He stated the position was vacant since approximately May of 2024, the previous year. The previous employee served as a project manager, but transferred to the Parks and Recreation Department in a lateral move during that time. President Bowers inquired whether a staffing realignment might help address the vacancy. Senior Director Schultz stated that hiring engineers was currently very difficult, and that hiring a utility engineer was even more challenging. Mayor Jadwin added that it was akin to "a needle in a haystack." Senior Director Schultz noted the city posted for multiple positions,

including Senior Utility Engineer, Utility Engineer, and Utility Project Administrator, but applicants were scarce.

President Bowers asked whether any of the responsibilities being proposed for Fishbeck could be handled internally by a different position. Senior Director Schultz explained that the tasks involved were highly specialized and required true utility engineering services, which no current staff member was qualified to perform. Bowers asked if other communities were experiencing similar challenges. Schultz confirmed that the position was posted in several neighboring municipalities, all facing similar difficulties. President Bowers acknowledged the challenge and expressed concern about the cost of the Fishbeck contract, noting that it appeared to be significantly more than the salary of a staff engineer. Schultz agreed, stating the position required a professional engineer (PE) credential. Bowers asked whether the position was in the correct classification and pay grade. Schultz responded that the position was upgraded to Senior Utility Engineer to ensure appropriate classification, though the current pay may not be competitive enough to attract qualified applicants. Mayor Jadwin added that paying more for the role than for the current City Engineer or Senior Transportation and Mobility Engineer would have broader compensation implications, and that the current contract approach was an effective way to meet the city's needs in the interim. Bowers asked whether the contract with Fishbeck could be canceled if the city hired someone for the position. Schultz confirmed that upon hiring, the Fishbeck contract would be phased out responsibly, and there was no commitment to the full expenditure.

Vice President Weaver noted the contract was structured as "not to exceed" and that billing would occur only for actual work performed. Schultz confirmed that Fishbeck provided on-site services several days per week, and that the city received monthly invoices. Vice President Weaver emphasized the importance of ensuring the city had the staff it needed and welcomed a broader conversation about remaining competitive with other communities in order to attract and retain engineering talent.

Councilmember Renner urged further research into the overall shortage of engineers, calling it a significant problem. Vice President Weaver acknowledged the challenge and agreed that all municipalities were competing for the same limited pool of qualified candidates.

Recommendation: Introduction/First Reading on Regular Agenda on 4/21/2025; Second Reading/Adoption with Emergency on Consent Agenda on 5/5/2025.

D. ITEMS FROM COUNCILMEMBERS:

Councilmember Padova:

1. Joint Resolution for Herb Week

[RES-0018-2025](#) A JOINT PROCLAMATION AND RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING MAY 3-10, 2025 AS HERB WEEK IN THE CITY OF GAHANNA

Councilmember Padova introduced a joint proclamation and resolution created in collaboration with Mayor Jadwin to recognize Herb Week. She noted that the Council received the document earlier that day. The proclamation honored the city's historical designation as the Herb Capital and recognized Jane "Bunnie" Geroux's contributions in achieving that distinction. Padova announced that the proclamation would be presented to Director Kappes during the Herb Day celebration on May 3, 2025, at Creekside. The presentation was scheduled to take place on the backstage area just before the start of the celebration at 10:00 a.m., and she encouraged Councilmembers to arrive by 9:30 a.m. to participate. Mayor Jadwin asked if the version circulated to the Council was the same one she sent to Councilmember Padova earlier that day. Padova confirmed that it was.

Recommendation: Introduction/Adoption on Consent Agenda on 4/21/2025.

2. Joint Certificates of Recognition: GLHS Paperclip Project and GRIN

Councilmember Padova informed the Council about the Paperclip Project currently taking place at Gahanna Lincoln High School. She noted that many Councilmembers had likely heard about the project or received emails from participating students. The project began in 2014 with the goal of collecting six million paperclips to create a monument honoring the victims of the Holocaust. Padova announced that students involved in the project would attend the next Council meeting. Students would speak about their work. Padova acknowledged scheduling was still being finalized due to end-of-year activities, including athletics. She shared that the Council Office prepared a certificate of recognition to present to the students in honor of their efforts. Vice President Weaver thanked Padova for the update and confirmed that no legislative action was required.

Councilmember Padova continued by announcing that Gahanna Residents in Need (GRIN) would hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony for its new food lockers on Monday, April 21, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. She noted that the lockers were made possible in part by the City of Gahanna's Community Grant funding. The Council Office would also prepare a certificate of recognition for GRIN, and she invited any Councilmembers who planned to attend the event to notify Clerk VanMeter or herself so their signatures could be included. For those unable to attend the event but who still wished to sign the certificate, Padova encouraged them to stop by Council Office prior to the event.

E. ITEMS FROM COUNCIL OFFICE:

[2025-0085](#)

Ohio Division of Liquor Control Notice to Legislative Authority Permit TRFO 4233752 FROM JAMES SNYDER DBA ANTOLINOS PIZZA TO JAMES SNYDER RESTAURANT GROUP LLC DBA ANTOLINOS PIZZA 1050 BEECHER CROSSING N STE G, GAHANNA, OH

Clerk VanMeter informed the Council that the item under consideration was a transfer of ownership for Antolino's Pizza. He reported that he contacted the Division of Police, which had no objections to the transfer. He stated that, unless the Council had any objections, he would proceed with notifying the

state that a hearing was not requested. Vice President Weaver asked if there were any questions or comments from Council. Hearing none, he directed the Clerk to proceed accordingly.

Note: Clerk returned notice to Division of Liquor Control indicating no hearing was requested.

F. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Committee of the Whole, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:57 p.m.

Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

*APPROVED by the Committee of the Whole, this
day of 2025.*

Trenton I. Weaver