

CITY OF GAHANNA CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION

TO: Members of the City of Gahanna Charter Review Commission

FROM: Ethan Charles Barnhardt, Chair

DATE: April 17, 2026

RE: Phase Three: Deliberation Framework, Agenda Structure, and Pre-Meeting Preparation

PURPOSE

The Charter Review Commission has substantively concluded its public engagement phase. As of the April 9, 2026, meeting, all invited stakeholder presentations have been completed, and twenty-seven distinct proposals have been received, cataloged, and distributed.

This memorandum is intended to prepare the Commission for Phase Three deliberations by consolidating the “homework” framework outlined at the close of the April 9 meeting, establishing the deliberation sequence, and identifying the key analytical questions that must be resolved before the Commission can finalize ballot groupings. The objective of this phase is to transition from a broad inventory of ideas to a focused, defensible set of recommendations.

The Commission’s July 1, 2026, deadline for delivering recommendations to Council is firm. Phase Three is therefore structured to allow for deliberation at the April 23 and May 7 meetings, drafting review at the May 21 and June 4 meetings, and report finalization at the June 18 meeting. Should additional time be necessary to complete deliberations or finalize the report, special meeting(s) may be scheduled as needed to ensure timely completion of the Commission’s work.

DELIBERATION FRAMEWORK FOR APRIL 23

The Commission adopted its Process Architecture on March 12, 2026, by a 6–1 vote. That framework governs Phase Three and establishes the structure for evaluating each ballot proposal. Commissioners are encouraged to review the adopted Process Architecture in advance of the April 23 meeting.

As discussed at the conclusion of the April 9 meeting, the Commission will apply a series of threshold questions to each ballot proposal prior to deliberation and scoring. A proposal that does not clear a threshold will be resolved at that stage and will not advance to the next step.

Question One: Charter Level or Referral

- Does the proposal address a matter that appropriately belongs in the Charter, or is it more suitable for an ordinance, Council rules, or administrative code?
- Proposals that do not meet this threshold may be suggested within the record for referral to Council or Administration, or set aside, based on Commission consensus and a subsequent vote not to advance.

Question Two: Education Hold or Additional Engagement

- Does the Commission have sufficient time and information to deliberate on the proposal?
- A proposal may be placed on a further review hold if additional expert input, legal guidance, or stakeholder engagement is required before evaluation can proceed.
- A proposal may be deferred if the Commission determines that rigorous review cannot be completed within the time available prior to the July 1 deadline.
 - Time constraints constitute a legitimate and principled basis for deferral. The Commission may make this determination through consensus, followed by a vote not to advance.

Question Three: Universal Scoring for All Surviving Measures

Based on the work and discussion completed to date, the Chair recommends that the Commission apply the Prioritization Matrix to all remaining draft ballot measures that clear Thresholds One and Two, regardless of whether the measure was originally classified as structural or housekeeping.

The original two-track system provided helpful framing at the individual proposal stage. However, following aggregation into proposed single-subject draft ballot measures, the Commission is tasked with prioritizing five to six ballot measures from a pool of up to fourteen draft measures. In this context, the Prioritization Matrix provides a consistent, transparent, and comparative basis for determining which measures rise to the top.

The matrix is intended to inform, but not dictate, Commission decision-making. The Commission retains full discretion to advance, hold, or decline any measure by majority vote, with the record reflecting the basis for that decision.

As the Process Architecture was adopted by motion, it would be appropriate for the Commission to consider a motion to adopt this refinement to the deliberation process.

AGENDA SEQUENCING

Thresholds One and Two: The Commission will conduct two brief open discussions — one for each threshold — rather than reviewing all fourteen draft ballot measures individually.

- Commissioners may identify any measure they believe does not meet the applicable threshold criteria.
- Each flagged measure will receive focused group discussion, followed by a motion and roll-call vote.
- Any measure not flagged is presumed to satisfy the threshold and proceed to the next step. Only measures affirmatively voted not to advance will be set aside.

Threshold Three: For each measure that clears Thresholds One and Two, the Commission will deliberate on the measure's component proposals — in consultation with the City Attorney — to confirm which elements to include and which to eliminate.

- This step establishes the final scope of each ballot measure prior to scoring.
- Once components are confirmed, commissioners will score each measure using the Prioritization Matrix, and the Clerk will tabulate the results.
- After all surviving measures have been scored, the Commission will review the full set of results, with the objective of advancing five to six measures to drafting.
- The Commission retains discretion to elevate a lower-scoring measure where there is clear consensus and an articulable basis on the record, and likewise to decline a higher-scoring measure on the same basis.
- The objective is to produce a ballot slate that is both procedurally defensible and substantively sound.

NEXT STEPS

- Commissioners are asked to review the adopted Process Architecture, updated proposals log, and the appendices to this memorandum in advance of the April 23 meeting.
- At the opening of the meeting, the Commission will be asked to adopt the universal scoring approach described above by motion prior to the start of deliberations.
- be prepared to identify any draft ballot measure they believe does not meet Threshold One or Threshold Two, and the basis for that position.

APPENDIX A: PRIORITIZATION MATRIX AND SCORING GUIDE

This scoring tool is advisory and is intended to guide structured deliberation by the Commission. Advancement of any proposed amendment requires a motion and majority vote of the Commission. The following six criteria are applied to each surviving draft ballot measure.

Each criterion is scored on a scale of 1 to 5. Scores are aggregated to a maximum of 30 points per measure.

Criteria Definitions	
<i>Governance Relevance</i>	<p>Does the proposal address a core Charter-level governance issue?</p> <p>High Score (5): Directly relates to governance structure or authority established in the Charter.</p> <p>Low Score (1): Relates primarily to policy, administration, or matters better suited for ordinance or practice.</p>
<i>Public Impact</i>	<p>Does this meaningfully impact residents or accountability?</p> <p>High Score (5): Meaningfully affects residents' rights, transparency, or accountability.</p> <p>Low Score (1): Has little to no effect on residents or public-facing governance.</p>
<i>Governance Clarity & Effectiveness</i>	<p>Does this improve clarity or effectiveness?</p> <p>High Score (5): Substantially improves clarity, eliminates ambiguity, or strengthens operational effectiveness.</p> <p>Low Score (1): Provides minimal or purely cosmetic improvement to clarity or function.</p>
<i>Strategic Plan Alignment</i>	<p>Does this proposal support the goals identified in the Our Gahanna Strategic Plan?</p> <p>High Score (5): Directly supports goals or strategies in the strategic plan or strengthens the City's governance capacity to pursue them.</p> <p>Low Score (1): Does not meaningfully relate to or support the goals or strategies of the strategic plan.</p>
<i>Legal / Risk Alignment</i>	<p>Is this legally necessary or risk-reducing?</p> <p>High Score (5): Corrects a legal conflict, compliance issue, or significant risk exposure.</p> <p>Low Score (1): Addresses no known legal concern or risk.</p>
<i>Readiness for Ballot Consideration</i>	<p>Is this understandable and realistically implementable?</p> <p>High Score (5): Is clearly defined, well-supported by evidence or stakeholder input, and can be responsibly presented to voters.</p> <p>Low Score (1): Is underdeveloped, lacks supporting information, or is not ready for voter consideration.</p>

Aggregate score interpretation:

Aggregate Score	Interpretation	Implication for Ballot Consideration
<i>25 – 30</i>	Strong Candidate	The Commission should give strong consideration to advancing to the ballot
<i>19 – 24</i>	Worth Serious Consideration	The Commission should deliberate whether the measure is among the highest priorities, given ballot space constraints
<i>13 – 18</i>	Requires Further Deliberation	The Commission may advance, but should document a specific basis; additional information may be warranted
<i>6 – 12</i>	Not Recommended at this Time	The Commission should document the basis for non-advancement in the record.

APPENDIX B: DRAFT BALLOT MEASURE INVENTORY

Article III - Mayor - Draft Ballot Measure One <i>An Amendment to Reform Gahanna's Non-Partisan Primary Election Process</i>				
CRC No.	Submitter	Section(s)	Short Title	Rationale / Reasoning
CRC 001	Mularski	§3.01	Article III – Mayor: Nonpartisan Primary	The purpose of the change is to eliminate an unnecessary primary election when only two candidates file, reducing administrative burden and aligning with ORC §3513.02 adapted for Gahanna's nonpartisan framework.

Article III - Mayor - Draft Ballot Measure Two <i>An Amendment to Require a Strategic Plan for the City of Gahanna and to Provide for Regular Review and Update</i>				
CRC No.	Submitter	Section(s)	Short Title	Rationale / Reasoning
CRC 004	Administration	§3.04	Article III – Mayor: Strategic Plan Embedding	The purpose of the change is to embed a strategic planning requirement in the Mayor's executive duties, ensuring Council and the public have a formal opportunity to review and comment on the City's long-term direction.

Article III - Mayor - Draft Ballot Measure Three <i>An Amendment to Align Residency and Conflict of Interest Requirements Across Elected Offices</i>				
CRC No.	Submitter	Section(s)	Short Title	Rationale / Reasoning
CRC 002	Wester	§3.02 / §4.03 / §10.02	Articles III, IV, X – Residency Requirement Consistency	The purpose of the change is to standardize the continuous qualified elector requirement across Mayor, Council, and City Attorney.
CRC 003 / CRC 026	Wester / Weaver	§3.02 / §4.03 / §10.02	Articles III, IV, X – Public Office Conflict: Standardization and Simplification	The purpose of the change is to align the public-office conflict prohibition for Mayor, City Attorney, and Council so that all three offices are governed by the same disqualification standard, removing anomalous carve-outs in §10.02.

Article III - Mayor - Draft Ballot Measure Four
An Amendment to Adopt a Council-Manager Form of Government for the City of Gahanna

CRC No.	Submitter	Section(s)	Short Title	Rationale / Reasoning
CRC 027	Padova	Article III (multi-article if advanced)	Article III – Form of Government	The purpose of the change is to initiate examination of whether a council-manager form of government would better support implementation of the City's long-term planning documents than the current strong-mayor structure.

Article IV - Council - Draft Ballot Measure Five
An Amendment to Provide for Modernizing City Council Processes and Procedures

CRC No.	Submitter	Section(s)	Short Title	Rationale / Reasoning
CRC 005 / 012	Admin / Bowers	§4.13	Article IV – Council: Public Notice Modernization	The purpose of the change is to modernize the public notice requirement in §4.13 by replacing the outdated physical-posting standard with outcome-based language that accommodates current and future communication practices.
CRC 009	Bowers	§4.10	Article IV – Council: Regular Meetings	The purpose of the change is to provide scheduling flexibility by shifting the organizational meeting anchor date and simplifying the standard for relocating a regular meeting to an alternate venue.
CRC 011	Bowers	§4.12	Article IV – Council: Legislative Procedure (Quorum Clause)	The purpose of the change is to remove a Robert's Rules of Order carry-over clause from the quorum provision that is unnecessary in a seven-member Council and may create confusion about adjournment authority.
CRC 021	Schnetzer	§4.07 / §4.12	Article IV – Council: Voting Abstention / Due Process Consistency	The purpose of the change is to align the consequence for an improper voting abstention with the due process framework in §4.07, replacing an automatic self-executing removal trigger with a notice-and-hearing procedure.

Article IV - Council - Draft Ballot Measure Six
An Amendment to Adopt Resident-Population Ward Apportionment Language

CRC No.	Submitter	Section(s)	Short Title	Rationale / Reasoning
CRC 025	Weaver	§4.02	Article IV – Council: Ward Composition Apportionment Basis	The purpose of the change is to shift ward boundary equalization from a registered-voter basis to a resident-population basis, aligning apportionment with total-population.

Article IV - Council - Draft Ballot Measure Seven
An Amendment to Establish Term Limits for Council Leadership and Align Voting Procedure

CRC No.	Submitter	Section(s)	Short Title	Rationale / Reasoning
CRC 008	Bowers	§4.04	Article IV – Council: President and Vice President Term	The purpose of the change is to authorize a two-year term for Council President and Vice President, providing continuity in the leadership role that supervises the Clerk of Council and carries significant administrative responsibilities.

Article IV - Council - Draft Ballot Measure Eight
An Amendment to Modernize Special Meeting Notice Requirements

CRC No.	Submitter	Section(s)	Short Title	Rationale / Reasoning
CRC 010	Bowers	§4.11	Article IV – Council: Special Meetings	The purpose of the change is to add the City Attorney to the list of officials who may request a special meeting and to modernize the notice language to reflect current communication practice.

Article IV - Council - Draft Ballot Measure Nine <i>An Amendment to Strengthen Council Oversight of Real Property, Contracts, and Development Agreements</i>				
CRC No.	Submitter	Section(s)	Short Title	Rationale / Reasoning
CRC 013	Pollyea	Art. IV (new)	Article IV – Council: Authorization of Real Property Transactions	The purpose of the change is to require Council authorization by ordinance before the City may purchase, sell, transfer, or lease real property, codifying existing practice as an explicit structural safeguard.
CRC 014		Art. IV (new)	Article IV – Council: Oversight of Development Agreements	The purpose of the change is to require Council authorization before any development agreement involving City property, public infrastructure, or financial incentives becomes binding on the City.
CRC 015		Art. IV / XI (new)	Articles IV, XI – Transparency in Zoning Decisions	The purpose of the change is to require Council to state the basis for its decision on rezoning and major land use actions, creating a transparent record of the planning considerations that drove each determination.
CRC 016		Art. IV (new)	Article IV – Council: Authorization of Major Contracts	The purpose of the change is to require Council authorization by ordinance before the City executes any contract above a threshold amount, with an anti-splitting provision to prevent evasion of the approval requirement.

Article V - Administrative Departments - Draft Ballot Measure Ten <i>An Amendment to Restructure the Article V Enumeration of Administrative Departments</i>				
CRC No.	Submitter	Section(s)	Short Title	Rationale / Reasoning
CRC 006	Administration	§5.01 / §5.02 / §§5.04–5.11	Article V – Administrative Departments Restructuring	The purpose of the change is to resolve the internal conflict between the Mayor's 2021 reorganization authority in §5.02 and the enumerated department list in §§5.04–5.11 by removing the fixed enumeration from the Charter.

Article XI - Planning Commission - Draft Ballot Eleven
An Amendment to Reform Planning Commission Attendance, Removal, and Member Accountability Standards

CRC No.	Submitter	Section(s)	Short Title	Rationale / Reasoning
CRC 017	Pollyea	§11.02	Article XI – Planning Commission: Percentage-Based Attendance Requirement	The purpose of the change is to replace the current fixed-number absence threshold with a percentage-based attendance standard, creating a more equitable and adaptable measure of Planning Commission member participation.
CRC 018		§11.02	Article XI – Planning Commission: Elimination of Automatic Consecutive-Absence Removal	The purpose of the change is to eliminate the automatic removal trigger for consecutive absences, ensuring that all attendance-based removal decisions are evaluated under the overall percentage standard rather than a separate automatic rule.
CRC 019		§11.02	Article XI – Planning Commission: Clarification of Excused Absences	The purpose of the change is to define what constitutes an excused absence and establish a process for making that designation, filling a gap in the current charter that references excused absences without defining them.
CRC 020		§11.01 / §11.02	Article XI – Planning Commission: Clarification of Removal Authority and Just Cause	The purpose of the change is to define "just cause" for Planning Commission removal and require notice and an opportunity to respond before removal, establishing a due process standard consistent with the seriousness of that action.

Article XII - Board of Zoning and Building Appeals - Draft Ballot Measure Twelve
An Amendment to Repeal the Board of Zoning and Building Appeals and Transfer Its Authority

CRC No.	Submitter	Section(s)	Short Title	Rationale / Reasoning
CRC 007	Administration	Article XII	Article XII – BZBA Repeal	The purpose of the change is to repeal the Board of Zoning and Building Appeals, which has experienced a significant decline in caseload, and transfer its appeals authority to the Planning Commission.

Article XXII - Charter Review Commission - Draft Ballot Measure Thirteen
An Amendment to Revise the Frequency and Scope of Mandatory Charter Review

CRC No.	Submitter	Section(s)	Short Title	Rationale / Reasoning
CRC 022 / 023	Schnitzer / Jones	Article XXII	Article XXII – Charter Review Commission: Convening Frequency and Scope	The purpose of the change is to amend the mandatory five-year convening cycle for the Charter Review Commission, either by extending the interval, eliminating the automatic trigger, or requiring Council to specify a targeted scope.

Article XXIII - General Provisions - Draft Ballot Measure Fourteen
An Amendment to Update the Charter's Non-Discrimination Protections

CRC No.	Submitter	Section(s)	Short Title	Rationale / Reasoning
CRC 024	Jones	§23.07	Article XXIII – Non-Discrimination Clause: Enumeration Modernization	The purpose of the change is to align the Charter's non-discrimination enumeration with the City's existing Equal Employment Opportunity statement, updating protected categories to reflect current legal standards and administrative practice.