

Merisa K. Bowers  
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To: Residents of Gahanna;  
Members of Council;  
Mayor Jadwin  
CC: Director of Parks and Recreation Stephania Bernard-Ferrell;  
Chief of Police Jeffrey Spence;  
Communications Manager Carrin Wester;  
Council Clerk April Beggerow  
From: Councilmember Merisa Bowers  
Re: **Constituent Update - January Report (Amended)**  
Date: 02/03/2020

General Update:

Constituent Hours initiated on January 6, 2020, from 4-6pm preceding regular council meetings and COTW meetings. Initially, logistical hiccups resulted in some constituents unable to access Council Office after 5pm. However, the obstacles seem to have been relieved and members of the public have been able to attend. Signage will be posted on main exterior doors during Constituent Hours.

I am planning a Community Conversation on Road Safety/Distracted Driving for Saturday, Feb. 15 from 1 - 2:30pm. Location TBD.

Registered to attend Ohio Municipal League Newly Elected Council Training - March 21, 2020

Constituent Issues/Concerns:

#1 Summary of Issue/Concern:

Request for Service around Woodside Green South Pond

A constituent expressed concern on social media about invasive tree species around the pond in the development at Woodside Green South.

Action:

Forwarded Request and Followed Up with Parks and Facilities Superintendent Alan Little

Response:

Mr. Little followed up with Julie Predieri, the City Forester, and Director of Parks and Recreation Department Stephania Bernard-Ferrell. They have previously cleared spots for fishing access, and note that the banks are too steep for mowing. Ms. Predieri visited the pond on January 15. Her recommendation to the Superintendent and Director:

**[S]ome of the species are invasive (pear, honeysuckle), and the woody vegetation probably doesn't look nice to surrounding homeowners. We could clear invasive woody species in the spring, but I'd rather not cut anything before April. There is a lot of vegetation mixed in with the trees that is habitat for overwintering pollinators, and I don't want to disturb it this time of year.**

Mr. Little agreed with the recommendation; the invasive species will be cleared in the Spring, leaving native plants. Ms. Bernard-Ferrell noted her appreciation to staff for the follow-through.

#2 Summary of Issue/Concern:

Escalation of conflict between neighbors

A constituent has sought city assistance in a matter involving a neighbor; constituent concerned about the sensitive nature of the issue and further escalation.

Action:

Met with constituent during Constituent Hours. Recommended that he speak with Chief of Police. Constituent followed up with Chief Spence and with Mayor Jadwin.

Response:

Constituent reported on 1/24/20 that he is very pleased with projected plan discussed with Mayor Jadwin, City Attorney, and Chief Spence.

Possible avenues include referral for mediation (Community Mediation Solutions (CMS) and the Columbus Bar Association (CBA) may be resources for free or low cost mediators), exploration of local nuisance law, or investigation into rental code violations.

#3 Summary of Issue/Concern:

Pool Memberships

Constituents on social media expressed concern and displeasure with pool membership purchase process and costs on January 19. Constituent tagged Councilmember Bowers on January 20.

Action:

Suggested constituents email City Council and Mayor regarding their concern and reminded constituents that public comment is welcome at every regular council meeting.

Response:

Received email from Recreation Superintendent Brian Gill-Huston on January 23. Noted on social media post that Administration responded to thread on January 24 with similar information provided by Mr. Gill-Huston. Mr. Gill-Huston explained why the online purchase option was removed, which not only was due to some technical issues with the system, but also with the logistics of providing keyfobs and bonus passes. Mr. Gill-Huston further stated: "We have extended hours at the senior center on Thursday evenings and will also have additional weekday and weekend opportunities to allow more options for those who may not be able to make it to City Hall during business hours."

#4 Summary of Issue/Concern:

Affordable Housing Workshop

Resident Michael Sweeney messaged Councilmember Bowers on Social Media:

I'm thinking about putting together a workshop that outlines the process a developer would go through to build "affordable housing", maybe an hour outlining the practical steps needed from finding land to finding tenants. Aim for early summer. Any thoughts?

Action:

Invited Mr. Sweeney to attend Constituent Hours to discuss further.

Interestingly, "the Process" referenced by Mr. Sweeney is something that seems to be a known need in our community. Developers, their attorneys, and local officials seem to acknowledge the

lack of a clear and consistent process in Gahanna, which has been blamed by some for stunting development.

Response:

I would like to learn more about what Mr. Sweeney's goals are with this workshop and who he envisions as the audience, as well as what's motivating his interest and qualifications/connections to this subject area. This seems like a good opportunity to involve an interested resident in a collaborative project, or suggest a meeting with Mr. Blackford or someone else in Planning. Feedback from Administration welcome.

#5 Summary of Issue/Concern:

Senior Center Staffing

Since approximately October 2019, various constituents have verbally expressed their displeasure with staffing at the senior center.

Action:

Listened to their concerns.

Response:

Verbally passed along this information to Director Bernard-Ferrell on January 13, 2020. She advised that this was a well-considered decision regarding the staffing change and that the well-loved former senior center staff member is now working at a private memory care facility in Gahanna. She was aware of the community displeasure and the new staff member is working on relationships with Senior Center patrons.

#6 Summary of Issue/Concern:

Maternal Mental Health Awareness

Resident Kelli Natale-Koppel has requested city participation in maternal mental health awareness.

Action:

Ms. Natale-Koppel has put Councilmember Renner in touch with an agency that provides information on maternal mental health.

Response:

Provide support/assistance to Councilmember Renner in determining and implementing response to Ms. Natale-Koppel's concerns. In progress.

#7 Summary of Issue/Concern:

Removal of Tree by City

A constituent attending the January 21, 2020 City Council Meeting verbally expressed displeasure with actions undertaken by Parks Department, reporting that the City removed a tree that a member of City staff determined was blighted or diseased, and reportedly refusing to replant or compensate for the removal of the tree.

Action:

Listened to her concerns. I believe that Councilmembers Renner and Schnetzler are generally aware of the resident's dissatisfaction, Mr. Schnetzler via communication by third parties.

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Response:

In progress; possibly request update from Administration.

#8 Summary of Issue/Concern:

Request for Additional School Traffic Signal

A constituent indicated that he believed there was a need for an additional school zone signal at Hamilton Rd SB approaching Granville Street.

Action:

Thanked him for his concerns; sent screenshot to new Interim Director of Public Safety Matt Roth.

Response:

In progress. Notified constituent that concerns were forwarded.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Merisa K. Bowers

Merisa K. Bowers

Gahanna City Councilmember, At Large

2/3/20