



City of Gahanna

Meeting Minutes

Finance Committee

200 South Hamilton Road
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

Michael Schnetzer, Chair
Merisa K. Bowers
Jamille Jones
Nancy R. McGregor
Kaylee Padova
Stephen A. Renner
Trenton I. Weaver

Jeremy A. VanMeter, Clerk of Council

Monday, November 4, 2024

City Hall, Council Chambers

Immediately following City Council at 7:00 PM on November 4, 2024

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Councilmember Michael Schnetzer, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:15 p.m. The agenda was published on November 1, 2024. All members were present for the meeting. There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

B. DISCUSSIONS:

Parks & Recreation Budget

[ORD-0065-2024](#) AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING APPROPRIATIONS FOR CURRENT EXPENSES AND OTHER EXPENDITURES OF THE CITY OF GAHANNA DURING THE FISCAL YEAR 2025

Chair Schnetzer provided a reminder about the budget review approach for the year, noting that instead of reviewing the entire budget at each meeting, the Council is addressing it department by department. He stated that the evening's meeting would focus on the Parks and Recreation budget, with approximately a dozen pre-submitted questions to guide the discussion. Chair Schnetzer acknowledged the presence of a prepared presentation and invited Senior Director of Administrative Services, Miranda Vollmer, to begin.

Director Vollmer opened her presentation by explaining that the Parks and Recreation budget discussion would follow a template similar to previous departmental reviews. She began by addressing general questions that were not necessarily specific to Parks and Recreation. This included a corrected Staffing Priority chart, noting an error in last week's communication that incorrectly listed the Communication Technician II role for 2026. She assured the Council that Finance Director Bury and Finance Manager Kincaid were reviewing the staffing budget to identify and correct any other double-counting errors in the projection module for salaries and benefits. Director Vollmer also outlined how professional development budgeting is conducted citywide,

excluding the police department, which manages its own professional development budget. Each year, Human Resources (HR) meets with directors to review planned training and conference participation for their teams. Based on past spending and future needs, HR incorporates these requests into its professional development line item. She noted that directors and key staff are often involved in state and national organizations, serving on boards or coordinating conferences. Employees also have access to several training opportunities, including as follows: OSU Management Advancement Programs (OSU MAPS), offered through a MORPC partnership, City of Columbus Training Programs, as part of an enterprise partnership with Columbus, and the PRADCO Emerging Leader Program, which recently began with 15 participants identified as emerging leaders by their departments. A similar program is planned and budgeted for 2025. Additionally, Vollmer highlighted the importance of the requested training coordinator role in the staffing budget. This position will support the development of structured training plans for key staff, which can often be overlooked due to daily compliance and operational demands.

Relationship Between Active Transportation Plan (ATP) and Comprehensive Transportation and Mobility Plan

Stephania Ferrell, Director of Parks and Recreation, provided an overview of the Active Transportation Plan. She explained that the plan focuses on pedestrian and bicycle improvements to enhance the City of Gahanna's walkability and bikeability. She noted that components of the Active Transportation Plan will be incorporated into the broader Transportation and Mobility Plan. The content, suggestions, requirements, and recommendations derived from the Active Transportation Plan will directly impact the Transportation and Mobility Plan. She emphasized that having this information beforehand would inform and improve the Mobility Plan.

Director Vollmer addressed a question about the use of multiple consultants for the two plans. She explained that the Active Transportation Plan was funded through a grant from the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), and ODOT selected the vendor for that plan. Conversely, the City's Engineering Department conducted a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to select a different vendor for the Comprehensive Transportation and Mobility Plan, as the two plans are distinct.

Councilmember Jones inquired about the timeline for providing an update to the Council on the Active Transportation Plan. She noted that it appeared to be further along in development than the Transportation and Mobility Plan and asked when Council could expect an update.

Director Ferrell responded that the final deliverable for the Active Transportation Plan is under review. The team is verifying the accuracy of the content, particularly with GIS data, to ensure it can be effectively used for future projects. She stated that the review is in its final phase and that the plan would be presented to the Council as a comprehensive presentation, covering the process from start to finish and reviewing the deliverable.

Council President Bowers asked for a timeline for the presentation. Director Ferrell stated that the presentation is expected to occur in the first quarter of 2025.

Parks & Recreation 2024 Achievements, 2025 Priorities & Expenditures

Director Vollmer highlighted key achievements of the Parks and Recreation Department in 2024. These accomplishments included improvements to existing park assets, increased participation in recreational programming, and expanded opportunities across all divisions. The department also developed and worked on the Active Transportation Plan. Additionally, Forestry Supervisor Predieri was recognized as a "30 Under 30" honoree by the National Recreation and Parks Association, the only individual in Ohio to receive this honor.

For 2025, Director Vollmer outlined the department's priorities. These include completing the construction of the Price Road House to expand access for indoor programming, developing an actionable plan to improve and protect aquatic facilities, and initiating the first year of a comprehensive street tree program discussed earlier in the meeting.

Director Vollmer proceeded to review the expenditures for Parks and Recreation. She explained that Parks and Recreation is funded through the General Fund and a Special Revenue Fund. The presentation included slides on General Fund expenditures, followed by slides on Special Revenue Fund expenditures. She referenced a chart on page 137 of the budget book, which detailed appropriation requests for the Parks and Recreation Special Revenue Fund, compared to the 2024 budget and actual expenditures for 2022 and 2023.

Councilmember Padova requested clarification and asked Director Vollmer to repeat the explanation of the Special Revenue chart expenditures. Director Vollmer reiterated that the chart was similar to the General Fund chart but focused on the Special Revenue Fund expenditures for Parks and Recreation, which is part of the Issue 12 funding. Councilmember Padova then inquired about the breakdown of expenditures into divisions. Director Bury explained that the divisions were reflected in the account structure. She detailed that the first three numbers of the account code represent the fund (242 for the Parks and Recreation special revenue fund), the next two numbers represent the department (08 for Parks and Recreation), and the last three digits correspond to specific divisions-310 for Parks, 320 for Recreation, 330 for Golf, and so forth. Councilmember Padova confirmed her understanding and repeated the codes for the divisions. Director Vollmer offered to provide a listing of the divisions, and Director Bury added that the divisions would be included in future budget books for clarity.

Director Vollmer addressed a question about the driving increase in contract services, referencing the table on page 137 and a related section on page 85 of the budget document. She explained that the increase was allocated to funding the 2025 Street Tree Program. Director Vollmer then introduced Director Ferrell to address the final question.

Director Ferrell explained the Department's approach to promotional materials. She noted that these materials, such as giveaways distributed during special events or programs, were designed to be purposeful and recyclable. Many items were intended for use in park spaces or for at-home activities, such as seed packets for cultivating plants. She also mentioned that items like biodegradable pens were selected to introduce sustainable elements and encourage environmental awareness among participants.

Parks & Recreation Revenues

Director Vollmer presented two slides covering the department's revenue expectations. She explained that the first slide reflected General Fund revenue expectations for 2025, while the second slide addressed Special Fund revenue expectations.

President Bowers asked for clarification on whether the information presented was derived from page 85 of the budget book. Director Bury clarified that the General Fund information was on page 85, while the Special Revenue information could be found on pages 136 through 137.

Vice President Weaver noted a slight decrease in charges for services in the General Fund revenue projections. Director Bury confirmed this observation, and Director Ferrell elaborated. She explained that new programming takes time to reach the expected levels of participation and revenue. Therefore, the 2025 projections were made conservatively, based on actual trends rather than prior projections.

Vice President Weaver asked if the downward trend in projections from 2023 was expected to continue. Director Ferrell clarified that, while projections trended downward, actual revenue from charges for services showed an upward trend in each division. She suggested that the disconnect might arise because the budget book table on page 85 compared the 2024 appropriated budget, which was based on projections, to the actual numbers, which were not yet finalized.

President Bowers followed up by asking where the actual revenue for 2024 was expected to fall. Director Ferrell confirmed that actual revenues were trending upward, although the 2025 projections were adjusted to align more closely with actual revenue trends rather than overly optimistic estimates. She noted that while general recreation revenue fell short of 2024 projections, participation and revenue overall were trending positively.

Vice President Weaver inquired if changes to fees or the introduction of free programs would be reflected in the revenue numbers. Director Ferrell affirmed that such adjustments were reflected and explained that the department uses a cost recovery model to determine fees for services. Programs outside the model or not aligned with the department's mission were not pursued.

Vice President Weaver summarized that participation in programming was

trending upwards. Director Ferrell agreed and commended the recreation team for their efforts in expanding opportunities. She noted that new programs often require significant time, effort, and marketing to build participation and achieve success.

President Bowers asked if programs like CPR training or the QPR (“Question, Persuade, Refer” suicide prevention training) program might deviate from the cost recovery model. Director Ferrell explained that such programs, which offer significant community benefits, were categorized as low or no-cost programs. CPR training also fell into this category.

Chairman Schnetzer suggested distributing a table summarizing the department’s cost recovery model for further clarification. Director Ferrell indicated that this table is reviewed annually and would be included in an upcoming Committee of the Whole meeting before the end of the year.

Parks & Recreation 2025 Staffing Requests & Additional Questions

Director Vollmer presented the 2025 staffing requests, which included the addition of a Forestry Foreman, a Parks Maintenance Worker, a Parks Manager, and the reclassification of two supervisors to superintendents. She also noted that a second Parks Maintenance Worker for the Horticulture and Forestry Division was identified as a priority two. She displayed the proposed 2025 organizational chart, highlighting priority one positions in gold, priority two positions in teal, and reclassified positions in gray. She then compared it to the current organizational chart, noting that positions in the red box, although appearing to have no direct supervisor, all reported to the Parks and Facilities Superintendent. Director Vollmer clarified that foremen in the City are union members and act as lead workers, not supervisors. They cannot perform supervisory duties such as evaluations, discipline, or holding employees accountable. Currently, the Parks and Facilities Superintendent oversees approximately 22 full-time and part-time employees, not including seasonal staff, in addition to responsibilities for the golf course and forestry operations. She highlighted that this large span of control, coupled with new forestry equipment and the implementation of the 2025 Street Tree Program, presented significant safety risks and increased training needs, necessitating the proposed reorganization and the addition of a Parks Manager.

Councilmember Jones inquired about changes to direct reports under the proposed structure. Director Vollmer explained that under the 2025 plan, three superintendents would report to the Parks Manager, along with the administrative assistant. This reorganization would relieve the Parks and Facilities Superintendent of responsibilities for golf and forestry, allowing them to focus solely on parks and facilities.

President Bowers requested additional information about the role of the Parks Manager. Director Vollmer stated that this position would reduce the span of control, ensure proper supervision and safety, manage contracts, oversee the implementation of the Street Tree Program, and focus on budgeting and executing the Parks Master Plan. The Parks Manager would also assist in identifying and managing capital maintenance programs and contracts..

Director Vollmer explained that the Projects Manager oversees capital improvement projects, while maintenance programs are managed by the Parks and Facilities Superintendent. Reflecting on the span of control in the current structure, Director Vollmer said she did not know how current Parks Superintendent Guthrie was able to fulfill all of his duties in a 40-hour work week while maintaining the safety and staff morale, which she noted staff was very engaged and moral was high.

President Bowers commended the Parks and Recreation Department for its engagement and efforts. Director Vollmer emphasized the importance of appropriate staffing to meet the demands outlined in the department's staffing study.

Senior Director of Operations Kevin Schultz elaborated that larger capital projects, such as the Academy Park project and the Price Road House, are managed by the Projects Manager, while smaller capital maintenance projects, such as replacing pool starter blocks or repairing the golf course deck, are overseen by the Parks and Facilities Superintendent. Schultz also noted that Director Ferrell participates in the planning and design phases of some projects.

Director Vollmer addressed questions regarding the difference in pay between the supervisor classification and the superintendent classification. She explained that this difference is reflected in the 2025 budget and was shown on the chart presented at the beginning of her presentation. She offered to provide further clarification if additional questions arose.

Director Ferrell responded to questions regarding beautification efforts and provided an overview of various initiatives managed by the Horticulture Division, which is a subset of the Forestry Division. She clarified the distinction between street tree programs and park tree programs. She highlighted several ongoing efforts as follows: 1) Tree Planting: The Horticulture Division has consistently met the goal of planting at least 100 park trees annually since the initiative began; 2) Beautification Projects: These include enhancing community entryway beds and taking over contracts from the Service Department as recommended by a staffing study. The division has worked to improve the aesthetics of these areas, adding sustainability efforts such as prairies and landscaping as part of the new municipal complex; 3) Park Sign Improvements: New park signs have been accompanied by improved plantings and landscaping within park areas; and 4) Veterans Memorial Park: This year, over \$10,000 was invested in improvements, including plantings and the addition of irrigation. Preparations are also underway to host the Vietnam Memorial traveling wall.

Director Ferrell emphasized the three pillars of the Parks and Recreation Department: social equity, health and wellness, and conservation. In terms of Conservation Efforts, she noted as follows: 1) Prairie Land Expansion: Over 14 acres have been converted from mowed turf to improved ecosystems for pollinators, with a goal to increase this area; 2) Pond Management: Capital Improvement Plans include projects like pond dredging to improve water quality and ecosystem health; and 3) Trail Development: Efforts are ongoing

to create trails with connections to key locations as part of the active transportation plan. This will enhance both recreational use and accessibility. For Land Management and Sustainability, Director Ferrell indicated that a draft Land Management Plan is under review by the Natural Resource Advisory Committee and Landscape Board. This plan outlines how the division manages invasive species, plants trees, and handles various parkland areas. For Recycling Initiatives, she reported the department received a grant through SWACO to support recycling at special events and static facilities. With respect to the Street Tree Program, Director Ferrell announced that over 350 trees were planted throughout Gahanna this year, with a focus on planting more trees than are removed. She concluded her remarks by reiterating the importance of these initiatives and their alignment with the department's mission to serve the community through conservation, beautification, and sustainable practices.

Councilmember Padova referenced a conversation with Director Ferrell at the Mill Street Market, where seed papers were distributed as a giveaway. She expressed appreciation for this sustainable approach, noting her familiarity with promotional items from her former line of work. Councilmember Padova inquired whether there was an overarching effort to make all giveaways sustainable or if the focus was limited to specific items.

Director Ferrell clarified that while there is no direct goal to ensure 100% sustainability for all giveaways, the department tries to align purchases with a purpose. She emphasized the intent to avoid waste and ensure items are practical rather than disposable, noting that giveaways are chosen to promote specific activities without becoming unnecessary clutter.

Chairman Schnetzer added a personal observation regarding the trails highlighted in Director Ferrell's presentation. He noted that, weather permitting, he occasionally rides his bike to work instead of driving, which contributes to sustainability by reducing gasoline consumption. He thanked Director Ferrell for emphasizing the connection between trails and sustainability efforts.

Parks & Recreation 2025 Capital Requests

Director Schultz provided an overview of the 2025 capital requests for Parks and Recreation, referring to Section 6 of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) document. He highlighted updates to the presentation based on feedback from the previous week. A list of completed projects for 2023 and 2024 was presented, though no specific details were discussed at this point in the presentation. A summary of in-progress projects was also provided, with key examples:

- 1) Trail Repair and Maintenance: Multiple ongoing tasks within the CIP related to trails, managed by Project Manager Jim Turner.
- 2) Hannah Park and Headley Park Connector: This project is awaiting the completion of a feasibility study conducted by the Franklin County Engineers Office.
- 3) Link to Literacy Trail: Easement acquisition is in progress.

- 4) Morse Road Tunnel Drainage Project: An update was deferred to Director Ferrell for later in the meeting.
- 5) Pond Rebuilds at Woodside Green and Hannah Park: These sustainability-related projects are in the design phase and slated for construction in 2025.

President Bowers inquired about Section 8 of the Big Walnut Trail, particularly regarding the design process, alignment options, and discrepancies between official plans and posts on social media.

Director Ferrell explained that in early 2024, the scope of work for engineering firm Structure Point was expanded. The firm identified an option to realign the trail to avoid an at-grade crossing and eliminate a potential conflict with a slip ramp. Currently, a traffic study is being conducted by Structure Point to evaluate the feasibility of this realignment.

President Bowers followed up by asking if the Bicycle and Trails Advisory Committee (BTAC) or other groups were involved in the process.

Director Ferrell confirmed that BTAC provides input on deliverables from Structure Point. She noted that the reevaluation of the trail alignment was initiated largely due to BTAC's concerns about the safety and accessibility of the at-grade crossing. Their input emphasized the need for a design suitable for all users, including families, rather than one that would cater primarily to advanced cyclists.

Director Schultz detailed the 2025 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) allocations for the Parks and Recreation Department, outlining a total budget of approximately \$3.3 million, representing 15% of the overall Capital Improvement budget for 2025. The Parks and Recreation CIP budget is divided into four categories: 1) Play Elements and Surfaces: This includes playground equipment and safety surfaces; 2) Trails and Paths: Maintenance and construction of trails and pathways; 3) Park Renovations: Larger-scale projects such as the Academy Park redesign and the Price Road House project; and 4) Pool Infrastructure: Projects focused on pool facilities. Director Schultz provided additional budget insights, noting the 2025 CIP includes 15 projects, with a total allocation of \$3.3 million. Including a \$4 million reallocation from prior years, the total funding available for 2025 projects is approximately \$7.3 million. Funding sources include \$3 million from the Capital Investment Fund and \$285,000 from the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Fund. He noted that funding allocations may shift in subsequent years.

Chairman Schnetzer asked for confirmation regarding the reallocation process, noting the chart's total exceeded the \$3.3 million identified for 2025. He inquired if the \$3.25 million was derived by combining the current year's capital improvement and TIF fund allocations, with the remaining funds coming from prior year reallocations. Director Schultz confirmed that the \$7.3 million total includes the reallocation of unspent funds from previous years, supplementing the current year's requests.

President Bowers asked for clarification on funding for the Action Sports Park,

specifically regarding the \$300,000 noted in the reallocation section.

Director Schultz noted that would be addressed in continuing the presentation. He provided an overview of "Play Elements and Surfaces" for following key projects:

- 1) Academy Park Play and Shade Structures: Initial allocation of approximately \$380,000 in 2024 for design work. An additional \$100,000 is requested in 2025 to complete the project.
- 2) Friendship Park Play Structure: \$60,000 allocated for design in 2025, with construction funding to be requested in 2026.
- 3) Annual Capital Maintenance: \$50,000 for replacement of individual components, such as slides, that meet capital definitions.

President Bowers asked whether the initial allocation for Academy Park in 2024 exceeded \$380,000 and whether funds were spent or reallocated due to underestimations.

Director Schultz explained that the initial allocation covered design work, and an additional \$100,000 is now requested to cover underestimated costs. He highlighted a shift in budgeting practices, moving toward a more structured approach exemplified by the Friendship Park project. This involves requesting design funding first, followed by construction funding after estimates are finalized.

President Bowers expressed concerns about reallocation practices, noting discomfort with the process of reallocating unspent funds from prior years. She asked whether future projects would align funding more closely with the calendar year in which expenditures are planned.

Director Schultz and Director Bury addressed these concerns, explaining the transition to new procurement policies. Under the old system, unspent funds remained tied to purchase orders (POs) and rolled over automatically. The new system requires unspent funds to return to the capital reserve at year-end, with reallocation requests made transparently for the following year. Mayor Jadwin added that this approach represents better governance, ensuring transparency and accountability. She acknowledged that ongoing projects, such as Academy Park, are caught in the transition phase, but emphasized the long-term benefits of the updated process.

Director Bury noted that moving forward, quarterly reports will provide detailed documentation, including budgeted amounts, unspent funds returned to reserves, and reallocation requests.

This will ensure clarity and aid in the maturation of the new process.

President Bowers expressed appreciation for the new governance practices and transparency, acknowledging the growing pains of the transition. She commended the team for moving toward a more realistic and segmented funding approach.

Director Ferrell addressed a question regarding the playground replacement

cycle. She explained that the department manages 17 playgrounds, each with an expected 18-year lifecycle. To stay on schedule, at least one playground must be replaced annually. Some playgrounds were introduced in the same year, leading to instances where multiple replacements might occur simultaneously. Variations in playground size also affect costs. The department has been able to keep pace with the cycle, often completing one replacement per year, with occasional years seeing two replacements based on project timing.

Director Schultz added that the playground replacement schedule is fully detailed in both the Parks Master Plan and the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), which specify when each playground is due for replacement. Schultz provided an overview of projects listed under the "Park Renovation and Improvements" section of the 2025 CIP. He reported that six items are identified in this section, with a new funding request of \$2.245 million and a reallocation of \$2.3 million from previous years. He noted that this section typically represents the largest annual investment in the department.

Highlighted projects included the following:

- 1) Price Road House Renovations, with an additional request of \$565,000.
- 2) Park signage improvements, with \$40,000 allocated for the next phase of replacing general park signs beyond entrance signs.
- 3) Pond rebuilds at Woodside Green and Hannah Park, both currently in the design phase.
- 4) A \$250,000 allocation for larger-scale park facility maintenance and upgrades, including HVAC and electrical system improvements in shelters and other structures.

Director Schultz described plans to consolidate all sub-projects at Academy Park under a single project heading to simplify management and reporting. Specific initiatives include the mountain bike trail (no new funding requested), improvements to the baseball field fencing, shelter house, and trailhead, as well as the play and shade structures, which require an additional \$100,000 as previously noted. The Academy Park parking lot replacement and expansion project is scheduled for 2027. This \$1.8 to \$2 million project includes stormwater facilities, lighting, and an 85-space expansion.

Chairman Schnetzer noted that the timing of the parking lot replacement project was influenced by logistical considerations, such as heavy equipment traffic potentially damaging a newly completed lot during ongoing construction. Director Schultz added that financial resource allocation also contributed to the deferred timeline. Given the size of the investment, the project was strategically moved to 2027 to balance revenue streams and avoid overcommitting the department's budget. He emphasized that this approach aligns with the objectives of the CIP to manage project sequencing and funding effectively.

Vice President Weaver addressed Director Ferrell regarding their prior discussion about Bryn Mawr Park. He asked if there were any updates about

the placement of restroom facilities, acknowledging that the topic was not on the prepared questions list for the agenda.

Director Ferrell explained that she had a preliminary conversation with Parks and Facilities Superintendent Guthrie about the challenges of locating restroom facilities in a suitable location. She noted that placing portable restrooms on sidewalks was not ideal due to aesthetic and functional concerns. The department is exploring alternative solutions while ensuring compliance with code requirements.

Vice President Weaver expressed his concern about the lack of adequate restroom facilities in parks, particularly those used for standing reservations like soccer practice or events. He shared reports of visitors using nearby private backyards as restrooms, highlighting the importance of providing appropriate amenities. Director Ferrell agreed, stating that any programmed space must include access to adequate restroom facilities to support its use.

Director Ferrell provided an update on field improvements at Academy Park. She noted that soil borings revealed a low water table, which poses challenges for implementing a functional drainage system. She proposed the use of laser grading technology, which allows for precise grading to improve field surfaces and drainage. This equipment could be used not only at Academy Park but also across other athletic fields. She clarified that synthetic turf is not currently a priority, as the focus remains on elevating park assets to meet standard functionality before pursuing elite standards like turf.

Chairman Schnetzer inquired whether the laser grading equipment was included in current funding or would require future allocation.

Director Schultz explained that the equipment would be funded using encumbered monies from 2024. The purchase will be completed within the current year, and the equipment will be used across the parks system.

Director Ferrell provided an update on the Price Road project, stating that no additional renovations have been added. The funding request includes the necessary amount to proceed with the project, covering the building structure, parking lot, and a 20% contingency to account for volatility in the construction market. She noted that the project went out to bid but did not receive a viable response. As a result, the project manager has worked to refine the scope and ensure appropriate permitting to make the project more marketable for future bidding opportunities.

Update on Action Sports Park

Director Ferrell explained the scope of the OHM contract for the Action Sports Park. OHM is preparing a report based on public input, which will include general sizes of amenities and cost estimates. However, the report will not specify a site for the park. This information is intended to support future planning for park amenities in various locations.

President Bowers inquired if the original contract included a site review. Director Ferrell confirmed that it did, but the site review was specific to Lower McCorkle Park, and that evaluation has already been completed. The focus was shifted to designing amenities based on city-wide needs rather than solely for the Lower McCorkle site. President Bowers further asked if recommendations would address intensity of use for any specific site. Director Ferrell clarified that the report is focused on general amenity sizes and cost estimates, not site-specific intensity of use. President Bowers also asked whether the report would address the replacement of the Shull skate park. Director Ferrell explained that the intention is not to replicate the former skate park but to develop amenities that reflect current trends and ensure sustainable engagement over time. President Bowers asked if the programming estimates could allow amenities to be distributed among multiple locations. Director Ferrell confirmed this approach, stating that the report would provide insights into the types of amenities, their appropriate sizes, and associated costs, which could inform decisions about introducing features across various parks.

When asked about the anticipated delivery date for the OHM report, Director Ferrell stated it is expected by the end of the year. Councilmember Jones sought confirmation, and Director Schultz added that additional work would be required after receiving the report to determine specific amenities and their locations, if any.

President Bowers asked if any funding is currently being requested for projects stemming from the OHM report. Director Schultz clarified that no funding is being requested at this time. He noted that \$220,000 in surplus funds from a prior \$300,000 allocation in 2024 would return to the General Fund. If additional funding is required in 2025 for any project related to the Action Sports Park, a supplemental request would be made to Council.

Park Signage Updates

Director Ferrell provided an update on the ongoing park signage project. She stated that the current funding request is intended to advance into the next phase of park signage improvements. This phase will include enhancements to wayfinding systems, kiosks, and interpretive signage. She noted that this is an annual effort, with updates and additional requests to be reintroduced in future budget cycles.

Councilmember McGregor inquired whether there was any plan to align the signage design with Metro Parks signage to create a more consistent look across the region's trails.

Director Ferrell explained that while alignment with Metro Parks signage is not the goal, Gahanna is part of the Central Ohio Greenways network. The department is using a wayfinding improvement report from Central Ohio Greenways to inform its signage project. She emphasized the dual goal of ensuring regional consistency for Central Ohio Greenways users while maintaining a distinct identity for Gahanna parks.

Athletic Fields

Director Ferrell addressed questions regarding the expansion of athletic fields and their alignment with the overarching Parks Master Plan. She explained that while the Master Plan does not specifically reflect athletic field expansion, it emphasizes maximizing the use of existing sports complexes. The focus remains on addressing deferred maintenance and improving outdated or unused amenities. Director Ferrell stated that opportunities to expand athletic facilities or increase athletic space are always considered. She provided an example from the ongoing Aquatics Master Plan, noting that the Gahanna Swimming Pool site includes parkland that could potentially be transitioned into athletic fields. However, she emphasized that before proceeding with such plans, the City must address its aging aquatic facilities, ensuring a comprehensive plan is in place before initiating any design work outside the scope of aquatic needs.

Trails, Paths, and Other Park Surfaces

Director Schultz provided an overview of the "Trails, Paths, and Other Park Surfaces" category within the 2025 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). He reported that five projects are identified, with an additional funding request of \$685,000 for 2025 and a reallocation of approximately \$1.4 million from prior years. Key projects include the Big Walnut Trail, the Link to Literacy, and two maintenance items: asphalt lot maintenance and trail/path maintenance. Director Schultz noted that parking lot maintenance and trail/path maintenance have been separated into distinct items for improved project tracking. He also highlighted the Morse Road multi-use trail tunnel drainage project and turned the discussion over to Director Ferrell for further details.

Director Ferrell explained that the Morse Road project involves building a cross slope within the culvert overlay to divert water. This improvement aims to eliminate the hazards caused by standing water, such as slipping risks and debris accumulation. The project was advanced as a change order within the street program, allowing it to proceed under the 2024 budget. Work is anticipated to be completed in November.

Vice President Weaver inquired about the project's design phase, to which Director Ferrell clarified that the overlay improvement within the culvert is being executed this year.

Chairman Schnetzer asked about the project's location, specifically where the multi-use trail intersects Morse Road. Director Schultz confirmed that the project is situated near the tunnel under Morse Road at Route 62, connecting to New Albany by the roundabout.

Director Schultz added that the Morse Road project would be removed from the 2025 CIP request and reflected in an upcoming budget amendment.

Director Ferrell further clarified that the \$100,000 allocated for park surface improvements is separate from the Academy Park project. This funding is designated for overlays or enhancements to any park surface, independent of

Academy Park.

Councilmember McGregor asked whether the Lower McCorkle Park parking lot resurfacing was being considered. Director Ferrell confirmed that while the parking lot resurfacing remains identified as a need in the CIP, it is not scheduled to move forward in 2025.

Pool Infrastructure

Director Schultz provided an overview of the pool infrastructure projects included in the 2025 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The first item is an annual allocation of \$15,000 for pump room maintenance across the City's pool facilities, including three primary pump rooms and a potential fourth at Creekside. This funding is designated for necessary maintenance and upgrades to ensure the pump rooms remain safe and operational. The second item allocates \$20,000 for chair and shade upgrades, primarily at the Gahanna Swimming Pool and, to a lesser extent, at Hunters Ridge Pool.

Councilmember McGregor asked if there were plans to plant trees at the Gahanna Swimming Pool to provide natural shade in the future, noting that the current mature trees are located farther back on the property, away from areas where parents might sit to watch their children.

Director Ferrell acknowledged that the Gahanna Swimming Pool site has significant mature trees, but they are not situated in locations optimal for shade near poolside seating. She noted challenges related to utility infrastructure on the property, including a gas line, which could limit opportunities for additional tree planting. She assured Council that any site with potential for increased tree coverage would be considered, as highlighted earlier in the regular Council meeting by Forester Julie Predieri. However, she could not confirm any immediate plans for additional tree planting at the pool site.

Concluding Remarks

Director Vollmer provided an update on the upcoming budget timeline. She informed Council that the Public Safety budget discussion is scheduled for next Tuesday, November 12, 2024. As outlined earlier in the presentation series, the Administration expects final feedback and requested changes by December 2, 2024. This feedback will allow Director Bury and her team to incorporate adjustments into the amended budget, which will be presented to Council on December 9, 2024. The amended budget will include all requested removals or additions and will be prepared for a final vote on December 16, 2024.

Chairman Schnetzer confirmed the timeline and inquired if questions related to the Public Safety budget are still required by Friday. Director Vollmer confirmed this deadline. Chairman Schnetzer acknowledged the deadline and requested that Councilmembers aim to submit questions by Thursday morning, allowing him 24 hours to compile them while balancing other

commitments. Councilmembers indicated agreement with the proposed timeline.

Recommendation: Held in Finance Committee; Further Discussion Scheduled 11/12/2024.

C. ADJOURNMENT:

With no further business before the Finance Committee, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:31 p.m.

Jeremy A. VanMeter
Clerk of Council

*APPROVED by the Finance Committee, this
day of 2024.*

Michael Schnetzer