

**Subject:** New amendment proposal  
**Sent:** 5/4/2026, 4:55:04 PM  
**From:** Carrin Wester<westerc@gahanna.gov>  
**To:** Jeremy VanMeter  
**Cc:** Ethan Barnhardt; Priya Tamararasan  
**Attachments:** [CRC City Attorney.xlsx](#)

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Hi fellow commissioners,

I wanted to send along a charter change I believe warrants a bigger conversation among the commission. I'd like this item to be added to the amendment catalog for discussion at our next meeting, this Thursday.

Ms. Belisle mentioned something at the very end of our last meeting regarding the city attorney role. I'd like to discuss an amendment to change to an appointed city attorney from the current elected structure. I realize the timing of this submission is in between our first and second meetings of our deliberations phase, but I feel it is important to discuss further.

This proposed change is not driven by any motivation other than municipal best practices and what is most common within our form of government. This suggestion is not meant to be critical of any prior City Attorney or the current office holder in any way. This for me, falls under "best practice standards/processes".

Most suburbs in the Columbus Metro Area - 11 of the 14 listed above - have appointed/hired City Attorneys. Elected City Attorneys are rare in Franklin County, and excluding Columbus, we are only 1 of 3 suburbs to elect that role.

Even among Mayor-led cities, we are in the minority. Of the 8 suburbs with strong Mayor form of government, only 3 have elected City Attorneys, including Gahanna.

Under this proposal, our Mayor and City Council would work together to appoint/confirm a city attorney.

The following are benefits of hiring/appointing over the current elected mechanism:

- Merit-based selection: appointing authorities, (Mayor and then confirmed by Council) can select a candidate based on technical expertise, municipal law experience, etc.
- Dually selected/confirmed: if the City Attorney is a Mayoral appointment that then has to be confirmed by Council, it allows both the administrative and legislative branches of government to actively participate in the search for the best candidate.
- Focused on law expertise: appointed attorneys can, generally speaking, be less influenced by political leanings or political affiliation, which is crucially important in this role.

My suggested language is from Bexley's Charter, for the purpose of starting the conversation:

**Section 46. Qualifications; Term; Compensation; Duties Generally.**

The City Attorney shall be an attorney-at-law admitted to practice in the State of Ohio, and shall be an elector of the City and shall have such assistants of like qualifications as the Council may authorize. The City Attorney shall be appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by Council for a term of one year, and compensation shall be fixed by Council. The City Attorney shall be the legal advisor of and attorney and counsel for the City and for all officers and departments thereof in matters relating to their official duties. The City Attorney shall prepare all contracts, bonds, and other instruments in writing in which the City is concerned, and no contract with the City shall take effect until the City Attorney's approval of the form and correctness thereof is endorsed thereon.

(Amended Nov. 6, 1990)

## **Section 47. Other Duties.**

In addition to the duties imposed upon the City Attorney by this Charter or required by ordinance in accordance therewith, the City Attorney shall perform the duties which are imposed upon City Attorneys by the general laws of the State.

(Amended Nov. 6, 1990)

Thank you, see you all Thursday!

Carrin Wester

**Vice Chair, City of Gahanna Charter Review Commission**

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<u>Municipality</u>	<u>FOG</u>	<u>City Attorney</u>
Grandview	Mayor	Appointed by City Council
Grove City	Mayor/Admin	Appointed/hired, law firm
Reynoldsburg	Mayor	Elected
Whitehall	Mayor	Elected
Bexley	Mayor	Appointed by Mayor, confirmed by Council
Obetz	Mayor/Admin	Appointed
Canal Winchester	Mayor/Admin	Appointed by Mayor, confirmed by Council
Columbus	Mayor	Elected
Dublin	City Manager	Appointed by City Council
New Albany	City Manager	Appointed by Council (Law Firm)
Westerville	City Manager	Appointed by Council (Law Firm)
Worthington	City Manager	Appointed by City Manager
Upper Arlington	City Manager	Appointed by City Council
Hilliard	City Manager	Appointed by City Council
Pickerington	City Manager	Appointed by City Council