

**From:** [Michael Heitzman](#)  
**To:** [Council](#); [Planning Commission](#); [Becky Stinchcomb](#); [Troy Euton](#); [Mike Musser](#)  
**Cc:** [Melissa Carrelli](#); [carolinamp15@gmail.com](mailto:carolinamp15@gmail.com); [Chris and Michaela Schuett](#); [Michael Schnetzer](#); [Tony Carrelli](#)  
**Subject:** Big Walnut Trail  
**Date:** Saturday, August 01, 2015 4:46:31 PM

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Members of Council, Mayor, Mr. Euton, and Mr. Musser-

My name is Michael Heitzman and my family and I live in the Rivers Edge Subdivision off of Olde Ridenour Road in Ward 2. My wife and I are both life long residents of Gahanna and have chosen to raise our family here.

I am writing in regards to my total opposition to an ordinance passed by Council on July 20, 2015 (Ord. #0072-2015) allowing the City to enter into a contract with Columbus Asphalt to construct Section 5 of the Big Walnut Trail.

Mayor and Mr. Euton, I left messages with both of your offices early on Friday to discuss this matter more. I look forward to speaking with both you on Monday.

I try to be a citizen that follows legislation and actions that impact the West side of Gahanna, creekside, and the Olde Ridenour section of Gahanna. I have been involved in planning commission discussions related to a cell tower at New Life Church and the rezoning of property on Olde Ridenour. Certainly, working full time and raising a family limits my involvement and ability to stay current on everything, but I was GREATLY dismayed when I learned of the Variance approved by the Planning Commission and the Ordinance approved by Council all in 1 month, the month of July, related to the Big Walnut Trail. The Public Hearing for the Commission was advertised on July 2, it was first introduced to Council on July 6 (two days before the variance was even approved by the Planning Commission on July 8), and had a second reading and approval by Council on July 20. This provided LITTLE to no time for citizens to truly become involved. When I talked with the Deputy Clerk of Council, she informed me that there were many opportunities for citizens to get involved in the development and plans for Section 5, but none of which I can find online nor did I know about.

I am here to tell you that I am NOW involved, and have connected with many of my neighbors in the Rivers Edge Subdivision, Stonegate, and Founders Ridge, who are also TOTALLY against the installation of any kind of fence. Like the Parks and Recreation master plan and citizen surveys show, we certainly support the expansion of the Big Walnut Trail; however, we DO NOT support the installation of any kind of fence. This totally takes away from the natural landscape of this area. The Golf Course and surrounding area is a gem on the West side of Gahanna, and installing a chain link fence greatly takes away from that. Have you driven down Olde Ridenour and imagined a fence along that road? It makes me sick to my stomach to consider.

I strongly urge council to amend this Ordinance immediately as an "emergency" to stall the enactment of the Ordinance or take out the fencing altogether. I plan to be at the Council meeting on Monday, August 3 to speak to you about my concerns

during the hearing of visitors. I also plan to pursue an appeal to the Board of Zoning and Building Appeals in regards to the Variance for fencing.

I have also learned of the urgency to approve this Ordinance as it is partly being funded through a grant. I greatly agree with Council Member Jolley, in that this should NOT be a reason to rush into the installation of this trail. I truly do not feel that time and notice was properly given to the residents most impacted by this, and more time needs to be taken to look at current plans and evaluate how to move forward in the most appropriate way. Council Member Angelou, as you pointed out on July 20, in your vote, citizens were not involved as they should have been. With that said, all Council members should have voted 'no'.

I did look thoroughly through the minutes of the Parks and Recreation Board, and I do not see a great deal of discussion in regards to the Big Walnut Trail. I understand that Council initially approved the plan in 2006, however, in my understanding, Section 5 has changed greatly, and now includes the fence element. These changes and the fencing and the impact on the golf course must still be considered prior to the beginning of construction; hence, an amendment to the Ordinance must be done. I also did not find any kind of minutes indicating that this discussion went through any kind of committee of the Council.

Once an amendment is made to the Ordinance, removing the fencing, I urge the Parks and Recreation Department to explore the following:

-A landscaping plan to help naturally hide the trail (there is no landscaping plan as part of this trail, which blows my mind!) Planning Commission Member Price asked about landscaping prior to her vote on July 8, and Euton stated funds were not available for this. This is another reason to wait on the construction of this trail. It should be done with a landscaping plan, to be done correctly. Would a neighboring community like New Albany even consider installing a trail without a landscaping plan or with a chain link fence?

-A plan to use thick hedgerow, tress, and landscaping to serve as a barrier to golf balls hitting individuals on the trail. This plan will take the place of the need for a fence. Or, just install the trail without the fence. Folks have used Olde Ridenour for more than 30 years as a trail along the golf course, without concern.

-More research must be done on the need for fencing. The source cited by the City on it's own website (National Trails Training Partnership) cited many trail systems near golf courses. Many of them very clearly stated that fencing was not installed and no accidents had been reported. Again, natural buffering should be considered instead of fencing. If money is not available to do this, Section 5 SHOULD WAIT! Let's do it the right way Council Members, Mayor, and Parks and Recreation.

I would welcome and encourage any of you willing to talk with me, to reach out to me by cell at 580-8962 prior to the Council meeting on Monday. At most, I hope to hear from my Ward Representative, Council Member Schnetzer.

I appreciate you taking the time to read my concerns, and look forward to partnering with you to SLOW this process down and do it correctly.

In partnership,

Michael Heitzman  
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