



# City of Gahanna

## Meeting Minutes

### Parks & Recreation Board

200 South Hamilton Road  
Gahanna, Ohio 43230

*Eric Miller, Chair*  
*Donna Simmons, Vice Chair*  
*Holly Haines*  
*Chrissy Kaminski*  
*Harvey McCleskey*  
*Jan Ross*  
*Ken Shepherd*

*Harmoni Grable, Clerk*

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Wednesday, April 15, 2026

7:00 PM

Gahanna City Hall, Council Chambers

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#### A. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The Parks and Recreation Board meeting, scheduled for April 15, 2026 was called to order at 7:00 PM. The agenda was published on April 10, 2026.

#### B. ROLL CALL

Staff in attendance: Stephanie Ferrell, Director; Catherine Eichel, Project Manager; Harmoni Grable, Clerk.

**Present:** 6 - Chrissy Kaminski, Eric Miller, Jan Ross, Ken Shepherd, Donna Simmons and Holly Haines

**Absent:** 1 - Harvey McCleskey

#### C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**Attachments:** [MM 2.18.26](#)

[MM 2.18.26 Signed](#)

**A motion was made by Ross, seconded by Shepherd, that the Minutes be Approved as Amended. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Yes:** 6 - Kaminski, Miller, Ross, Shepherd, Simmons and Haines

**Absent:** 1 - McCleskey

#### D. ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA

#### E. HEARING OF VISITORS

#### G. CORRESPONDENCE AND ACTIONS

Mrs. Kaminski stated she had a request to consider portable restrooms at Shull Park during football games due to limited restroom access, as well as the same for Bryn Mawr Park. Mrs. Ferrell responded that it was a good suggestion and would be taken to the Parks Manager to determine the possibility for both parks, noting that Bryn Mawr has been a challenge due to the tight location and spacing to service the restrooms.

## F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Attachments: [P&R Board Academy](#)

Mrs. Ferrell introduced Catherine Eichel as the new Project Manager, who was promoted in February. She Ms. Eichel's successful transition into the role, her coordination with internal and external partners, and noted that she is serving as the primary manager for the Academy project. Mrs. Ferrell formally introduced Mrs. Eichel to the board.

Mrs. Ferrell presented visual renderings and reviewed the current site orientation of Academy Park, noting the existing locations of the shelter, playground, trail, and parking lot. She explained that the updated site plan will relocate the playground and shelter closer together south of the parking lot to create a more welcoming entrance, improve visitor flow, and provide clearer wayfinding upon arrival.

She highlighted planned trail improvements designed to enhance safety by redirecting trail users away from areas near the baseball diamonds where crowding and potential conflicts currently occur. The new facility will also function as a trail head, including bike parking, with partial funding secured through a partnership with the Parks and Recreation Foundation and grant support from the Department of Natural Resources.

Mrs. Ferrell reviewed building renderings showing updated architectural design and color schemes that align with community feedback from the Parks Master Plan requesting modernized park facilities. She noted the inclusion of covered gathering spaces and emphasized that staff coordinated closely with recreation and maintenance teams to ensure the building supports programming needs and long-term maintenance.

She also described the new playground design, which will be located directly adjacent to the shelter and designed to serve a wide range of ages and interests. Due to the site's location within a floodplain, the building will be elevated to meet FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) requirements, allowing the playground to incorporate varied topography, including features such as slides integrated into the slope. Mrs. Ferrell concluded by inviting questions and feedback from attendees.

Mrs. Ross asked about the timing for the park construction completion. Mrs. Ferrell responded that the third-party engineering firm has submitted the 100% construction documents, which staff completed an extensive review of, including a page-by-page meeting with the firm. Comments are currently being addressed, and final contract documents are expected by the beginning of the third quarter, noting that this timeline is a target and not a firm date.

Mrs. Ross asked how long the project is assumed to take. Mrs. Ferrell stated that the project is expected to take approximately 16 months for construction due to its size and complexity. She noted that significant environmental controls will be incorporated into the parking lot design to improve storm water management, protect nearby streams, and extend the lifespan of the parking area. She also emphasized the importance of careful coordination to ensure project elements are completed without causing damage to other completed work.

Mrs. Simmons reiterated that the project would not be completed until 2027 at best. Mr. Miller asked if the project would take 16 months, how would that impact on scheduled events like baseball and Halloween. Mrs. Ferrell stated that staff has been coordinating with the Junior League regarding project scheduling. She noted that the spring baseball season will not be impacted, but the fall season and spring 2027 season may be affected. Staff will work to identify alternative locations to avoid canceling seasons, and the Junior League has expressed understanding and support, recognizing the long-term benefits of the improvements.

Mrs. Simmons asked if there would be any changes to the amount of baseball diamonds or soccer fields with the new design plan. Ms. Eichel stated that construction milestones will be built into the project schedule for the general contractor to help coordinate construction activities and allow continued use of baseball facilities where . Mrs. Ferrell responded that the total number of available baseball fields and soccer fields will not be impacted. She noted the project includes significant infrastructure upgrades, including electrical and cable improvements, in addition to the building and playground work. Ms. Eichel emphasized the complexity of the project, noting that timelines will be dependent on conditions such as weather and overall construction challenges.

Mrs. Kaminiski asked if the playground and the shelter building would be constructed at the same time. Ms. Eichel explained that while construction milestones can be included in the project bid, the city cannot dictate specific construction methods. She noted that actual construction sequencing will be determined by the contractor. She also described

anticipated phasing around the circular area where the playground and building are located, along with nearby storm water work, emphasizing that the final approach may vary once the project is awarded.

Mr. Miller wanted to clarify that there would not be any additional fields or less than current amount of fields with the new plan. Ms. Eichel stated they would not be impacted with the new plan. Mr. Miller asked if the location of those fields would change. Ms. Eichel stated that the project will not impact the soccer or baseball fields. However, the parking lot expansion and associated trail extension will bring pavement closer to the soccer fields, while all fields will otherwise remain in their current locations and continue to be used as normal.

Mr. Miller asked whether any potential interruption to the baseball season would be related to parking impacts rather than construction on the fields themselves. Ms. Eichel explained that Academy Park has a single vehicular entrance and exit, which creates safety concerns during construction due to heavy equipment and truck traffic. She noted that the project includes extensive parking lot work such as expansion, milling and overlay, full-depth reconstruction, and a new turnaround, along with installation of stormwater infrastructure, utilities, and a new water line.

Due to the scope of work and safety considerations, the park will be closed to the general public during construction. However, access to the Big Walnut Trail will be maintained through Woodside Green and a nearby neighborhood connection north of the park. She added that staff will work with the general contractor to potentially phase construction and maintain some access for baseball where possible, but emphasized that safety will be the top priority given the project's size and complexity.

Mr. Miller asked if the project will effect the Mountain Bike Trail. Ms. Eichel stated that most likely the Mountain Bike Trail will only be closed on that side. Mr. Miller asked if they would be able to access it from the other side. Ms. Eichel stated that was correct. Mr. Miller then asked if the new shelter would be available to rent. Mrs. Ferrell stated that the specific operations of the rental have not yet been determined. However, she noted that the project creates new opportunities that differ from current offerings, and additional details will be shared as they are finalized. Mr. Miller asked about the bike racks and if it would fit 5 or 6 bikes at a time. Mrs. Ferrell stated it was a "u" set up for attaching multiple bikes at one time. Ms. Eichel stated that it is roughly double that and if it is utilized that is something to add more to in the future.

Mrs. Kaminski asked if the trail head to the mountain bike trail would be rated. Mrs. Ferrell stated that new signage will be incorporated at the

site, including trail etiquette guidance for the mountain bike trail and an overall park map. She also noted a partnership with Combo to host a “Dirt School” program at the site, using the shelter house as a central hub for instruction before participants access the trails. She emphasized that the project creates expanded recreational and educational opportunities. Mrs. Kaminski asked if the shelter would be similar to the Hannah Park Shelter. Mrs. Ferrell stated that, unlike Hannah Park’s facility, the new site’s design includes a large breezeway and different interior capacity, resulting in a distinct but intentional function. She noted that the back overhang is designed to support programming and gathering opportunities. She also shared that the site is being envisioned as a future camp program site, with ongoing planning and creative development for expanded uses. Ms. Eichel provided an overview of the building layout, noting that storage is located on the left side, followed by concession areas, restroom facilities, and a centrally located mechanical room.

Mrs. Simmons asked if the picnic tables going to be different for seating. Ms. Eichel stated that the building was intentionally designed so that visitors entering through the breezeway arrive at a large concrete gathering pad beneath an overhang. She explained that the building’s placement was based on feedback to maximize visibility of both the baseball fields and the playground, allowing caregivers to easily monitor children across both areas from a central vantage point.

Mrs. Simmons asked if the parents would need to sit at the picnic area to see the playground or if there would be seating around it. Ms. Eichel stated that there would be some benches integrated in the playground area. Mrs. Simmons stated that the seats are too narrow on the benches and would like to see them wider. Ms. Eichel and Mrs. Ferrell acknowledged that request. Mr. Miller asked what the total cost for the project would be. Mrs. Ferrell stated over \$7.5 million.

## **H. NEW BUSINESS**

### **Staffing Updates**

Mrs. Ferrell provided staffing updates across the Parks and Recreation Division. She announced the retirement of Parks Foreman Jim Ferguson, recognizing his long-standing contributions and institutional knowledge. Maintenance Worker III Travis Smith has been promoted to Parks Foreman, with plans to backfill the resulting vacancy, reflecting the department’s focus on internal advancement and succession planning.

She also reported the upcoming retirement of Administrative Assistant

Ellen Ores, with Joel Schick already hired and being cross-trained to assume the role. Additionally, Zoe Zessing has joined the team as the new Senior and Adult Programming staff member and is already supporting operations during the transition to the new senior center.

Mrs. Ferrell noted that Nicole Butler has accepted a new position closer to home and will be departing the organization after the weekend, though she will continue limited involvement through the Parks Foundation in a clerk capacity. The Youth and Family Programming vacancy will be addressed, with preparations underway to ensure continuity for summer camp operations.

**Attachments:**     [Juneteenth GMAC Rental Waiver Request](#)

Mrs. Ferrell discussed the memo requesting for a fee waiver for the GMAC (Gahanna Mobile Activities Center) for June 19th Juneteenth event in coordination with the Creekside Blues and Jazz Festival. This includes a question on the deposit being waived.

Mrs. Ross expressed concern about waiving deposits, stating she is not comfortable doing so because deposits can be refunded and serve as a form of accountability. She noted that waiving a deposit could eliminate recourse if issues arise and questioned whether the practice of waiving deposits has been standard, indicating she recalls previously raising this concern. Mrs. Ferrell stated that there is currently no formal, blanket policy regarding deposit waivers, and decisions have been made on a case-by-case basis. She noted that the City could formalize this practice within the pricing policy if desired. She also emphasized that deposit waiver expectations should be clearly defined and discussed in this forum, including for shelter rentals, and indicated that establishing a consistent policy would be appropriate.

Mrs. Simmons agrees that it is in our best interest to collect the deposit and not be waived. She asked if the Parks would drop off and set up the GMAC trailer at the event. Mrs. Ferrell stated that we would drop it off and then pick it up after the event, however it is part of the agreement that the renter manages and protects the equipment. Mrs. Ross asked if it was requested or rented often. Mrs. Ferrell responded that it is rented often for block parties and birthday parties.

Mrs. Kaminski expressed uncertainty about how to proceed, questioning whether to begin requiring a deposit immediately or wait until it is formally included in the pricing policy, and whether that policy update could be implemented right away. Mrs. Ross suggested they could waive the fee but still require the deposit for now, even without a formal policy. She emphasized the need to create a clear policy stating that deposits are required, noting that this expectation has not yet been formally

documented. Mrs. Ferrell explained that the deposit was flagged for discussion because staff does not have the authority to decide on waivers. Since the deposit is tied to that decision, it needs to be determined by the Board.

Mrs. Kaminski asked when the topic should be formally incorporated into the pricing policy-whether it should be addressed immediately, at the next meeting, or during a future pricing discussion. Mrs. Ferrell explained that the pricing policy is typically reviewed annually but can be adjusted outside that schedule. She offered to prepare a draft for discussion and noted that any formal changes would require council approval, and she is willing to present it at the next meeting. Mrs. Kaminski agreed that she would like to get the process formalized moving forward. Mrs. Ferrell reiterated that these discussions typically take place during GMAC requests. The recreation trailer contains several components that contribute to the overall expense. Currently, deposit requirements are often determined case by case, with the deposit usually still required, and she emphasized that formalizing this process would be beneficial.

Mrs. Kaminski asked if the conversation could be formalized at the next meeting over the process of deposit waivers. It was agreed upon by Mrs. Simmons and Mr. Shepherd to discuss at the next meeting. Mr. Miller asked if the Gahanna Juneteenth Committee was a standing committee. Mrs. Ferrell stated that it is a grassroots committee in order to celebrate Juneteenth. Mrs. Simmons added that they were a part of the Blues and Jazz Fest last year.

Mrs. Haines asked to clarify that the deposit is refundable if there are no issues and expressed concern that requiring it upfront could create a financial barrier for smaller or grassroots community groups with limited budgets. Mrs. Ross supported requiring a deposit, noting that if a group cannot afford it upfront, they may also be unable to cover damages if something goes wrong. However, she acknowledged that some groups may not have funds available until after their event. Mrs. Kaminski asked if someone cannot afford the deposit, they can request an exception, which would involve asking for flexibility in applying the policy. Mrs. Ferrell stated that in that circumstance we would have to bring it to the board for approval. Mr. Shephard asked if the reason for the deposit was in case there is any damage to cover the cost vs. having to seek retribution. Mrs. Ferrell stated yes, the deposit helps secure funds for damaged equipment.

**The motion to approve the fee waiver, but still require the deposit to be obtained.**

**Yes:** 6 - Kaminski, Miller, Ross, Shepherd, Simmons and Haines

**Absent:** 1 - McCleskey

**I. DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Mrs. Ferrell reported that the Director's Report has been redesigned with improved imagery and layout, and she praised the team's work and overall presentation.

She clarified a previously misunderstood point regarding the key loan process, explaining that it is currently being refined by staff to improve the tracking and management of facility keys. This update is intended to better support seasonal staff and individuals who do not have on-site hosts with direct access to keys, ensuring a more organized and efficient inventory system.

Mrs. Ferrell also provided an update on seasonal staffing efforts, noting that the department is actively hiring and has completed a significant number of interviews. She highlighted a strong return rate of seasonal employees across areas such as aquatics, camps, events, and boating. She emphasized that retaining returning staff is especially valuable because they are already trained, understand operations, and positively contribute to both service delivery and the community.

Finally, Mrs. Ferrell noted upcoming weekend programming, including the Chili Bowl event at the golf course, and encouraged attendance while commending the team for maintaining excellent course conditions. It was stated that the Chili Cook Off has been a long standing event in the community.

Mrs. Kaminski asked if we knew when 825 Tech Drive location would become available for a board meeting. Mrs. Ferrell explained that the ribbon cutting originally scheduled for April 25 has been postponed, and a new date has not yet been determined. She will provide an update once a new date is set.

Mrs. Kaminski asked if they could get an updated tour of the Price Road location. Ms. Eichel shared that the project is progressing well and remains very exciting, noting that the east side parking lot has been fully poured while additional work is still underway on the west side. She encouraged those interested to reach out to her to schedule a tour of the site. She also praised the project administrator for his strong management and hands-on involvement, explaining that the Project Administrator is on-site frequently and has been doing an excellent job overseeing construction. Finally, she noted that tours are best scheduled in the morning or late afternoon to avoid active construction traffic and equipment movement. Mrs. Ferrell added that you can now see the vision as it is coming along.

Mrs. Ross asked how camp sign ups went. Mrs. Ferrell stated that camps are sold out, and explained that, due to a high number of returning staff, the organization is evaluating the possibility of expanding camp capacity. This is a shift from previous years and may allow them to reduce long waitlists and better meet demand. While they aim to serve more participants, they emphasized that any expansion would only occur if staffing ratios and safety standards can still be maintained to ensure a quality experience.

Attachments: [PR Directors Report February.March 2026](#)

## J. COMMITTEE REPORTS

### i. Bicycle & Trail Advisory Committee (BTAC)

No recent meeting, the next meeting to be held on April 22nd.

### ii. Gahanna Active Senior Advisory Committee (GASAC)

Mrs. Simmons reported that the board's main focus last month was increasing their visibility and engagement in the community. They discussed participating in events such as Herb Day, Blues and Jazz, and the monthly market. She noted that Visit Gahanna is willing to waive fees for their participation in Herb Day, though it may be too soon to coordinate for that event. She also shared plans for them to be present at Blues and Jazz in a flexible way, allowing members to come and go rather than stay all day. Additionally, she suggested exploring how they could be incorporated into the market, either through their own booth or by sharing Parks and Recreation space. She concluded by noting their enthusiasm about relocating to the Tech Center and mentioned their next meeting of May 19th. Mr. Miller said the new facility would be a great way to recruit new members.

Mrs. Simmons added that after speaking with Visit Gahanna, the group could set up a tent or table near the entrance area for Blues and Jazz. They would be able to share information with attendees as they arrive from shuttle drop-offs, and the setup would allow them flexibility to leave early if needed without disrupting the event.

### iii. Natural Resources Advisory Committee (NRAC)

Mrs. Ferrell noted that the BioBlitz information was included in the Explorer Guide and encouraged the public to obtain a copy due to the variety of new activities and information it contains. She praised the staff for their ongoing work in developing the guide. She explained that the

BioBlitz offers both virtual and in-person training opportunities and serves as a way to engage and connect individuals with shared interests. Participation is free but requires registration, with in-person sessions held at Gahanna Woods. She added that the effort is intended to build interest, excitement, and involvement in the related committee.

#### **K. POLL MEMBERS FOR COMMENT**

Mr. Sheperd reported that the Veterans Memorial Committee met on March 25, during which Matt McGregor was elected chairperson and Ellen Murphy was elected vice chair. He shared that Beth Johnson, Executive Director of Launer Flat in Glumas, has been selected as the principal address speaker. The program is approximately 65-70% complete, and once finalized, it will be distributed to committee members and staff. He also expressed hope for good weather and a strong turnout for the event.

Mrs. Simmons reported that the Make Gahanna Great group will begin the year with a litter cleanup at Friendship Park at 9:00 a.m., noting that significant volunteer help is needed due to the amount of work. They also shared plans for a flower planting event at Creekside on May 16 in partnership with the Parks and Recreation Department. Mrs. Ross added that the Gahanna Shred It event was also on May 25th at City Hall.

Mrs. Kaminski asked if Hops and Vines was moved to Edison Brewing Company. Mrs. Ferrell stated that there may be a redaction and it may be moving back to Creekside. They are not anticipating changes to happen at Creekside from now through October 1st, so there may be an opportunity for it to be held at Creekside.

Mrs. Kaminski asked about an update to Creekside. Mrs. Ferrell shared that a recent council meeting presentation by Senior Director Schultz is now available on YouTube and can be circulated for review. The presentation focused on the Creekside public project and its limitations outside of flood mitigation efforts. She explained that the discussion centered on how extensive the project should be, with overall support for moving forward, but with continued questions about costs and funding mechanisms needed to advance into construction.

#### **L. ADJOURNMENT**

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Harmoni Grable  
Clerk

*APPROVED by the Parks & Recreation Board, this  
day of 2026.*

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Eric Miller