



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
Michael Moseley
Jan Ross
Ken Shepherd

Harmoni Grable, Clerk

Wednesday, June 17, 2026

7:00 PM

Gahanna City Hall, Council Chambers

A. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

B. ROLL CALL

Present: 6 - Eric Miller, Jan Ross, Ken Shepherd, Donna Simmons, Holly Haines and Michael Moseley

Absent: 1 - Chrissy Kaminski

MEETING MINUTES

C.

Attachments: [5.20.26 MM](#)
 [5.20.26 PR Board Signed](#)

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

Yes: 6 - Miller, Ross, Shepherd, Simmons, Haines and Moseley

Absent: 1 - Kaminski

D. ADDITIONS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA

E. HEARING OF VISITORS

G. CORRESPONDENCE AND ACTIONS

F. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Attachments: [P&R Board June 17](#)

Mrs. Ferrell introduced the Friendship Park Playground presentation, noting that Parks Manager Zac Guthrie, was present to assist with any questions. She reminded that Mr. Guthrie had previously provided the Board with an overview of the project in December, and that this presentation focused on the proposed playground renderings and visual design. She also shared that the project had been presented to City Council, where authorization was requested for the Mayor to enter into an agreement for the playground's purchase and installation.

Mrs. Ferrell explained that the playground will be fully enclosed by a perimeter fence to enhance safety and security. The fencing is intended to protect children due to the playground's proximity to the creek, its large footprint, and to help prevent children from wandering away while caregivers supervise multiple users.

Mrs. Ferrell explained that the playground will feature poured-in-place surfacing in high-use areas to provide an inclusive, accessible surface for a variety of users, while engineered wood fiber will be used in other areas to balance accessibility with project costs and maximize play features within the available budget. She also highlighted the playground's wide platforms, which allow caregivers and children to move through the equipment together, and noted that the varied elevations and multiple pathways are designed to encourage exploration, creativity, and physical development.

Mrs. Ferrell highlighted several playful and family-friendly features of the Friendship Park Playground. She noted that the design includes a critter scavenger hunt, with hidden animal features throughout the playground to create moments of surprise and discovery for children and adults alike. She also pointed out the 2-5-year-old play area located behind the main structure and explained that shade canopies were added in response to strong community feedback emphasizing the importance of shade and comfort for playground users. Additionally, she shared that the playground will feature unique climbing elements designed to challenge users, helping children develop their skills, confidence, and physical abilities while providing an engaging and enjoyable play experience.

Mr. Shepherd asked if the playground was moving locations from its current position. Mr. Guthrie explained that the new playground will be built in the same location as the existing one but will have a substantially larger footprint, estimated to be approximately one-quarter to one-third larger. He noted that the expanded design will include more play equipment and a greater variety of play features, providing a significantly enhanced play experience compared to the current playground.

Mr. Shepherd asked if any trees at the current playground would remain. Mr. Guthrie explained that the new playground will require the removal of only one tree, which was already in declining condition and located within the planned playground footprint. He also noted that the playground design incorporates both natural and constructed shade. After evaluating multiple design options, the project team chose to place a shade canopy over the main 2-5-year-old play area rather than the swings, as the nearby tree line along the creek will provide additional natural shade for portions of the playground.

Mrs. Ross requested the overall timeline of when the construction of the playground would begin. Mr. Guthrie explained that the project timeline is dependent on City Council approval, execution of the purchase contract, equipment lead times, and weather conditions. He noted that playground equipment is expected to take approximately 8-12 weeks to arrive, and the poured-in-place safety surfacing requires consistently warm temperatures for installation. If weather delays prevent the surfacing from being installed this fall, the project may be postponed to avoid leaving the completed playground inaccessible over the winter.

Mrs. Simmons asked if Friendship Park would be closed during this time period. Mr. Guthrie responded that construction will begin with demolition, followed by several weeks of site grading and earthwork before playground installation. He estimated the overall construction process will take approximately 8 to 12 weeks, depending on the project schedule and site conditions. Mr. Guthrie stated that if construction is delayed until spring, the existing playground would be temporarily unavailable during construction, but the project would be scheduled so the new playground would be completed and open for the peak recreation season. He added that staff would continue working around weather conditions and provide updates, including project photos, as construction progresses.

Mrs. Simmons asked what the price point of the project is. Mr. Guthrie replied roughly around \$860,000. Mr. Guthrie noted that the Friendship Park Playground project includes significant outside funding, including a \$25,000 contribution from the Foundation, \$10,000 from Gahanna Kiwanis, and a grant from GameTime that was previously discussed in December, helping offset the overall project cost.

Mr. Shepherd asked if the gazebo would need any work done as well. Mr. Guthrie explained that the gazebo is not included as part of the Friendship Park Playground project, though staff will continue to evaluate future improvements, noting that the gazebo roof will need repairs.

Mr. Shepherd asked if there was any issues obtaining playground equipment. Mr. Guthrie explained that replacement timelines for playground equipment vary depending on the type of component. While standard repairs are typically completed without significant delays, specialty equipment-particularly items that must be sourced internationally-can require longer lead times for replacement.

Mrs. Haines asked if it was the final color scheme for the playground. Mr. Guthrie said that it is the final decision. Mrs. Haines then asked if the color scheme will follow in other playground concepts. Mr. Guthrie explained that the playground's color palette was carefully selected based on the park's setting, existing site features, community feedback, and overall design goals. Staff worked with the design consultant to evaluate colors for individual playground components, ensuring the equipment complemented the existing surfacing while incorporating a variety of colors to create visual interest. He noted that each playground has its own unique color scheme, and the collaborative design process involved detailed discussions about the appearance of individual poles, panels, and other features.

Mrs. Haines asked if there would be any alternative types of swing sets, or just the standard swing sets. Mr. Guthrie explained that the Friendship Park Playground will include four swing bays featuring a mix of traditional belt swings and alternative swing options, including more accessible, accommodating swing seats. He noted that the design considered not only the variety of swing types but also accessibility to the swings, with surfacing and layout planned to provide inclusive access and accommodate users with different abilities.

Mrs. Haines asked if there were no signage for the scavenger hunt. was there an alternative option to let them know what to look for? Mrs. Ferrell explained that the playground will include signage for the Critter Hunt feature, which helps guide users in finding the hidden critters throughout the playground. She noted that children may discover the critters naturally while playing, even before noticing the informational sign, adding an element of surprise and exploration to the experience. Mr Guthrie added that the panels have some sort of interactive detail in them.

Mrs. Ferrell emphasized the significant time, effort, and thoughtful consideration invested by Mr. Guthrie and the project team throughout the playground design process. She noted that every detail was intentional and purposeful, with each decision contributing to a more functional, beneficial, and enjoyable playground experience for the community.

H. NEW BUSINESS

Ashburnham Playground

Mrs. Ferrell introduced the next playground project, Ashburnham Park Playground, noting that the same level of thoughtful planning and consideration used for Friendship Park was applied to this project as well. She explained that Ashburnham Park is located near Columbus Academy and surrounded by several nearby residences, so community feedback and surveys were primarily focused on the residents who are expected to use the playground most frequently. She highlighted that the existing playground is very limited, consisting mainly of a platform and a few slides, and that the proposed project represents a significant improvement and upgrade to the current amenities.

Mrs. Ferrell explained that the Ashburnham Park Playground design will include a replacement of the existing swing bay and main playground structure while incorporating the surrounding natural environment into the overall theme. She noted that the nearby nature path and wooded setting influenced the design, with the goal of creating a playground that feels like it is part of the woods. The use of elements such as flowers and a smaller tree feature helps reinforce the natural aesthetic while providing more durable and sustainable playground components.

Mr. Guthrie highlighted that the Ashburnham Park Playground design was intentionally created to serve a wide range of ages and abilities. He explained that the playground includes a 2-5-year-old area focused on creative and imaginative play, while the main structure is designed for ages 5-12 with accessible challenges and opportunities for adventure. He noted that the structure provides enough height and climbing elements to engage older children while remaining approachable for younger users.

Mr. Guthrie also shared that the design adds an additional swing bay, expanding from the current two swing bays to include a saucer swing, two belt swings, an infant swing seat, and an adaptive swing option, creating a more inclusive experience for all users.

Mrs. Ross asked if it was part of the plan to continue to upgrade playgrounds over the life cycle of them. Mrs. Ferrell explained that the Ashburnham Park Playground project is funded for the current year and was included on the City Council agenda on Monday. She clarified that the project also requires authorization for the purchase and installation of the playground equipment.

Mr. Shepherd asked if there would be benches or shade structures on this playground. Mr. Guthrie explained that the Ashburnham Park

Playground project has a budget of approximately \$236,000, requiring careful prioritization of features. He noted that the design uses engineered wood fiber surfacing and does not include shade structures or poured-in-place surfacing in order to maximize play value within the available budget. While some premium features were not included, the park benefits from surrounding trees that provide natural shade. He emphasized that the upgraded playground will significantly improve the neighborhood park and is expected to serve many nearby residents, with more than 300 households located within approximately a half-mile and the park being highly walk able for the surrounding community.

Mrs. Simmons asked if the basketball court going to remain. Mr. Guthrie explained that the existing feature will remain in place, while staff explore potential improvements such as relocating it or adding a protective fence. He noted that community survey feedback helped identify practical concerns that may not have been immediately apparent during the planning process, including basketballs entering the nearby drainage basin. He shared that staff have identified possible solutions, though those improvements are not included as part of the current playground project.

Mr. Miller asked if it would remain close to where the basketball courts were. Mr. Guthrie responded that it would remain on the north side. Mr. Guthrie explained that the Ashburnham Park Playground design will include ramps for access and a gravel path connection to the existing quarter-mile nature trail behind the playground. He noted that the connection is intended to encourage children to explore the wooded area while providing a designated pathway that supports safe access and interaction with the natural surroundings.

Mrs. Simmons asked if the parking lot is a part of this project. Mr. Guthrie explained that improvements to the area near the road, including the small parking area and additional connectivity improvements, are not included in the current playground project. He noted that these enhancements will require a larger, separate project and additional planning. Staff's current priority is completing the playground replacement and addressing recent inspection concerns. Future improvements may include adding a sidewalk connection and redesigning the area's layout, though specific plans have not yet been determined.

Mrs. Simmons asked what the surface was made out of. Mr. Guthrie responded that it would be wood fiber. Mrs. Haines asked if there were any activities planned along the walking trails. Mr. Guthrie shared that staff are open to ideas and have actively discussed ways to further

activate the area. He explained that the intention behind adding pathways was to encourage exploration of the natural surroundings by showing users that the woods are accessible and inviting. The goal is to create an intentional connection to the wooded area while encouraging people to explore the space naturally. Mrs. Ferrell added that the path is well maintained and well used.

Mrs. Haines asked whether the close proximity to Columbus Academy could provide an opportunity to expand the existing maintenance program or create a future partnership related to the Ashburnham Park Playground.

Mrs. Ferrell explained that there are no specific partnership plans with Columbus Academy at this time. However, she noted that the Active Transportation Plan identified an opportunity to improve pedestrian and bicycle access through nearby trails, which could support future connectivity and activation efforts in the area.

Playgrounds

Mrs. Ferrell provided an overview of the City's approach to playground replacements and long-term planning. She noted that, with several major playground projects underway, including two large system-wide replacements and the Ashburnham Park Playground upgrade, it was important to review how playgrounds are evaluated and prioritized.

She explained that playgrounds typically have a life cycle of approximately 18-20 years and that the Parks Department has certified playground safety inspectors, including Mr. Guthrie, who regularly evaluate playground conditions. She emphasized that playgrounds remain open only when they meet safety standards, and any closed features are typically due to inspection concerns.

Mrs. Ferrell also discussed the role of the Capital Improvement Plan, which helps staff schedule playground replacements based on installation dates, expected life cycles, maintenance needs, and available funding. She noted that playground projects must be balanced with other park assets and competing capital needs across the City, requiring careful consideration of overall funding capacity and priorities.

Mrs. Ferrell explained that the playground replacement schedule is based on the condition, age, and recent improvements of each playground within the system. She noted that playgrounds shown at the bottom of the replacement list were recently upgraded and therefore have replacement timelines further out, while those at the top have been identified as needing replacement and are already funded or moving

forward.

She clarified that the Parks system includes 17 playground features (or 16 when accounting for the separate playground areas at Hunters Ridge Park and Pool), and with an expected lifespan of 18-20 years, staff continuously evaluate and plan for future replacements.

Mrs. Ferrell emphasized that the Parks Department takes a strategic, system-wide approach to capital improvements by combining necessary upgrades into larger projects when possible. This approach helps reduce costs, minimize disruptions, and avoid closing playgrounds whenever possible by ensuring replacements and improvements are planned proactively.

Mr. Miller asked if there was a regular schedule to check and see if repairs are needed? Mr. Guthrie explained that while there is no specific regulation requiring a set number of playground inspections, the Parks Department follows industry best practices by conducting regular park inspections weekly and completing more detailed playground inspections twice annually. Maintenance staff routinely monitor playground conditions during park visits, with additional attention given to older playgrounds or equipment requiring frequent repairs.

He noted that inspections evaluate individual playground components, such as slides and swings, and assign condition ratings based on safety. If a feature does not meet safety standards, staff may close that specific section or equipment until it can be addressed. He emphasized that these inspections are essential to ensuring playgrounds remain safe and accessible for the community.

Mrs. Simmons asked where the Rice Avenue Park was located. Mr. Guthrie explained that the playground location is on the eastern side of Gahanna, near the Taylor Road area and the Foxwood Rice neighborhood, within the Gahanna Woods area.

Mrs. Ferrell explained that, in addition to individual playground project budgets, the Parks Department maintains a dedicated capital maintenance budget for playgrounds. This funding allows staff to quickly replace damaged or outdated playground features without waiting for separate funding approvals, helping maintain safe and functional park amenities. She noted that replacement timelines can still depend on equipment availability and manufacturer lead times, but having this budget in place helps staff respond efficiently to maintenance needs.

Mr. Guthrie explained that Pizzuro Park and the two existing playgrounds

are expected to remain in place as long as they continue to meet safety standards and remain within their useful life cycle. He noted that the Parks Department is not planning a full playground replacement investment at this location but is instead exploring ways to maximize the value of future improvements within the park.

He shared that staff will continue monitoring the playground to ensure it remains safe while considering other enhancements, such as additional park amenities and shade areas, that may provide greater benefit and enjoyment for the overall park space.

Mr. Miller asked whether advancements in playground technology, materials, and design have extended the typical 18-20-year playground life expectancy. He asked whether newer materials and improvements have allowed playgrounds to remain functional and safe for longer periods than traditional expectations. Mr. Guthrie explained that advancements in playground materials and technology have not significantly changed the typical playground life expectancy. He noted that playground equipment is available in a variety of materials, including plastic, metal, steel, and newer wood options that staff continue to evaluate.

He shared that an 18-20-year life cycle is considered on the longer end for many playground systems, with some needing replacement closer to 15 years depending on factors such as weather exposure, usage, temperature changes, and overall wear. He emphasized that the lifespan of a playground is largely influenced by environmental conditions and how frequently it is used.

I. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Attachments: [PR Directors Report](#)

Mrs. Simmons asked if the Academy Park project is still ongoing? Mrs. Ferrell explained that the 100% design plans for the project were submitted by POD, the third-party project manager. Parks staff reviewed the submission and provided feedback, which is now being evaluated by the project team before the plans are resubmitted. She noted that the project is continuing to move forward, but it is not yet ready to proceed to the bidding phase.

Mrs. Ferrell provided additional updates from the Director's Report. She shared that the Southwest Floodplain aquatic site project has moved forward, with a Request for Proposal (RFP) released and three responses received. Staff are currently reviewing the proposals and evaluating which team to move forward with.

She also highlighted the new “Explore Our Ecosystem” event, scheduled for June 27th at Woodside Green. The event will build upon the previously discussed BioBlitz, incorporating results from the community’s biodiversity observations and providing an opportunity for residents to learn more about Gahanna’s natural environment and ecosystems. Mrs. Ferrell encouraged participation in the event.

Mrs. Ferrell shared that the upcoming Blues and Jazz Festival, hosted by the Convention and Visitors Bureau, will take place the weekend of 6/19 - 6/21. She recognized that Parks staff, along with the Service Department and Police Department, play a significant role in supporting the event’s logistics, operations, and overall safety. She acknowledged the dedication and long hours required from staff during large events and encouraged the community to thank and recognize team members for their efforts.

Mrs. Ross asked about the Park Takeover and was curious on what the outcome was for that. Mrs. Ferrell noted that the Police Department provides guidance and feedback throughout the planning process, and she expressed appreciation for the Chief and officers for their communication, collaboration, and support in helping ensure events are prepared and safely managed. Mrs. Ross stated she was impressed with the pro activeness in response to the possibility of the event.

Mrs. Haines asked if there was any feedback from the Pride Fest. Mrs. Ferrell acknowledged that participation in the event was lower than anticipated. She explained that the event has undergone recent changes, including being hosted on a Saturday for the first time noting that finding the right timing, day, and schedule for a newer event is an ongoing process and adjustments may continue as organizers work to build participation.

J. COMMITTEE REPORTS

i. Bicycle & Trail Advisory Committee (BTAC)

ii. Gahanna Active Senior Advisory Committee (GASAC)

iii. Natural Resources Advisory Committee (NRAC)

Mrs. Ferrell provided an update on the BioBlitz, noting that six individuals registered, including four Gahanna residents and two non-residents. She highlighted the broad age range of participants, from 12 to 69 years old,

and shared that, although participation was modest, it represents a positive starting point for building community interest in Gahanna's natural environment and ecosystem initiatives.

K. POLL MEMBERS FOR COMMENT

Mr. Shepherd shared a question from a resident regarding the possibility of adding a pedestrian crossing near Hannah Park across the heavily traveled roadway. He asked whether a study has been conducted or if any plans are underway to improve pedestrian access and safety at that location, noting that the resident had previously discussed the issue with Parks & Recreation staff several months earlier.

Mrs. Ferrell explained that improving pedestrian access near Hannah Park has been under discussion for some time. She noted that Franklin County completed a high-level feasibility study for a trail corridor extending from Headley Park to Jefferson Township, and the project has been included as a future request for LinkUS funding through the COTA initiative approved last November.

She emphasized that the project is still in the planning stages and is not yet ready to move forward. Additional detailed design work is needed, including determining the safest pedestrian crossing location and evaluating factors such as sightlines and the most appropriate crossing treatment.

Mrs. Ross asked if that area was in control of Gahanna or another city. Mrs. Ferrell noted that jurisdiction along the corridor is shared among the City of Gahanna, Franklin County, and Jefferson Township. She clarified that the section of roadway between Hannah Park and Headley Park falls within the City of Gahanna's jurisdiction, giving the City authority over improvements in that portion of the corridor.

Mr. Miller mentioned that is already a busy road, with more growth occurring. Mrs. Ferrell explained that extending the trail and improving pedestrian connections is a complex project involving multiple challenges. She noted that while the improvements are feasible, significant planning, design, and coordination are required, particularly for extending the trail from Headley Park into Jefferson Township and potentially southwest toward the roundabout.

Mr. Miller welcomed new board Michael Moseley to the Parks & Recreation board.

L. ADJOURNMENT

Harmoni Grable
Clerk

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

Eric Miller