

**Cuyahoga Falls City Council
Minutes of the Community Development Committee**

June 15, 2026

Members: Joe Siegfert, Chair
Frank Stams, Vice-Chair
Brian Ashton, Nikki Cebula, Susan Spinner

Mr. Siegfert called the meeting to order at 6:56 p.m. All members were present.

The minutes of the March 16, 2026 Community Development Committee meeting were approved as written.

Legislation Discussed:

Temp. Ord. A-37

Discussion:

Temp. Ord. A-37

An ordinance approving the application to expand the Downtown Community Cuyahoga Falls Entertainment District within the Downtown Cuyahoga Falls area; making certain findings in connection therewith, and declaring an emergency.

Ms. Mary Spaugy, Community Development Director, presented Temporary Ordinance A-37 to Council. Community Entertainment Districts (CEDs) were created by the Ohio Legislature in the early 2000s to aid economic revitalization in areas lacking D5 permits. Current CEDs in Cuyahoga Falls include the Portage Crossing CED, which was established in 2013, covers 20 acres, and allows 4 D5-J permits and the Downtown CED, which was created in 2017, covers 57 acres, and allows 11 D5-J permits (one per five acres, up to 15 maximum per district). The City of Cuyahoga Falls has 26 D5 permits, all currently allocated. No more than 15 D5-J permits can be issued within a single CED, regardless of district size.

Pilgrim Church at 130 Broad Boulevard was not included in the original Downtown CED. The owner seeks inclusion to pursue a D5-J permit. Without inclusion, the only alternative is the costly TREX process (acquiring a permit from another jurisdiction, costing \$10,000–\$20,000 plus fees).

Expanding a CED follows the same process as establishing one: public notice and adoption of an ordinance or resolution. The Division of Liquor Control requires an updated street boundary description for the entire expanded district. New parcels (including 130 Broad Boulevard) are zoned MU-5 (Urban Center) or MU-6 (Downtown), supporting mixed-use development and meeting CED requirements. Zoning and permitted uses will not change with the expansion.

The CED expansion does not affect the DORA (Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area), which allows outdoor consumption of alcoholic beverages in designated cups. If the City Council approves the expansion, Pilgrim Church can apply for a D5-J permit without incurring the high costs of the TREX process, supporting local economic development and mixed-use activity in the downtown area.

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Mr. Siegferth stated that there are 120 Community Entertainment Districts in the State of Ohio. He asked Council to look at Exhibit A, an overlay of the mapping dated June 11th. The bulk of the expansion is on the north side in order to get the required acreage to where these 5D-J permits could be acquired. The condos on Riverfront are not included in this. He asked if someone what someone outside the would have to do to obtain a permit. Ms. Snyder stated that they could still pursue the reimagination of their space and receive assistance from the Community Development Department. They would not be eligible to be included in the Community Entertainment District for one of these permits. They could pursue a TREX transfer. If they had the minimum 20 acres the City and the property owner could pursue an additional Community Entertainment District. Mr. Siegferth asked if there is a plan to preserve the sanctuary spaces of the churches through this reimagination. Reverend Joy Fenton Jones stated that, at Pilgrim United Church of Christ, the entire process and agreement is contingent on preserving that historic sanctuary. As for Church Square, they are just beginning work on conceptual design, but have laid out preservation of the three sanctuary spaces as a foundational non-negotiable as they move into that conceptual design and beyond.

Mrs. Spinner asked if they would be preserving the area where the important part of the Underground Railroad took place. Reverend Joy Fenton Jones stated that it will be preserved. That space is located at the rear of the sanctuary, which will be under a preservation easement and some additional space where the tunnel went out of that side of the building is under the umbrella of the space that will be preserved.

Mr. Balthis expressed his support for this ordinance and also thanked everybody for all the work that has been put into this. He really appreciates their commitment to the recovery community making sure that safe space remains for the people who rely on it. It is going to be a great addition to an already great downtown.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked if anyone sells their building does the permit go with the business. Ms. Snyder stated that as long as the permit is active, they can submit paperwork to the State for that transfer. If the new buyer is approved for no criminal actions and all of those other things that have to be reviewed in order to be a liquor permit holder, the transfer can move through as part of the sale.

Ms. Willis-Guarneri stated that she is the Director Of Music at First United Methodist Church, so her art series will definitely benefit from this. They are trying to expand more activities for people with disabilities. They need a way to pay for all of this to expand to the community, so this is very exciting to have another source of revenue to be able to do even more for the community. The possibilities are huge for Cuyahoga Falls. It is right in the center of downtown, so it's really going to be beneficial.

Mr. Ashton moved to bring out Temp. Ord. A-37 with a favorable recommendation, second by Mrs. Cebula. Motion passed (5-0).

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The meeting adjourned at 7:07 p.m.