

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
Tuesday, August 4, 2026

On Tuesday, August 4, 2026, a meeting of the Cuyahoga Falls Planning Commission was held at the Natatorium, 2345 Fourth St., Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, at 6:00 p.m. in accordance with Chapter 107 of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Cuyahoga Falls.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dan Rice, Chair
Rob Habel, Vice Chair
Sandy Locascio, Secretary
Jeff Iula
Alicia Harris
Colleen Kelly
Jake Ricker
Susan Spinner

MEMBERS ABSENT: NA

COMM. DEV. STAFF: Rob Kurtz, Planning Director
Mary Spaugy, CD Director
Kim Ferencz, Senior Planner

Mr. Dan Rice called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. He welcomed everyone and explained the meeting process. The Pledge of Allegiance was then recited.

Ms. Sandy Locascio read the agenda into record.

Mr. Rice opened the first item of business up to the city.

New Business

TXT-26-00025

Project: TXT-26-00025 Report Date: 07-22-26 Meeting Date: 08-04-26	Application Type: ☒ Staff ☐ Council ☐ Applicant	☐ Information ☐ Direction ☒ Action
Property Owner:	N/A	
Applicant	Planning Division	
Application Summary:	The Community Development Division is proposing text amendments to Chapters 1131 and 1133 regarding the districts where assisted living/ nursing home facilities are located and modifying from permitted “by right” to “conditional”.	
Zoning:	N/A	

Initiated or Requested By ☐ Staff ☐ Council ☒ Applicant	Decision Type: ☐ Information ☐ Direction ☒ Action
File Presenter:	Rob Kurtz, AICP, Planning Director

Mr. Kurtz went over the staff report for the record, and he stated that Jack Breese was present to provide information as to why the fire department has requested this particular change to the general development code.

Mr. Jack Breese – 2310 Second St. – Assistant Fire Chief – stated that the fire department has requested these changes to the general development code as a way to assist the volume of calls received by the department. He also reviewed how the fire department distinguishes the difference between residential living, assisted living and skilled nursing facilities. Mr. Breese also then discussed the importance of early engagement and evaluation to ensure that all new assisted living facilities meet the required fire codes. He also then went on to explain the lobbying efforts that the department has begun in conjunction with the local and state fire marshal groups to combat necessary changes to state law, specifically the difficulty that occurs with changes in ownership and staff turnover.

Mr. Rice thanked Mr. Kurtz and Assistant Fire Chief, Jack Breese and then closed the item to the city and opened it to the public.

Mary Nichols-Rhodes of 739 Lincoln Avenue- Councilwoman-at-Large- stated that she thinks that it was great for the city to take a proactive approach to this issue. As someone who worked in this profession for over 30 years, she understands the need for these changes. She also stated that it is important for the city to ask about the number of beds for skilled vs. non-skilled residents, as the needs are very different.

With no further comments or questions from the public, Mr. Rice closed the item to the public and opened it to the commission members.

Mr. Rob Habel asked why the tables were different in the code.

Mr. Kurtz then explained that because the proposed change makes assisted living facilities a limited use, the user will need to go to the limited use tables where it will state that any facility over 20 beds will be a conditional use. In order to change both tables that Mr. Habel referred to; the city would need to change the entire development code rather than just this section. Mr. Habel stated that he understood and had no further questions or comments.

Ms. Susan Spinner questioned whether the fire department will have any input as to whether a new facility could go in one of its districts if the call volume received was too high with the existing facilities?

Mr. Kurtz stated that they would have input as the proposed changes are conditional use and not allowed by right.

Ms. Colleen Kelly questioned if the fire department had a say in whether or not the facility would be considered a conditional use?

Mr. Kurtz answered that yes, the fire department reviews all plans and would have input.

Mr. Jake Ricker asked whether the city currently has any assisted living facilities under 20 beds?

Mr. Kurtz answered that he was not aware of any that were under that limit.

Ms. Alicia Harris questioned whether we currently have anything in place that will help combat the current issues facing the fire department?

Mr. Jack Breese stated that the fire department conducts annual inspections and if violations are found, they forward those to the fire marshal for follow-up and to ensure correction. As far as change in ownership and staffing levels, the city's hands are tied and that is where the lobbying efforts previously mentioned come into play.

Mr. Dan Rice stated that he appreciated the detailed presentation and was happy that the city is getting ahead of this situation. We had two questions, with the first being if the city has had any conversations with owners of the current facilities regarding these changes?

Mr. Breese answered that the fire department does have a good working relationship with all of the facilities, and that at the beginning of his and Chief Martin's term as Assistant Fire Chief and Fire Chief, they held regularly scheduled meetings with them, but those meetings have fallen off everyone's calendars as everyone involved has shared their issues and understanding of individual responsibilities.

Mr. Kurtz stated that he had nothing to add to Mr. Breese's answer.

Mr. Rice then asked if these changes will affect current facilities?

Mr. Kurtz answered that they do not unless they wished to expand.

With no further comments or questions, Mr. Rice requested a motion.

Mr. Rice made the following **MOTION**:

Based on the findings in this report, the Planning Commission has determined that TXT-26-00026 is consistent with the applicable criteria for text amendments and is recommending **APPROVAL**.

The **MOTION** was seconded by Ms. Kelly. With no further discussion, Mr. Rice requested a Vote. The Vote to **APPROVE** the item: Yes- 7, No-0. The **MOTION** is approved with a vote of 7-0.

TXT-26-00026

Report Date: 07-22-26	Meeting Date: 08-04-26		
Project: TXT-26-00026	Application Type:	☒ Staff ☐ Council	☐ Information ☐ Direction

	☐ Applicant ☒ Action
Applicant:	Planning Division
Application Summary:	The city is proposing several text amendments to address data centers, per <u>Section 1113.06 Text Amendments</u> , as a result of a thorough internal review of the Development Code.
Initiated or Requested By ☒ Staff ☐ Council ☐ Applicant	Decision Type: ☐ Information ☐ Direction ☒ Action
File Presenter:	Kim Ferencz, Senior Planner

Ms. Ferencz provided an overview of why the city decided to limit data centers and went over the staff report for the record.

Mr. Rice thanked Ms. Ferencz and closed the item to the city, and opened it to the public for questions or comments.

Ms. Mary Nichols-Rhodes- 739 Lincoln Avenue- Councilwoman-at-Large- thanked the city for making the effort to tackle this issue and thoroughly answer her and other councilmembers concerns regarding noise, fire, energy consumption, and pollution. She also stated that she conducted a few site visits to ensure that the small data centers did not create noise and receive input from those organizations. She visited NEONet on Graham Road and stated that very little noise could be heard from the outside. She also stated that she visited the RITA building and their property manager stated that their networks are currently cooled via an air-conditioning unit.

Mr. Bob Goldstein- 2031 Riverfront Parkway- thanked the city for being proactive and asked what authority the city had to deny water consumption to a data center?

Ms. Mary Spaugy stated that all plans will be reviewed by the water department and if they feel that the consumption is too large for the city's capacity, the city could deny it.

With no further comments or questions from the public, Mr. Rice closed the meeting to the public and opened it to the Commission.

Ms. Locascio asked whether the city would provide tax abatements to data centers?

Ms. Spaugy stated that most likely that answer would be no as tax abatements are tied to job creation/retention and that statistically data centers typically do not create the number of jobs that trigger those thresholds.

Ms. Locascio also asked how these structures would be taxed?

Ms. Spaugy stated that these structures would be taxed as commercial structures.

Ms. Locascio asked Ms. Spaugy if she would proactively seek out data centers to build in the city?

Ms. Spaugy stated that she would not and emphasized that this process began because she had received an inquiry for a company wanting to tie into our infrastructure and she wanted to ensure that the city could limit their construction.

Mr. Habel questioned the size in the definition and asked if a 20,000 square foot building would be allowed to house a data center?

Ms. Ferencz stated that they could indeed house a data center, but the data center portion could not exceed 5,000 square feet.

Ms. Susan Spinner questioned if this change would require a public hearing?

Ms. Ferencz stated that yes, it would require one.

Mr. Jeff Iula questioned where the city's servers are located and whether they were still located in the basement since the city had a flood a few years back that destroyed equipment?

Ms. Spaugy stated that our servers are out of the basement and located at NeoNet on Graham Road.

Mr. Iula then asked where data centers could be located?

Ms. Ferencz stated that they would be allowed in the manufacturing and employment districts.

Ms. Kelly expressed concerns about tying the environmental standards to the state of Ohio standards as there is currently legislation pending that limits pollutant emissions.

Mr. Kurtz stated that although we are tying the language to state standards all developments would need to meet the city's stormwater management standards which are much more stringent than state standards.

Mr. Ricker questioned how these changes impact existing data centers?

Ms. Ferencz stated that it does not affect existing facilities and will only affect them if they choose to expand or relocate.

Ms. Harris asked how soon the changes would become effective?

Ms. Spaugy stated that if passed at planning commission this evening, legislation would be introduced to city council during the first meeting in September and the public hearing would be held on October 19, 2026 with the vote occurring the week after.

Ms. Harris asked how often data centers would be inspected for water, electric usage?

Ms. Ferencz replied that the city receives instant feedback on water and electric consumption, so the city would know immediately if a data center was exceeding the proposed thresholds.

Ms. Harris also asked how we would have access in case of an emergency?

Ms. Spaugy reported that the community development was currently working on a business registration that would capture all of that information- including overnight contact information in case of an emergency. She anticipated that legislation to go before council before years end and become effective in January 2027, if passed by council.

Mr. Rice asked if he could have copies of the presentations?

Mr. Kurtz stated that he would forward them to the commission.

Mr. Rice also asked how we came up with 5,000 square feet? He stated that he is not for or against data centers, he was just curious on how we came up with that number.

Mr. Kurtz stated that Micro and Edge data centers are not that large and businesses need this space to house their data and/or networks. The larger data centers are strictly data centers.

Mr. Rice also asked if there were any numbers out there regarding data centers and job employment numbers.

Ms. Spaugy stated that there are, but they contain conflicting information. For example, the Ohio Economic Developer's Association, who favors data centers, has provided numbers on job creation, but cities where data centers have been constructed are reporting lower job numbers from what was promised at the time the center was built.

With no further comments or questions, Mr. Rice requested a Motion.

Ms. Harris made the following **MOTION**:

Based on the findings in this report, the Planning Commission has determined that TXT-26-00026 is consistent with the applicable criteria for text amendments and is recommending approval

The Vote to **APPROVE** the item: Yes-7, No-0. The **MOTION IS APPROVED** with a vote of 7-0.

Minutes

July 7, 2026

With no comments or corrections, a **MOTION** was made by Mr. Ricker and **seconded** by Mr. Habel to **APPROVE the minutes** from **July 7, 2026**. The **Vote: All Yes (7-0)**. **Motion carried.**

Other Business

Mr. Rice read the resignation letter of Ms. Sandy Locascio into the record. Discussion regarding whether the city could do a proclamation for Ms. Locascio.

Adjournment

With no further discussion, Mr. Locascio adjourned the meeting at 7:32 pm.

Minutes submitted by: Mary Spaugy