Cuyahoga Falls City Council
Minutes of the Public Affairs Committee

October 5, 2026

Members: Rachel Loza, Chair
Brian Ashton, Vice Chair
Gary DeRemer, Frank Stams, Marie Willis-Guarneri

Ms. Loza called the meeting to order at 7:11 p.m. Mr. DeRemer was absent.

The minutes of the September 21, 2026 Public Affairs meeting were approved as written.

Legislation Discussed:
Temp. Ord. A-73
Temp. Res. A-74

Discussion:

Temp. Ord. A-73
An ordinance amending Chapter 505 "Animals and Fowl" of the Cuyahoga Falls Codified Ordinances, and declaring an emergency.

Ohio recently made changes to its laws concerning dog bites and dogs running at large, known as Avery's Law. The purpose of the changes is to make the public safer by holding dog owners accountable when a dog behaves in a nuisance, vicious, or dangerous way. The City of Cuyahoga Falls Codified Ordinances are being updated to match the newer state law. It is timely to make other updates to the City of Cuyahoga Falls Codified Ordinances regarding dogs being off leash in dog parks and stray cats being neutered or spayed and released.

Law Director Janet Ciotola recognized Deputy Law Director Matt Dickinson for his work revising the ordinance. The changes align Cuyahoga Falls regulations with Ohio's Avery's Law and update existing dog-control provisions. The ordinance defines three dog designations:

- **Vicious dog:** A dog that kills a person.
- **Dangerous dog:** A dog that seriously injures a person or animal.
- **Nuisance dog:** A dog that injures another dog without killing it or aggressively chases people, among similar conduct.

Owners may appeal a designation to the Stow Municipal Court within 10 days. The City's former aggressive-dog designation and separate appeal board will be eliminated because the State's nuisance-dog designation covers the same conduct.

Designated dogs must be reported to the County and annually registered with the Cuyahoga Falls Police Department, including their location, photograph, and microchip number. Owners must keep the dogs on their property or walk them with a chain-link leash and may be required to use a

muzzle. Owners of aggressive, dangerous, or vicious dogs must maintain $100,000 in liability insurance.

The designation follows the dog throughout Ohio. Owners who move a designated dog into Cuyahoga Falls must notify the city and update the county dog warden. The city does not currently have access to a statewide database of designated dogs. The ordinance also clarifies that capturing, sterilizing, and releasing a cat does not constitute ownership or boarding. It provides a defense to a dog-at-large violation when the dog is at a dog park and all rules are followed.

Committee members supported consistent statewide dog-designation standards and discussed the appeal process. The police maintain records of designated dogs, although the city does not know the current total. The city provides designated-dog warning signs for $10. There is no separate age-based designation for juvenile dogs. The committee also discussed the roles of the prosecutor and police during appeals.

Mr. Ashton moved to bring out Temp. Ordinance A-73 with a favorable recommendation, second by Ms. Willis-Guarneri. Motion passed (4-0).

Temp. Res. A-74
A resolution expressing support for and urging the passage of Issue 6, a proposed tax levy for the Cuyahoga Falls City School District, at the General Election to be held on November 3, 2026, and declaring an emergency.

The Cuyahoga Falls City School District has eight public schools in the City of Cuyahoga Falls and the Village of Silver Lake, serving over 4,000 students. A properly-funded public school system is foundational to civic and economic success. The Cuyahoga Falls City School District has caused a proposed levy to be placed on the November 3, 2026 ballot as Issue 6. This levy is an additional tax not exceeding 5.5 mills for each $1 of taxable value, which amounts to $193 for each $100,000 of the county fiscal officer's market value, for 5 years, commencing in 2026, first due in calendar year 2027. This Administration expresses support for the proposed renewal levy for the Cuyahoga Falls City School District, and urges the citizens of Cuyahoga Falls to vote YES on Issue 6 on or before the General Election on November 3, 2026.

Ms. Loza abstained because of a potential conflict of interest and transferred responsibility to Vice Chair Brian Ashton.

Dr. Andrea Celico, Superintendent of the Cuyahoga Falls School District, discussed Issue 6, a proposed five-year, 5.5-mill operating levy for the Cuyahoga Falls School District. The levy would generate approximately $6.1 million. The estimated annual cost for a home valued at $100,000 is $193. The district's previous levy was approved in 2019. After extending those funds from three to seven years, the district expects to need additional operating revenue in 2026.

During the past two years, the district reduced its budget by $6.73 million, or about 10 percent. Cuts included:

- More than 40 teaching, counseling, and literacy positions.
- Five building and central-office administrators and one career-tech administrator.
- Ten classified and support positions.
- A 10 percent reduction in administrative budgets.
- Delayed curriculum and textbook purchases.
- Closure and repurposing of Preston Elementary School.
- Elimination of open enrollment.

Dr. Celico cited higher costs for fuel, utilities, special education, and health insurance. She also explained that under House Bill 920, rising property values reduce tax rates, so existing levies generally produce a fixed amount of revenue rather than keeping pace with inflation. The district's report-card rating rose from 2.5 to 3.5 stars during the superintendent's five-year tenure, and the graduation rate increased from 83 percent to 96 percent. The performance index has also risen annually for five years. If the levy fails, possible reductions could include:

- Larger class sizes.
- Fewer electives and extracurricular programs.
- Up to 50 additional staff reductions.
- Reduced transportation services.
- Higher student fees.
- Elimination of middle-school teaming.
- Closure of another elementary school.
- Relocation of fifth-grade students to the new sixth-through-twelfth-grade campus.

Dr. Celico emphasized that these are possible reductions submitted to the state, not final decisions. She also discussed public-school funding, voucher growth, and the district's expected minimum state contribution of $822 per student beginning in 2028. This compares with an estimated district cost of $12,000 to $13,000 per student, leaving local taxpayers to provide most of the remaining funding. Music programs, counseling, and mental-health services were also discussed. The superintendent stated that no specific program would automatically be eliminated, but electives such as band and choir could be affected. Red Oak counseling services would likely continue, although the district would need to assess the impact of any staff reductions on student support.

Mr. Balthis expressed concern that local taxpayers must choose between school funding and personal financial needs. He cited the Ohio Constitution's requirement for a thorough and efficient system of common schools and argued that state funding is insufficient. He supported the levy while encouraging residents to advocate for changes in state funding policies.

Committee members thanked the superintendent for communicating through newsletters, public presentations, and Finance Fridays. They emphasized that higher property-tax bills do not necessarily provide schools with additional revenue. The levy would appear only in the Cuyahoga Falls School District. If approved, the District's primary goal would be to maintain current services rather than restore all previously eliminated positions and programs.

Mr. Ashton moved to bring out Temp. Resolution A-74 with a favorable recommendation, second by Ms. Willis-Guarneri. Motion passed (3-0-1). (Loza)

The meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.