

**NORTH RIDGEVILLE CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING MINUTES
CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS – 6:00 p.m.
JULY 27, 2026**

To Order:

Chairwoman and President Holly A. Swenk called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order on Monday, July 27, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Led by Chairwoman Swenk

Roll Call:

Council Members Present: Chairwoman and President Holly A. Swenk, Kathryn Rogerson, Robert Holub, Bruce F. Abens, Clifford Winkel, Paul Wolanski, and Cali Zingale.

Others Present: Mayor Kevin Corcoran, Director of Finance April Wilkerson, Clerk of Council Nicholas Ciofani, and Assistant Clerk of Council Fijabi Gallam.

Absent: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Clerk of Council Ciofani: The Resolution was read by title.

R 2026-75 A Resolution authorizing the City of North Ridgeville to participate in the Lorain County Urban County CDBG Program and authorizing the Mayor to execute the HUD Cooperation Agreement.
(Introduced by Mayor Corcoran; First Reading on 07-20-2026)

Chair Swenk invited Mayor Corcoran to speak.

Mayor Corcoran reviewed the proposed participation in the Lorain County Urban County Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. He stated that Lorain County had participated in the program for approximately 16 years and that the City had received funding for Americans with Disabilities Act improvements at the Senior Center, paving on Monica Drive, Carolyn Drive, and Luanne Drive, and a waterline replacement project on Behm Drive. He stated that 63 North Ridgeville households had applied for Lorain County Community Housing Impact and Preservation (CHIP) Program grants and identified areas in Ward 1 and Ward 2 that may be eligible for funding, including Aurensen Road, Behm

Road, and Noll Avenue.

Mayor Corcoran explained that Lorain County's population growth had made it eligible for an enhanced Urban County designation through HUD. He stated that the designation could result in CDBG and CHIP funding increasing to approximately three to four times the amount currently available. He explained that additional funding could support improvements to homes, streets, water infrastructure, sewer infrastructure, stormwater infrastructure, and other eligible community development projects. He displayed maps identifying eligible areas in Wards 1 and 2 and stated that the identified neighborhoods represented residents who could directly benefit from investment through the program. He remarked that participation would not create additional cost to North Ridgeville residents and would allow the City to pursue additional federal resources during difficult economic times. He believed the City should take advantage of the opportunity.

Chair Swenk referenced a January 27, 2026 email from Lorain County regarding the Urban County designation and application process and asked whether an individual meeting had occurred with county representatives.

Mayor Corcoran responded that he had not attended an individual meeting but was aware that Planning and Development Director Kim Lieber had attended meetings regarding the program. He further stated that multiple emails concerning the Urban County designation had been distributed to council members since January and that Council had been aware of the proposal for several months.

Councilman Abens stated that he recalled the emails.

Chair Swenk questioned why Council had not discussed the matter after the Mayor signed correspondence dated May 15, 2026, to David Moore, indicating North Ridgeville's intent to participate.

Mayor Corcoran responded that the agreement had not yet been completed when he signed the letter. He explained that neither he nor Council received the cooperation agreement until the Friday preceding the July 20, 2026 Council meeting. He further stated that the initial correspondence was intended to include North Ridgeville in population calculations necessary for the Urban County application process and that subsequent requirements developed after the letter had been submitted.

Councilwoman Rogerson stated that she appreciated the public's participation and feedback regarding the legislation. She explained that, after receiving the legislation, she had spent significant time researching the proposal because she wanted her decision to be based on facts rather than fear, speculation, or opinion. She reported reviewing HUD guidance, communicating with county officials,

studying both the current rural program and the proposed Urban County program, and speaking with residents who both supported and opposed the legislation.

She stated that one of the primary concerns she encountered was a lack of trust in the county commissioners. While acknowledging those concerns, she stated that she did not believe her vote should be based solely on speculation regarding what elected officials might do in the future. She explained that her research demonstrated that the term “Urban County” was a HUD designation only and did not change North Ridgeville’s zoning, governmental structure, character, or local decision-making authority. She stated that North Ridgeville would continue to identify its own needs, determine its own priorities, and pursue projects that best served local residents.

She noted that one waterline project received approximately \$150,000 in CDBG funding, while the construction estimates for a complete repair exceeded \$1.5 million before engineering and design costs. She also noted that another infrastructure request sought \$500,000. She added that an Urban County would receive a direct annual HUD allocation rather than compete through the Ohio small cities process. She further stated that current annual County funding was \$324,000 for three projects and that the anticipated Urban County allocation discussed was approximately \$781,000 annually for three years, subject to allocation among participating jurisdictions and HUD requirements.

She explained that Urban County designation could provide greater access to federal funds and allow participating communities to plan projects with greater funding predictability. She stated that the opportunity was not about changing the City's identity but rather about improving access to federal dollars that could be invested back into North Ridgeville. She concluded by stating that she believed the City had a responsibility to pursue every available opportunity to bring additional funding into the community and indicated that she had compiled extensive notes, research, and supporting information that she was willing to share with residents.

Councilman Wolanski requested clarification regarding meeting procedures and whether council members would be permitted to comment again after public participation.

President Swenk stated that the floor could be reopened to the Committee.

Councilman Wolanski stated that he viewed the issue as an opportunity to separate facts from misconceptions. He stated that his preliminary understanding was that Urban County designation would allow participating communities access to additional funding opportunities and that the designation itself did not alter

the character of the City. He also noted that discussion surrounding data centers and related concerns should be evaluated carefully and based upon factual information.

Councilman Winkel reported that he had conducted significant independent research regarding the proposal and intended to reserve most of his comments until after hearing from members of the public and county representatives.

Lobby:

President Swenk opened the lobby session for public comment on R 2026-75. Speakers were asked to state their names and addresses for the record and were given three minutes to address the topic.

R 2026-75 – Lorain County Urban County CDBG Program

Stephanie Jacovetti, 6581 Majestic Drive, stated that she understood the potential benefits of HUD programs and cited her familiarity with the HOME program. She stated that her husband had previously worked with the HOME program in Lorain and that she had observed the program assisting residents with their homes. She stated that she was concerned about the projected funding amount, the allocation of funds among County jurisdictions, and the County's administration of the program. She stated that she had received information indicating that the annual allocation could be approximately \$780,000 rather than \$3 million to \$4 million, and she asked how funds would be distributed among participating jurisdictions.

Moved by Winkel and seconded by Zingale to give Ms. Jacovetti up to an additional three minutes.

A voice vote was taken, and the motion carried.

Yes – 7

No – 0

Ms. Jacovetti stated that the term “urban” was not her concern. She stated that her concern was whether funds would be designated fairly among participating cities and townships and requested that Council contact representatives of New Russia and Brownhelm Townships regarding their experiences with County officials.

Richard Schartman, 8576 Avon Belden Road, stated that the proposed designation could return additional federal tax dollars to the County but questioned whether North Ridgeville would receive a proportionate share. He also stated that, under the proposed agreement, project approval would be at the County Commissioners' discretion. He requested that Council reject the arrangement unless a cooperation agreement included a distribution formula or assigned decision-making authority to a regional body representing communities throughout the County.

Robert Baumgardner, 6327 Stoney Ridge Road, discussed drainage and flooding matters, communications concerning the resolution, and his concerns regarding local and County administration of funds. He asked whether the Mayor or the administration had discussed the proposed legislation with Council before the legislation was introduced and stated that he believed residents had not received sufficient notice of the proposed designation.

Moved by Winkel and seconded by Rogerson to give Mr. Baumgardner up to an additional three minutes.

A voice vote was taken, and the motion carried.

Yes – 7

No – 0

Mr. Baumgardner stated that he had concerns regarding the management of federal funds by the County Commissioners and the City. He referenced news reports and legal matters involving County government, discussed the Finance Director's credentials, and requested that the Committee reject the resolution.

Andrew Lipian, 614 Garford Avenue, Elyria, Ohio, stated that he was an Elyria City Councilman representing Ward One, the Village Administrator for the Village of Grafton, and a former County employee. He stated that Grafton's research indicated that participation could affect pending CDBG Flex grant pre-applications. He discussed project approval by the County Commissioners and recommended considering a regional authority for funding decisions. He stated that Grafton had decided not to participate and asked Council to consider the effect of participation on local control and pending funding opportunities.

Karen Toich, 36765 Chestnut Ridge Road, stated that she opposed the Urban County designation. She referenced her 28 years of employment with the County Auditor and Board of Revision and expressed concerns regarding County communications and administration. She stated that she did not support relying on information provided by the County Commissioners.

Amanda Quimper, 2299 West River Road North, Elyria, stated that she opposed the designation and discussed her concerns regarding local control, land use, infrastructure, data centers, environmental protection, and public participation. She stated that she believed an Urban County designation could affect decisions on development, utilities, zoning, and rural communities.

Moved by Winkel and seconded by Zingale to give Ms. Quimper up to an additional three minutes.

A voice vote was taken, and the motion carried.

Yes – 7

No – 0

Ms. Quimper asked Council to keep Lorain County rural and stated that residents should retain the ability to oppose projects they believe could affect land, water, and their communities.

Bernard Garcia, 7324 Root Road, stated that he opposed the designation and discussed the Lorain County Commissioners' role in project and funding decisions. He expressed concern that funding could be directed to County infrastructure or development projects rather than projects benefiting North Ridgeville and other participating communities. He referenced the Urban County fact sheet and requested clarification on any amount or percentage of funding that would be allocated specifically to North Ridgeville.

Moved by Winkel and seconded by Zingale to give Mr. Garcia up to an additional three minutes.

A voice vote was taken, and the motion carried.

Yes – 7

No – 0

Mr. Garcia asked whether a HUD representative, County representative, or representative of the Commissioners could commit to a specific dollar amount or percentage of funding for North Ridgeville. He stated that he had visited a data center and the Intel megasite in central Ohio and requested an opportunity to provide information from that visit at a future Council meeting.

President Swenk stated that, under Robert's Rules, a person could speak once on a topic during the lobby session.

Councilwoman Rogerson thanked residents for sharing their concerns and reiterated that her objective was to act in the best interest of North Ridgeville. She stated that the grant program had existed for many years and had already provided significant benefits to the City. She explained that, based on her research and her professional experience working with HUD programs, grant funds could not be used to support proposed data center projects because HUD regulations require investments to benefit qualifying low-to-moderate income populations and neighborhoods. She further noted that North Ridgeville currently had a moratorium on data centers and lacked the land and utility capacity necessary to accommodate such developments

She stated that county commissioners currently have involvement in the grant application process under the existing structure and would continue to have a similar role under the proposed structure. She explained that project recommendations are first reviewed by development professionals before being forwarded for approval. She further noted that there's more local control because, under urban, we have a project; we submit it to the county. If the City has an urban designation, an advisory board is put in place. The advisory board

is made up of stakeholders from all of the participating cities. It could be a council member from North Ridgeville, a council member from Avon, and a council member from Avon Lake. These are the ones who are reviewing the applications and the project submissions and then making recommendations to the Commissioners. She expressed that she wanted to make her decision based on facts.

She stated clarified that the estimated \$781,000 represented annual funding over the three-year program cycle. She contrasted that amount with the approximate \$324,000 currently available each year through the existing structure and noted that current funding opportunities are limited to three projects annually. She reiterated that all projects remain subject to HUD regulations and funding eligibility requirements.

Councilman Wolanski stated that his concern was that choosing not to participate could eliminate future funding opportunities for North Ridgeville. He remarked that Elyria and Lorain could continue to receive HUD funding because of their population thresholds, while North Ridgeville could have fewer options available absent participation. He further stated that concerns regarding the conduct of county commissioners should ultimately be addressed by voters through the electoral process and questioned whether North Ridgeville should decline potential funding opportunities based on concerns about actions commissioners might take in the future.

Councilwoman Zingale stated that the primary concern expressed by residents was trust. She remarked that trust was not based upon speculation and noted that public confidence is earned through transparency, communication, and engagement. She stated that residents expected elected officials to listen to those concerns and argued that misinformation often resulted from insufficient communication from decision-makers. She also expressed concern about how funding is distributed among participating communities and noted that North Ridgeville residents expected their concerns to receive meaningful consideration.

Councilman Winkel reported that he had conducted extensive research and communicated with individuals at various levels of HUD regarding the proposal. He stated that, under both the current and proposed funding structures, local governments could continue to initiate projects and request funds through the established application process. He noted that participation could potentially increase funding opportunities, although no guaranteed allocation existed for North Ridgeville.

He further explained that project control remains with the City because projects must be initiated locally before funding can be requested. He discussed HUD's low-to-moderate income requirements, restrictions on fund usage, and the

distinction between a HUD Urban County designation and actual changes to zoning or municipal classifications. He stated that his analysis focused primarily on whether participation could provide North Ridgeville with an additional tool to address infrastructure and utility needs. He further stated that elected offices are temporary and that he preferred to evaluate the merits of a program independently of the individuals currently holding office.

Councilman Abens stated that he understood the concerns expressed by residents but believed participation offered an opportunity to reduce bureaucracy and increase access to funding opportunities. He stated that the proposal would not alter local zoning regulations or result in the development of data centers within North Ridgeville. He further expressed concern regarding future infrastructure demands and budgetary challenges facing the City and stated that securing additional funding opportunities was in the best interest of North Ridgeville residents.

Councilman Holub stated that he did not wish to repeat comments already made by other members of Council but wanted to thank the residents who took the time to prepare comments and attend the meeting. He stated that Council hears the concerns expressed by residents, reviews information available publicly, and conducts independent research before making decisions. He specifically acknowledged Councilwoman Rogerson's efforts in researching the legislation. Councilman Holub stated that, similar to Councilman Winkel, he evaluates issues by considering how they may impact North Ridgeville and his ward. He remarked that, as Council continued to evaluate the legislation in the coming days, consideration would be given to how available funding could benefit residents and support those most in need. He concluded by thanking everyone who participated in the discussion and shared their perspectives with Council.

Councilwoman Zingale stated that she wanted to note that data centers can impact communities beyond the municipality in which they are located. She stated that such projects can affect surrounding areas through increased demand for electrical and water infrastructure and therefore should not be viewed solely as a municipal issue. She added that the projected annual funding amount was noted, and that the estimated \$780,000 would be distributed among numerous participating cities, villages, and townships throughout Lorain County. She stated that, when viewed in that context, the increase may not be as significant as some have suggested.

Councilwoman Rogerson clarified that the estimated \$781,000 represented an annual allocation under the Urban County program and stated that the amount would be distributed among participating communities. She noted that communities choosing not to participate would not receive a share of the funding. She further stated that Lorain County currently receives approximately \$324,000 annually

through the existing program and that communities are already competing for available funds under the current structure.

President Swenk asked about the 63 North Ridgeville CHIP applications and whether applicants compete for funding. She also asked whether the City could apply for funding through the State if it opted out.

Director Wilkerson stated that the 63 applications had been referenced at the prior Council meeting and that the County administers the current program. She stated that, if the City did not participate in the County CDBG partnership, it would not be eligible to apply directly for CDBG funding through the State, but it could remain eligible for HOME funding subject to HOME program requirements. She explained that CDBG funds are intended to address a broad range of community development needs, including public infrastructure projects, community centers and public facilities, economic development, small business assistance, housing rehabilitation, demolition of blighted structures, job training programs, and services benefiting senior citizens. She stated that HOME funds are specifically intended to create and preserve affordable housing and may be used for activities such as construction of affordable housing, rehabilitation of existing housing, homebuyer assistance, tenant-based rental assistance, and acquisition of property for affordable housing purposes. She further noted that HOME funds generally cannot be used for infrastructure projects unless the infrastructure is directly associated with an affordable housing development.

She stated that, based upon information she received from the Ohio Department of Development and discussions with state representatives, her understanding was that if North Ridgeville chose not to participate in the Urban County partnership, the City would not be eligible to receive direct CDBG funding through the County and would not qualify to apply directly to the federal government because North Ridgeville is not individually classified as an Urban County. She stated that the City would, however, remain eligible to pursue HOME funding through the State. She explained that prior to partnering with the County, North Ridgeville primarily utilized HOME funds for housing rehabilitation activities, and that participation with the County later expanded opportunities through the CHIP program. She concluded by stating that these differences should be considered when evaluating the legislation.

Councilwoman Rogerson added that HUD determines low- and moderate-income eligibility through income requirements and census data, and that 51% of residents within a qualifying neighborhood must meet HUD income requirements. She added that HUD annually publishes income limits used to determine program eligibility.

Chair Swenk described receiving CHIP assistance when the City administered the program

and discussed her experience with CT Consultants administering the housing program.

Director Wilkerson stated that CT Consultants previously administered the program for the City and advised her that the funding was HOME funding, not CHIP funding.

Councilman Winkel stated that he recalled CT Consultants administering the program.

Councilwoman Zingale asked whether the proposed designation would affect a 55-and-older low- and moderate-income housing development.

Mayor Corcoran stated that the development's HUD program was separate and that the resolution would not affect it.

Adjournment:

Chairwoman Swenk adjourned the meeting at 7:16 p.m.

Approved on August 3, 2026.



Holly A. Swenk
PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL



Nicholas Giofani
CLERK OF COUNCIL



