



August 25, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Cuyahoga County Districting Commission Holds Two Public Forums Reviewing Iterations of Possible County Council District Maps**

*Commission moves toward updated districts with substantially equal  
populations while minimizing residents assigned to new districts*

CLEVELAND—On Monday, August 23, 2021, and Wednesday, August 25, 2021, the Cuyahoga County Districting Commission, which Cuyahoga County Council appointed to reapportion Cuyahoga County’s Council districts, held two public forums at which they reviewed different iterations of possible boundary maps that might be used to define Cuyahoga County’s Council districts for the coming decade. To view the videos from these meetings and the presented materials, please click on the links below.

### **August 23 Meeting**

[Video](#)

[Agenda](#)

[Presented Materials](#)

### **August 25 Meeting**

[Video](#)

[Agenda](#)

[Presented Materials](#)

Residents may learn more about the Districting Commission and its efforts by visiting [www.cuyahogacounty.us/countyredistricting](http://www.cuyahogacounty.us/countyredistricting) and may submit comments or questions by visiting [cuyahogacounty.us/council-districting-committee-submit-a-question-or-comment](http://cuyahogacounty.us/council-districting-committee-submit-a-question-or-comment). Residents may also sign up for updates by visiting [council.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/Sign-Up.aspx](http://council.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/Sign-Up.aspx).

## August 23, 2021 Meeting

At the request of the Districting Commission, the Commission's consultants and Cuyahoga County Assistant Law Director Jerad Zibritosky offered a preliminary review of the criteria for population deviation that the Commission must use when defining the boundaries for Cuyahoga County's Council districts.

- While  $\pm 5\%$  of the ideal/average district population is a standard used by many redistricting processes, Cuyahoga County's Districting Commission is not required to use it as a criterion.
- Courts have used a population variance of 10% or less between the most and least populated of a set of districts as a general guideline for determining that districts have substantially equal populations. Courts have required redistricting bodies to justify their decisions when the population of the most populated district exceeds the population of the least populated district by more than 10%.

The Commission's consultants presented three initial iterations of maps that reflected both the criteria defined by federal and state law and the Cuyahoga County Charter and guideline the Commission had established at its previous meetings:

- New maps should use the existing County Council map as a starting point and keep changes to a minimum.
- New districts should have substantially equal populations of within  $\pm 5\%$  of the ideal/average district size.
- New districts must neither pack nor dilute minority populations.
- New districts must be contiguous and compact.
- New districts should be built from existing boundaries of governmental entities, prioritizing in this order: townships, municipalities, city wards, and precincts.
- Precincts may not be split among Council Districts.
- Each individual community, except the City of Cleveland, should be within the same Council district. Cleveland is exempt from this requirement because its population is larger than a single Council district.
- A new district map should minimize the number of people shifted into new districts.

The three different maps presented by the consultants demonstrated the challenge the Districting Commission faced in successfully satisfying all of these criteria. Cuyahoga County's population decreased by 15,305 people from 2010 to 2020. While the consultants were able to draw contiguous, compact districts of substantially equal size in each of the maps they presented, each map required more than 100,000 residents to be placed in new districts.

Three members of County Council—Council President Pernel Jones, Councilwoman Sunny Simon, and Councilwoman Nan Baker—addressed the Districting Commission. They raised concerns about how shifting large populations into new districts would disrupt County

Council’s work. Each Councilmember encouraged the Commission to consider other maps that would involve drawing fewer residents into new districts.

Representatives of the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland (LWV) presented to the Districting Commission for its review a County Council district map they drew using 2020 census data. The LWV’s draft map may be found [here](#).

### **August 25, 2021 Meeting**

To accommodate residents who can’t participate in meetings held during the workday, the Districting Commission convened a public forum on Wednesday, August 25, 2021, from 5:30-7:30 pm.

Following comments from the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland, County Councilmembers Jack Schron, Sunny Simon, Dale Miller, and Nan Baker, a member of the public, Districting Commission members voted unanimously to waive attorney-client privilege and make public [a legal opinion issued by the Cuyahoga County Department of Law](#). The question addressed in the memo was

*“Whether there is a numerical limit to the permissible deviation among Cuyahoga County District populations for the purposes of establishing district boundaries of substantially equal population pursuant to Section 3.04 of the Charter of Cuyahoga County?”*

The memo presents three ways to define whether districts have “substantially equal populations”:

1. *+/- 5% deviation from the ideal district (the “Ohio Model”);*
2. *Total deviation of 10% or less (the “Federal Model”); and*
3. *Total deviation of more than 10% supported by specific and rational and legitimate county interest (the “Interest Model”)*

The memo recommends that the Ohio Model is the least risky approach and the Interest Model as the riskiest. The Interest Model approach *“...relies heavily on the Commission showing with specificity that a particular objective required specific deviations. The Commission must prove that the population deviations, on a district-by-district basis, were necessary to achieve specific County interest(s).”*

In response to comments from the Districting Commission at its August 23 meeting, the Commission’s consultants presented a new district map that focused on minimizing the need for residents to be assigned new districts. This new map had a range of population deviation of 9.86% and required placing only 26,460 residents or 2.09% of Cuyahoga County’s total population into new districts. Commission members thanked the consultants for responding to concerns raised at the August 23 meeting.

The consultants also update the Commission on their outreach efforts, reporting that during the last two weeks, they had contacted more than 500 individuals and organizations by email and direct calls, including:

- Elected officials
- Political parties and groups
- Faith leaders
- Good government organizations
- Unions
- CDCs
- Nonprofits
- Community leaders
- Business groups

The Commission also reviewed a map submitted by Cuyahoga County residents Mark Salling and Robert Dykes, which may be found [here](#).

### **Next Meeting**

The next public forum of the Districting Commission will be held on:

**Thursday, August 26, 2021**

**Time: 3:00-5:00pm**

In the Cuyahoga County Council Chambers,  
Cuyahoga County Administration Building 4th Floor,  
2079 E. 9th Street, Cleveland.

This meeting will be streamed live at:

<http://council.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/Streaming-Video.aspx>. Residents who wish to address the Commission may join the meeting via Zoom at <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86510973774>.

## Final Meeting

The final scheduled public meeting of the Districting Commission will be held on:

**Monday, August 30, 2021**

**Time: 3:00-5:00pm**

In the Cuyahoga County Council Chambers,  
Cuyahoga County Administration Building 4th Floor,  
2079 E. 9th Street, Cleveland.

This meeting will be streamed live at: [http://council.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/Stream on  
ing-Video.aspx](http://council.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/Stream_on_Video.aspx). Residents who wish to address the Commission may join the meeting via  
Zoom at <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86510973774>.

## Background

The Cuyahoga County Districting Commission must submit a new map for Cuyahoga County's Council districts by September 1, 2021.

Section 3.04 (2) of the Cuyahoga County Charter requires the County Council to appoint a five-member Districting Commission every ten years, immediately following each decennial Federal Census, to draw the boundaries of the County's Council districts. Once established, the Commission shall prepare and certify to the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections a detailed apportionment of Council districts that reflect the criteria outlined in the Charter.

Cuyahoga County's Charter requires that the Districting Commission complete its apportionment of Council Districts "...the same date as the apportionment for the Ohio General Assembly," which is September 1, 2021. Federal statute required the U.S. Census Bureau to release the data needed for reapportionment by March 31, 2021, five months before the Districting Commission's deadline. The Census Bureau did not release the necessary data, however, until August 12, 2021—less than three weeks before the Districting Commission's deadline.

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