



Ohio Revised Code

Section 715.70 Contract creating joint economic development district.

Effective: October 3, 2023

Legislation: House Bill 33

(A) This section and section 715.71 of the Revised Code apply only to:

(1) Municipal corporations and townships within a county that has adopted a charter under Sections 3 and 4 of Article X, Ohio Constitution;

(2) Municipal corporations and townships that have created a joint economic development district comprised entirely of real property owned by a municipal corporation at the time the district was created under this section. The real property owned by the municipal corporation shall include an airport owned by the municipal corporation and located entirely beyond the municipal corporation's corporate boundary.

(3) Municipal corporations or townships that are part of or contiguous to a transportation improvement district created under Chapter 5540. of the Revised Code and that have created a joint economic development district under this section or section 715.71 of the Revised Code prior to November 15, 1995;

(4) Municipal corporations that have previously entered into a contract creating a joint economic development district pursuant to division (A)(2) of this section, even if the territory to be included in the district does not meet the requirements of that division.

(B)(1) One or more municipal corporations and one or more townships may enter into a contract approved by the legislative authority of each contracting party pursuant to which they create as a joint economic development district an area or areas for the purpose of facilitating economic development to create or preserve jobs and employment opportunities and to improve the economic welfare of the people in the state and in the area of the contracting parties. A municipal corporation described in division (A)(4) of this section may enter into a contract with other municipal corporations and townships to create a new joint economic development district. In a district that includes a municipal corporation described in division (A)(4) of this section, the territory of each of



the contracting parties shall be contiguous to the territory of at least one other contracting party, or contiguous to the territory of a township or municipal corporation that is contiguous to another contracting party, even if the intervening township or municipal corporation is not a contracting party. The area or areas of land to be included in the district shall not include any parcel of land owned in fee by a municipal corporation or a township or parcel of land that is leased to a municipal corporation or a township, unless the municipal corporation or township is a party to the contract or unless the municipal corporation or township has given its consent to have its parcel of land included in the district by the adoption of a resolution. As used in this division, "parcel of land" means any parcel of land owned by a municipal corporation or a township for at least a six-month period within a five-year period prior to the creation of a district, but "parcel of land" does not include streets or public ways and sewer, water, and other utility lines whether owned in fee or otherwise.

The district created shall be located within the territory of one or more of the participating parties and may consist of all or a portion of such territory. The boundaries of the district shall be described in the contract or in an addendum to the contract.

(2) Prior to the public hearing to be held pursuant to division (D)(2) of this section, the participating parties shall give a copy of the proposed contract to each municipal corporation located within one-quarter mile of the proposed joint economic development district and not otherwise a party to the contract, and afford the municipal corporation the reasonable opportunity, for a period of thirty days following receipt of the proposed contract, to make comments and suggestions to the participating parties regarding elements contained in the proposed contract.

(3) The district shall not exceed two thousand acres in area. The territory of the district shall not completely surround territory that is not included within the boundaries of the district.

(4) Sections 503.07 to 503.12 of the Revised Code do not apply to territory included within a district created pursuant to this section as long as the contract creating the district is in effect, unless the legislative authority of each municipal corporation and the board of township trustees of each township included in the district consent, by ordinance or resolution, to the application of those sections of the Revised Code.

(5) Upon the execution of the contract creating the district by the parties to the contract, a



participating municipal corporation or township included within the district shall file a copy of the fully executed contract with the county recorder of each county within which a party to the contract is located, in the miscellaneous records of the county. No annexation proceeding pursuant to Chapter 709. of the Revised Code that proposes the annexation to, merger, or consolidation with a municipal corporation of any unincorporated territory within the district shall be commenced for a period of three years after the contract is filed with the county recorder of each county within which a party to the contract is located unless each board of township trustees whose territory is included, in whole or part, within the district and the territory proposed to be annexed, merged, or consolidated adopts a resolution consenting to the commencement of the proceeding and a copy of the resolution is filed with the legislative authority of each county within which a party to the contract is located or unless the contract is terminated during this period.

The contract entered into between the municipal corporations and townships pursuant to this section may provide for the prohibition of any annexation by the participating municipal corporations of any unincorporated territory within the district beyond the three-year mandatory prohibition of any annexation provided for in division (B)(5) of this section.

(C)(1) After the legislative authority of a municipal corporation and the board of township trustees have adopted an ordinance and resolution approving a contract to create a joint economic development district pursuant to this section, and after a contract has been signed, the municipal corporations and townships shall jointly file a petition with the legislative authority of each county within which a party to the contract is located.

(a) The petition shall contain all of the following:

(i) A statement that the area or areas of the district are not greater than two thousand acres and are located within the territory of one or more of the contracting parties;

(ii) A brief summary of the services to be provided by each party to the contract or a reference to the portion of the contract describing those services;

(iii) A description of the area or areas to be designated as the district;



(iv) The signature of a representative of each of the contracting parties.

(b) The following documents shall be filed with the petition:

(i) A signed copy of the contract, together with copies of district maps and plans related to or part of the contract;

(ii) A certified copy of the ordinances and resolutions of the contracting parties approving the contract;

(iii) A certificate from each of the contracting parties indicating that the public hearings required by division (D)(2) of this section have been held, the date of the hearings, and evidence of publication of the notice of the hearings;

(iv) One or more signed statements of persons who are owners of property located in whole or in part within the area to be designated as the district, requesting that the property be included within the district, provided that those statements shall represent a majority of the persons owning property located in whole or in part within the district and persons owning a majority of the acreage located within the district. A signature may be withdrawn by the signer up to but not after the time of the public hearing required by division (D)(2) of this section.

(2) The legislative authority of each county within which a party to the contract is located shall adopt a resolution approving the petition for the creation of the district if the petition and other documents have been filed in accordance with the requirements of division (C)(1) of this section. If the petition and other documents do not substantially meet the requirements of that division, the legislative authority of any county within which a party to the contract is located may adopt a resolution disapproving the petition for the creation of the district. The legislative authority of each county within which a party to the contract is located shall adopt a resolution approving or disapproving the petition within thirty days after the petition was filed. If the legislative authority of each such county does not adopt the resolution within the thirty-day period, the petition shall be deemed approved and the contract shall go into effect immediately after that approval or at such other time as the contract specifies.



(D)(1) The contract creating the district shall set forth or provide for the amount or nature of the contribution of each municipal corporation and township to the development and operation of the district and may provide for the sharing of the costs of the operation of and improvements for the district. The contributions may be in any form to which the contracting municipal corporations and townships agree and may include but are not limited to the provision of services, money, real or personal property, facilities, or equipment. The contract may provide for the contracting parties to share revenue from taxes levied on property by one or more of the contracting parties if those revenues may lawfully be applied to that purpose under the legislation by which those taxes are levied. The contract shall provide for new, expanded, or additional services, facilities, or improvements, including expanded or additional capacity for or other enhancement of existing services, facilities, or improvements, provided that those services, facilities, or improvements, or expanded or additional capacity for or enhancement of existing services, facilities, or improvements, required herein have been provided within the two-year period prior to the execution of the contract.

(2) Before the legislative authority of a municipal corporation or a board of township trustees passes any ordinance or resolution approving a contract to create a joint economic development district pursuant to this section, the legislative authority of the municipal corporation and the board of township trustees shall each hold a public hearing concerning the joint economic development district contract and shall provide thirty days' public notice of the time and place of the public hearing in a newspaper of general circulation in the municipal corporation and the township. The board of township trustees may provide additional notice to township residents in accordance with section 9.03 of the Revised Code, and any additional notice shall include the public hearing announcement; a summary of the terms of the contract; a statement that the entire text of the contract and district maps and plans are on file for public examination in the office of the township fiscal officer; and information pertaining to any tax changes that will or may occur as a result of the contract.

During the thirty-day period prior to the public hearing, a copy of the text of the contract together with copies of district maps and plans related to or part of the contract shall be on file, for public examination, in the offices of the clerk of the legislative authority of the municipal corporation and of the township fiscal officer. The public hearing provided for in division (D)(2) of this section shall allow for public comment and recommendations from the public on the proposed contract. The contracting parties may include in the contract any of those recommendations prior to the approval of



the contract.

(3) Any resolution of the board of township trustees that approves a contract that creates a joint economic development district pursuant to this section shall be subject to a referendum of the electors of the township. When a referendum petition, signed by ten per cent of the number of electors in the township who voted for the office of governor at the most recent general election for the office of governor, is presented to the board of township trustees within thirty days after the board of township trustees adopted the resolution, ordering that the resolution be submitted to the electors of the township for their approval or rejection, the board of township trustees shall, after ten days and not later than four p.m. of the ninetieth day before the election, certify the text of the resolution to the board of elections. The board of elections shall submit the resolution to the electors of the township for their approval or rejection at the next general, primary, or special election occurring subsequent to ninety days after the certifying of the petition to the board of elections.

(4) Upon the creation of a district under this section or section 715.71 of the Revised Code, one of the contracting parties shall file a copy of the following with the director of development:

(a) The petition and other documents described in division (C)(1) of this section, if the district is created under this section;

(b) The documents described in division (D) of section 715.71 of the Revised Code, if the district is created under this section.

(E) The district created by the contract shall be governed by a board of directors that shall be established by or pursuant to the contract. The board is a public body for the purposes of section 121.22 of the Revised Code. The provisions of Chapter 2744. of the Revised Code apply to the board and the district. The members of the board shall be appointed as provided in the contract from among the elected members of the legislative authorities and the elected chief executive officers of the contracting parties, provided that there shall be at least two members appointed from each of the contracting parties.

(F) The contract shall enumerate the specific powers, duties, and functions of the board of directors of a district, and the contract shall provide for the determination of procedures that are to govern the



board of directors. The contract may grant to the board the power to adopt a resolution to levy an income tax within the district. The income tax shall be used for the purposes of the district and for the purposes of the contracting municipal corporations and townships pursuant to the contract. The income tax may be levied in the district based on income earned by persons working or residing within the district and based on the net profits of businesses located in the district. The income tax shall follow the provisions of Chapter 718. of the Revised Code, except that a vote shall be required by the electors residing in the district to approve the rate of income tax. If no electors reside within the district, then division (F)(4) of this section applies. The rate of the income tax shall be no higher than the highest rate being levied by a municipal corporation that is a party to the contract.

(1) Within one hundred eighty days after the first meeting of the board of directors, the board may levy an income tax, provided that the rate of the income tax is first submitted to and approved by the electors of the district at the succeeding regular or primary election, or a special election called by the board, occurring subsequent to ninety days after a certified copy of the resolution levying the income tax and calling for the election is filed with the board of elections. If the voters approve the levy of the income tax, the income tax shall be in force for the full period of the contract establishing the district. Any increase in the rate of an income tax that was first levied within one hundred eighty days after the first meeting of the board of directors shall be approved by a vote of the electors of the district, shall be in force for the remaining period of the contract establishing the district, and shall not be subject to division (F)(2) of this section.

(2) Any resolution of the board of directors levying an income tax that is adopted subsequent to one hundred eighty days after the first meeting of the board of directors shall be subject to a referendum as provided in division (F)(2) of this section. Any resolution of the board of directors levying an income tax that is adopted subsequent to one hundred eighty days after the first meeting of the board of directors shall be subject to an initiative proceeding to amend or repeal the resolution levying the income tax as provided in division (F)(2) of this section. When a referendum petition, signed by ten per cent of the number of electors in the district who voted for the office of governor at the most recent general election for the office of governor, is filed with the county auditor of each county within which a party to the contract is located within thirty days after the resolution is adopted by the board or when an initiative petition, signed by ten per cent of the number of electors in the district who voted for the office of governor at the most recent general election for the office of governor, is filed with the county auditor of each such county ordering that a resolution to amend or repeal a prior



resolution levying an income tax be submitted to the electors within the district for their approval or rejection, the county auditor of each such county, after ten days and not later than four p.m. of the ninetieth day before the election, shall certify the text of the resolution to the board of elections of that county. The county auditor of each such county shall retain the petition. The board of elections shall submit the resolution to such electors, for their approval or rejection, at the next general, primary, or special election occurring subsequent to ninety days after the certifying of such petition to the board of elections.

(3) Whenever a district is located in the territory of more than one contracting party, a majority vote of the electors, if any, in each of the several portions of the territory of the contracting parties constituting the district approving the levy of the tax is required before it may be imposed pursuant to this division.

(4) If there are no electors residing in the district, no election for the approval or rejection of an income tax shall be held pursuant to this section, provided that where no electors reside in the district, the maximum rate of the income tax that may be levied shall not exceed one per cent.

(5) The board of directors of a district levying an income tax shall enter into an agreement with one of the municipal corporations that is a party to the contract to administer, collect, and enforce the income tax on behalf of the district. The resolution levying the income tax shall provide the same credits, if any, to residents of the district for income taxes paid to other such districts or municipal corporations where the residents work, as credits provided to residents of the municipal corporation administering the income tax.

(6)(a) The board shall publish or post public notice of any resolution adopted levying an income tax in a newspaper of general circulation within the district once a week for two consecutive weeks or as provided in section 7.16 of the Revised Code, before the resolution takes effect. In districts in which no newspaper is generally circulated, notice shall be accomplished by posting copies in not less than five of the most public places in the district, as determined by the board, for a period of not less than fifteen days before the effective date of the resolution.

(b) Except as otherwise specified by this division, any referendum or initiative proceeding within a district shall be conducted in the same manner as is required for such proceedings within a municipal



corporation pursuant to sections 731.28 to 731.40 of the Revised Code.

(G) Membership on the board of directors does not constitute the holding of a public office or employment within the meaning of any section of the Revised Code or any charter provision prohibiting the holding of other public office or employment, and shall not constitute an interest, either direct or indirect, in a contract or expenditure of money by any municipal corporation, township, county, or other political subdivision with which the member may be connected. No member of a board of directors shall be disqualified from holding any public office or employment, nor shall such member forfeit or be disqualified from holding any such office or employment, by reason of the member's membership on the board of directors, notwithstanding any law or charter provision to the contrary.

(H) The powers and authorizations granted pursuant to this section or section 715.71 of the Revised Code are in addition to and not in derogation of all other powers granted to municipal corporations and townships pursuant to law. When exercising a power or performing a function or duty under a contract authorized pursuant to this section or section 715.71 of the Revised Code, a municipal corporation may exercise all of the powers of a municipal corporation, and may perform all the functions and duties of a municipal corporation, within the district, pursuant to and to the extent consistent with the contract. When exercising a power or performing a function or duty under a contract authorized pursuant to this section or section 715.71 of the Revised Code, a township may exercise all of the powers of a township, and may perform all the functions and duties of a township, within the district, pursuant to and to the extent consistent with the contract. The district board of directors has no powers except those specifically set forth in the contract as agreed to by the participating parties. No political subdivision shall authorize or grant any tax exemption pursuant to Chapter 1728. or section 3735.67, 5709.62, 5709.63, or 5709.632 of the Revised Code on any property located within the district without the consent of the contracting parties. The prohibition for any tax exemption pursuant to this division shall not apply to any exemption filed, pending, or approved, or for which an agreement has been entered into, before the effective date of the contract entered into by the parties.

(I) Municipal corporations and townships may enter into binding agreements pursuant to a contract authorized under this section or section 715.71 of the Revised Code with respect to the substance and administration of zoning and other land use regulations, building codes, public permanent



improvements, and other regulatory and proprietary matters that are determined, pursuant to the contract, to be for a public purpose and to be desirable with respect to the operation of the district or to facilitate new or expanded economic development in the state or the district, provided that no contract shall exempt the territory within the district from the procedures and processes of land use regulation applicable pursuant to municipal corporation, township, and county regulations, including but not limited to procedures and processes concerning zoning.

(J) A contract creating a joint economic development district under this section or section 715.71 of the Revised Code may designate property as a community entertainment district or may be amended to designate property as a community entertainment district as prescribed in division (D) of section 4301.80 of the Revised Code. A joint economic development district contract or amendment designating a community entertainment district shall include all information and documentation described in divisions (B)(1) through (6) of section 4301.80 of the Revised Code. The public notice required under division (D)(2) of this section and division (C) of section 715.71 of the Revised Code shall specify that the contract designates a community entertainment district and describe the location of that district. Except as provided in division (F) of section 4301.80 of the Revised Code, an area designated as a community entertainment district under a joint economic development district contract shall not lose its designation even if the contract is canceled or terminated.

(K) A contract entered into pursuant to this section or section 715.71 of the Revised Code may be amended and it may be renewed, canceled, or terminated as provided in or pursuant to the contract. The contract may be amended to add property owned by one of the contracting parties to the district, or may be amended to delete property from the district whether or not one of the contracting parties owns the deleted property. The contract shall continue in existence throughout its term and shall be binding on the contracting parties and on any entities succeeding to such parties, whether by annexation, merger, or otherwise. The income tax levied by the board pursuant to this section or section 715.71 of the Revised Code shall apply in the entire district throughout the term of the contract, notwithstanding that all or a portion of the district becomes subject to annexation, merger, or incorporation. No township or municipal corporation is divested of its rights or obligations under the contract because of annexation, merger, or succession of interests.

(L) After the creation of a joint economic development district described in division (A)(2) of this section, a municipal corporation that is a contracting party may cease to own property included in the



district, but such property shall continue to be included in the district and subject to the terms of the contract.