Sept. 28, 2026

Jeff Carman, Chair
Chillicothe Planning Commission
35 S. Paint St.
Chillicothe, OH 45601

RE: Ideas to Consider — Future Data Center Rules in the Unified Development Code

Dear Chairman Carman and Planning Commission members,

On behalf of the Chillicothe Ross Chamber of Commerce and our nearly 800 investor businesses, thank you for your continued leadership. We know the Planning Commission is the proper group to handle the discussion of data center rules once it comes up. In the meantime, we wanted to share some early, practical ideas for the Commission to think about as it looks ahead.

Why We're Writing

The Chamber convenes and connects local businesses, government, and residents. We've heard from members across manufacturing, utilities, real estate, and small business who want two things at once: for Ross County to benefit from this growing industry, and for our infrastructure, property values, and quality of life to stay protected. Working out the rules now — before any future project shows up — is the best way to get both.

Ideas for the Commission to Consider

The Commission has the most say over how these rules turn out before a company ever files an application. With that in mind, here are some straightforward ideas, based on research and lessons other communities have learned when data centers came to town:

1. **Hire outside experts, paid for by the company.** When a data center project comes in, don't rely only on the developer's own numbers. Bring in independent engineers or consultants to check the water, noise, and power impact — and have the company cover that cost.

2. **Look at the whole project, not just phase one.** Companies often build data centers in stages. Make sure the rules require a look at the full, final size of the project up front, not just the first piece. Keeping new facilities a safe distance from homes and schools is one of the best protections available.

3. **Keep zoning rules and money agreements separate.** Things like noise limits and setback distances need to be written into the zoning code itself, where they're enforceable. Money matters — fees, payments to the community — should be handled through a separate, clearly written agreement. Don't mix the two.

4. **Set real water limits.** A single yearly water cap isn't enough — it can hide big spikes on hot summer days. Set limits for the year, the peak day, and the peak hour. And don't assume "closed loop" cooling means low water use; it can still use a lot of water when it's hot out.

5. **Account for low, rumbling noise, not just loudness.** Standard noise rules (measured in dBA) often miss the low-frequency hum that cooling equipment and fans produce. A facility could pass a noise test on paper and still be a real nuisance for neighbors. It's worth getting an independent noise study done before approval, plus ongoing monitoring after.

6. **Watch for backup generators that dodge the rules.** Some facilities install their own gas-powered generators to avoid utility oversight. Make sure the code addresses this directly so it doesn't turn into an air quality problem down the road.

7. **Be clear about who pays if things change.** Sort out ahead of time who pays for power grid upgrades versus who's responsible if a project's needs change or it doesn't move forward as planned. This protects everyday ratepayers from being stuck with the bill.

8. **Think carefully about tax breaks and property value.** As with any big project, it's worth weighing whether proposed tax incentives are worth it long-term, and making sure the property's assessed value is protected over time.

9. **Require a plan — and money set aside — for tearing it down.** Data center equipment often becomes outdated in just four to six years. Requiring a funded plan for removing the equipment, decided at approval time (not later), helps make sure the community isn't left with an empty building and no way to deal with it.

10. **Spell out what happens if a project goes over its limits.** Setting water, power, and noise limits only works if the code also says what happens when a facility exceeds them. The rules should lay out clear steps — like required fixes, fines, or even a pause in operations — along with who's responsible for catching the problem and how quickly it needs to be addressed. Without this piece, a limit is just a suggestion.

11. **Consider who pays if damage occurs.** If roads, nearby homes, or other public resources are affected by construction or the day-to-day operation of the facility, there should be a plan in place ahead of time to repair or make up for that damage.

12. **Approve projects in stages and settle the "what if it closes" questions first.** Wherever possible, approve projects step by step, and figure out the closing/exit terms before giving initial approval — not after, when there's less room to negotiate.

We're Happy to Help

The Chamber is glad to support the Commission in any way that's useful — gathering input from our members, helping organize a broader conversation with the community, or just being available to talk through any of this further. Our goal is simple: help the Commission write rules that welcome responsible growth while protecting the people and businesses who call the city home.

Thank you again. The Chamber will continue tracking this process and share updates as the city's review moves forward. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Respectfully,



Mike Throne, IOM
President and CEO
Chillicothe Ross Chamber of Commerce

CC: City Council, Mayor