DRAFT Data Center Ordinance

North Coventry Township

SUMMARY

What is being proposed?

North Coventry Township is considering a Draft Ordinance that would establish specific zoning regulations for **Data Centers**. The proposed regulations are intended to allow Data Centers only under carefully controlled circumstances and to address potential impacts on surrounding residents, public infrastructure, natural resources, and emergency services.

The proposal would amend **Chapter 370 (Zoning)** of the Township Code and would treat a Data Center as a distinct land use. The Draft proposes that Data Centers be permitted **only through a conditional use process** in a zoning district that has not yet been identified in the Draft.

What is a Data Center?

Under the proposed Ordinance, a **Data Center** is a facility that houses computer systems, servers, data storage, network hardware, cooling equipment, generators, and substations.

The Ordinance also defines **Data Center Accessory Uses** as related facilities or structures supporting the Data Center, such as administrative, storage, security, electrical/substation, cooling, and water facilities located on the same tract or unified group of parcels.

Why is the Township considering these regulations?

The Draft identifies several concerns associated with the rapid expansion of Data Centers, including:

- **High energy demand**
- **Water consumption**
- **Noise**
- **Vibration**
- **Environmental impacts**
- **Impacts on surrounding land uses and available public services**

Data Centers are expanding rapidly and are not specifically regulated at the state level in Pennsylvania. Because of the complexity of these facilities and their potential impacts, the proposal recommends **case by case conditional use review.**

What protections are proposed for residents?

The Draft Data Center Ordinance would establish comprehensive zoning and performance standards intended to ensure that Data Centers are carefully located, designed, constructed, operated, and ultimately decommissioned.

Key provisions include substantial separation distances, including 250-foot setbacks and 1,000-foot separation from residential dwellings and other sensitive receptors, along with a 40-foot maximum building height, 10-acre minimum lot size, and 100,000-square-foot maximum principal building size.

The Draft also requires extensive landscaping, berms, screening, and architectural standards; baseline and post-construction noise studies with proposed noise and vibration limits; public water and sewer connections and restrictions on cooling systems and water withdrawals; detailed energy plans and restrictions on backup generators and large-scale battery systems; comprehensive emergency response planning, fire protection, and specialized first-responder training; environmental, stormwater, water, air-quality, energy, infrastructure impact assessments.

Additionally, the Draft includes a required Community Benefits Plan addressing local employment, emergency services, workforce development, environmental initiatives, and other community benefits; and financial assurance for complete decommissioning and removal of the facility and hazardous materials when its useful life ends.

Any proposed Data Center would **not be automatically permitted**; instead, it would require **conditional use approval**, allowing the proposal to be reviewed on a case by case basis, subject to a public hearing, required notice to adjacent landowners, and potential for additional conditions imposed by the Board of Supervisors.

Key Takeaway for Residents

Important: This is a proposal, not a final Ordinance.

The proposed Data Center Ordinance is a **"living document"** because Data Center technology and regulatory requirements continue to evolve. The Township may amend the Ordinance in the future as circumstances change.

The Draft remains under review. The Planning Commission is being asked to provide input, including consistency with the Township's Comprehensive Plan, existing zoning districts, infrastructure capacity, and administrative practices before it is advanced to the Board of Supervisors and other regulatory bodies for review consideration for adoption.