Village of Lawrence
157 N. Paw Paw St.
Lawrence, MI 49064
PH: 269-674-8161 Fax: 269-674-3004
www.lawrencemi.org

Village of Lawrence Planning Commission Meeting
411 N. Paw Paw St., Lawrence, MI 49064
September 28, 2026

Call to Order: The Planning Commission Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call:

- **Present:** Ryan Ransom, Mike Carpp, Annette Crandall, Skylar Closson, Amy Cordes, John Gritter
- **Absent:** None
- **Public Attendance:** Catherine Kaufman, Gayle Crandall, Barb Guritz Houser, Donna Spenner, Christian "CJ" Zehm, Elizabeth Zehm, Phoebe Attili, Mara Stone, Eric Stone, Eliseo Guerra, Susannah Collison, Peggy Flowers, Carmela Nemethy, William Featherstone

Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes:
Motion by Crandall, 2nd by Closson
All Aye. Motions Carried.

Data Center Legal Overview Presentation-Catherine Kaufman, Michigan Township Law:
Purpose: understand data center ordinances and lawful management to protect the village while avoiding litigation risks from outright bans.

Moratoriums

- Presented by Catherine Kaufman (municipal law partner).
- Moratoriums temporarily pause land use applications (Michigan case law), typically upheld for 6–12 months while actively drafting regulations.
- Extended moratoriums (e.g., two years) are risky and not a permanent prohibition.
- Adopt both zoning and police power ordinances for effectiveness.

Data Center Overview and Context

- Data centers house servers for storage/processing, including AI workloads.
- Types: hyperscale (very large), colocation (within or adjacent to other facilities), edge (smaller, near end-users).
- U-M Graham Sustainability Institute has a useful, though somewhat dated, guide; a free "data guidebook" is available.
- Interest is rising due to a federal AI-focused executive order and Michigan's 2024 sales/use tax exemptions on construction and equipment.
- Michigan hosts 40+ data centers; public opposition is common.

Legal Risks and Exclusionary Zoning

- Michigan law (MCL 125.3207) prohibits total exclusion of legitimate land uses when there is a demonstrated need (e.g., federal directives, state incentives).
- Saline Township case: refusal to rezone 575 acres triggered an exclusionary zoning lawsuit; settlement led to construction proceeding in a rural area.
- If no feasible location is identified, courts may allow development to proceed.
- Recommendation: proactively plan and adopt data center ordinances, identify appropriate districts (e.g., industrial), and ensure municipal insurance includes zoning coverage.

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Zoning Ordinance Strategies for Data Centers

- Site selection: consider proximity to utilities (water, electricity), road access, and existing industrial areas; a village industrial park may be suitable.
- Limitations: cap or prohibit hyperscale facilities if infrastructure cannot support them.
- Regulatory authority: no state preemption specific to data centers at this time (unlike PA 233 for large-scale renewables); MPSC controls utility rates.
- Require proof of independent or non-harmful energy supply to avoid negative grid impacts.
- Treat data centers as special land uses with conditions enforceable via compliance orders or permit revocation.

Key Regulatory Standards

- Vibration: requires modeling, isolation/mitigation systems, and monitoring at specified intervals (e.g., every 500 feet) near sensitive uses (homes, schools).
- Noise: establish daytime/nighttime decibel limits measured at property lines; include tonal and octave band provisions; use a clear 10-minute LEQ standard for enforcement.
- Water and cooling: prohibit evaporative cooling, require water recycling, and ensure cooling energy use is proportionate to computing load.
- Fire suppression and public safety: include standards in special use approvals; require developer contributions for needed public safety equipment.
- Decommissioning: require bonds/financial surety; mandate transfer of surety and notice on ownership changes within defined timelines.
- Monitoring and enforcement: designate the zoning administrator; fund third-party technical audits (e.g., acoustics, power usage) via developer-funded escrow.

Public Process and Transparency

- Zoning text amendments require a Planning Commission public hearing with at least 15 days' notice.
- Special land use approvals require an additional public hearing.
- Avoid NDAs; encourage early developer engagement with the Planning Commission.
- Public communication: Planning Commission meets fourth Mondays at Village Hall; draft minutes posted online within a day and approved at the next meeting.

Water, Utilities, and Infrastructure

- High water and power demands are primary concerns; existing water towers are likely insufficient for a large facility.
- Require developers to pay for all infrastructure upgrades necessary to meet their demand and for ongoing usage.
- The MPSC sets utility rates; the village cannot regulate rates.

Inter-Community Collaboration

- Village and township coordinating to direct industrial uses to areas with public infrastructure, preserving rural/agricultural land.
- Alignment allows township to deny rural rezonings if industrial siting is accommodated in serviced areas.

Battery Storage Considerations

- Parallel ordinance development recommended for battery storage alongside data centers.
- Fire risk (thermal runaway) and noise from active cooling are key concerns; require lithium-specific fire suppression and noise standards.

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- State preemption applies at ≥50 MW (treated like solar); municipalities retain local control primarily for sub-50 MW facilities and on-site industrial backup storage.
- Ensure successor-binding development agreements and surety transfer procedures to manage project sales.

Zoning Report:
None; Short-Term Rental Ordinance under review by Village attorney

Any other projects or news:
None

Motion to Adjourn:
Motion by Crandall, 2nd by Gritter
All Aye, Motion Carried.
Meeting Adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Annette G. Crandall
Annette G. Crandall, Secretary

10-26-26
Date