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**Testimony ZTA 26-01 Montgomery Countryside Alliance – February 24, 2026**

For the record I am Caroline Taylor on behalf of Montgomery Countryside Alliance, our board and members.

We support the careful, collaborative, transparent crafting of this ZTA and its operational guidelines. And while we are fulfilling this task, we ask that the County implement a pause in permitting projects.

**To the specifics thus far- the ZTA calls for:**

Conditional use – yes

Only in Industrial zones – yes scale of facilities should dictate whether heavy or lighter industrial zone

And sure, fence colors and trees buffers... yada yada.

**But externalities that have been left out give rise to significant concerns and beg further attention.**

**As we are hearing:**

*Potential tax revenue seems very sexy*

Thus far County decision makers have been relying on industry representations. Please conduct an independent cost benefit analysis. Let's say for every \$10 the County collects in tax revenue, County ratepayers pay \$20 – that is an uncomfortable arrangement for the public. It is already exceedingly uncomfortable for ratepayers esp. our most vulnerable community members.

*Somebody else will handle that*

It has been suggested that issues related to water and the impact on the electric utilities and rate payers are not the purview of the Council. But It is the council's job to establish the APF provisions and standards for the use that will guide the review process. The Planning Board recommended that the Council consider adding standards related to energy efficiency and water use. **We agree.**

The proposed hyperscale facility in Dickerson has proffered they will employ. at their first ever project, the greenest water & energy use systems. We have asked for more information on these systems and have been told that they are subject to non-disclosure agreements. In general, this has felt more like *strategic ambiguity*.

**The ZTA should require these green things.** Similar to the ZTA's requirement regarding analysis of a project's noise abatement technology, the applicants should be required to present analysis of their cooling and energy



systems technology that must meet high standards that protect these shared resources and support our climate change goals.

**Shouldn't we be concerned with externalities?**

The County is evaluating adding this use to our zoning code at a time when the infrastructure that it heavily relies upon has become increasingly vulnerable.

+Both ICPRB and WSSC have forecast big challenges for our regional water supply to meet near term demand – alternatives are being explored. And our sole source aquifer... should be entirely off the table for data center cooling needs.

+Grid operator PJM warns that electrical demands, driven in large measure by hyperscale data center proliferation may result in brown outs... rolling black outs.

We appreciate that this is starting point for a well-crafted ZTA that will offer clarity to the industry, strong guidance to OZAH, and protection for County residents. Councilmember Glass's recommendations for collaborative study coupled with a moratorium or pause on approving projects should be given strong consideration as we embark on this process. We trust that the Council will not allow themselves to be pressured to step away from their duty to promote the public good. We will submit further written testimony to the hearing record.