

Testimony on ZTA 26-01 Data Center Commercial Uses - Data Center

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Data centers are developments of major impact on the communities where they are sited and are being built without sufficient public information and analysis. They are being built to support entirely new, complex and poorly understood technology that is increasingly controversial. In fact there is widespread concern in the industry that the infrastructure for this technology is being overbuilt and many of the corporations involved will not survive. The negative economic impacts on the county and its businesses and citizens could be enormous.

If these facilities do successfully operate, the stresses on our regional water and power supplies could be devastating. We already are having trouble building and maintaining sufficient water and power infrastructure to meet existing needs. Furthermore, data centers do not fit within the existing zoning codes. This proposed ZTA does not even address the water and power impacts of the centers. The scale of these projects is unlike anything else in the county and the zoning needs to acknowledge that. Data centers typically use the same energy as hundreds of thousands of houses (roughly equivalent to the output of an average nuclear power unit) and millions of gallons of water per day from the Potomac. We can't afford to lose either the power or the water that would be consumed by such a center.

Regulations that take stakeholders into account and balance data centers with other needs of the community and local economy will take some time to get right. Please put a moratorium into place quickly to allow the time to craft zoning that takes the real issues into account, to conduct the proper analyses, and to provide meaningful two-way public communication throughout the process.

In particular, it is essential that everyone understands who will benefit from such development and who will pay the costs (in taxes, power and water rates, loss of resources, impacts from construction and operations, etc.). We need to pause like several other Maryland jurisdictions have done. Please include my comments in the hearing record.

Thank You,

William Kirksey