

Joint Planning Session Minutes – Data Center Ordinance

Harmony, Minnesota

Meeting Details

Type: Joint planning session of the Economic Development Authority (EDA), City Council, and Planning & Zoning (P&Z) Board.

Date: December 3, 2025

Called to Order: 6:00 PM

Present: Honorable Steve Donney, Jesse Grabau, Tara Morem, Kyle Scheevel, Keith McIntosh, Greg Schieber, Kerry Kingsley, Stuart Morem, Rod Johnson, Erik Olson, Miles Petree, Jim Strozyk

Absent:

Others Present: : Katrina Hurley (CEDA), Alissa Steflug (City Administrator), Trenton Akre, Amy Bishop, Aaron Bishop, Alan Dahl, (others)

Adjourned: 8:05 PM

Facilitator: Katrina Hurley, Community Development Coordinator

Context and Process

This was a joint planning session designed for information-sharing and collaborative input. By design, joint planning sessions do not permit formal decisions or votes. Instead, the session collected input from the public as well as members of the EDA, City Council, and P&Z Board. Draft ordinance language emerging from this session will be forwarded to the Planning & Zoning Board for consideration at its next meeting and then voted on through the formal process.

The City's intent is to proactively protect community health, safety, rural character, and fiscal fairness before any data center project is proposed or constructed. To accomplish this, the City is taking a careful, deliberate approach by exploring every avenue, engaging the public, and developing clear, enforceable standards to ensure responsible development.

Facilitation Approach (ToPs)

The discussion was facilitated using ToPs (Technology of Participation) methods. ToPs is a structured, inclusive facilitation approach developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs that

helps groups move efficiently from diverse perspectives to shared understanding and practical action. Core ToP tools include the Focused Conversation (ORID) to guide dialogue, the Consensus Workshop to integrate ideas into shared themes, and Action Planning to translate agreements into next steps.

Discussion Highlights

Purpose of the ordinance: Balance economic growth opportunity with Harmony's values, including quiet rural character, transparency, and fiscal fairness.

Key terms reviewed included (among others):

- Data Center and Large-Scale Data Center
- Colocation Data Center
- Disaster Recovery Facility
- Crypto Mining Facility
- Enterprise Information Technology Equipment
- Backup Generation
- Consumptive Water Use and Water Appropriation
- Decommissioning, Restoration, and Reclamation
- Community Benefit Agreement (CBA)
- Noise and Sound Level (L10/L50)
- Impervious Surface
- Buffer and Landscape Buffer
- Screening
- Utility Infrastructure, Public Utility, Substation, Transmission Line, Interconnection
- Emissions/Air Pollution and Generator Emissions
- Energy Use/Load/Megawatt/Peak Demand
- Hazardous Materials, Waste, Wastewater, Effluent
- Security, Access Control, Surveillance
- Employment, Local Hiring, Apprenticeship
- Tax Abatement, Tax Increment Financing, PILOT

- Environmental Review (EAW/EIS/AUAR)
- Nonconforming Use, Amortization, Conditional Use Permit
- Groundwater Impact
- Site Plan and Site Plan Review
- Monitoring, Reporting, Compliance, Enforcement
- Closed-loop Cooling
- Enforcement Actions, Clawback Provisions, Financial Assurance (Escrow/Performance Bond)
- Operational Reporting, Compliance Metrics, Adaptive Management Trigger
- Emergency Response Plan, Complaint Resolution Protocol, Permit Transferability, Revocation, Default

Draft definitions were tentatively recorded for several terms (for example: Noise; Sound Level (L10/L50) thresholds; Impervious Surface; Buffer; and Community Benefit Agreement). Other terms were discussed extensively but deferred without draft language pending further review (e.g., Large-Scale Data Center; Colocation; Disaster Recovery; Consumptive Water Use; Water Appropriation; Decommissioning; and additional utility-related definitions).

Standards and Safeguards Discussed

- Noise limits, setbacks, buffer zones, and comprehensive screening of equipment
- Conditional Use Permit (CUP) process with public hearing
- Operational reporting (annual disclosure of water use, energy consumption, and compliance metrics)
- Fiscal safeguards (PILOT agreements, school district contributions, and incentive clawbacks)
- Environmental safeguards (stormwater management, closed-loop cooling, hazardous materials containment)
- Adaptive management triggers and complaint-resolution protocols
- Decommissioning plans with financial security for site restoration

Public Input

Public comments were invited throughout the session. Input from residents and stakeholders will be incorporated into revisions of the draft definitions and standards before they are forwarded to the P&Z Board.

Decisions and Next Steps

No formal decisions were taken during the joint planning session. Draft language will be presented to the Planning & Zoning Board at its next meeting for consideration and possible vote through the standard ordinance process.

- City staff to compile and format draft definitions based on session input
- City attorney to review for clarity, enforceability, and statutory alignment
- P&Z Board to agendaize and consider drafts at its next meeting
- Schedule public hearing and additional community engagement, as needed

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 PM.

Next Meeting

The next joint planning session will be held on Wednesday, January 21st 6-8pm at the Harmony Community Center.