



City of Harmony - Process Overview

Data Center Ordinance Planning

Community Process & Meeting Summaries:

The City of Harmony has taken a proactive and transparent approach to developing a data center ordinance. Rather than reacting to a specific proposal, the City is working collaboratively to ensure that any future development reflects community values, protects natural resources, and maintains Harmony's rural character.

All meetings have been conducted as open to the public, joint planning sessions with participation from the City Council, Economic Development Authority (EDA), and Planning & Zoning Board. Members of the public have been invited to attend and actively participate throughout the process.

Below is a summary of each meeting held to date:

Initial Community Town Hall:

The City hosted a public town hall to introduce the topic of data centers and discuss initial interest in Harmony as a potential location. Representatives from MiEnergy and Dairyland Power were present to answer questions and provide general information.

This meeting focused on:

- What data centers are and how they operate
- Why companies are interested in rural communities
- Initial questions and concerns from residents
- Potential annexation of 60 acres of farm land for future development

This meeting helped shape the City's decision to move forward with developing an ordinance before considering any specific project.

Joint Planning Session #1: Definitions & Foundations

The first joint planning session focused on building a shared understanding of data centers and establishing key definitions that would be used throughout the ordinance.

Discussion topics included:

- Types of data centers (including cryptocurrency mining)
- Key terminology and operational components
- Initial identification of potential impacts (energy, noise, water, land use)

This meeting laid the groundwork for consistent language and understanding across all boards.

Joint Planning Session #2: Definitions & Early Policy Direction

The second session continued refining definitions and began introducing early policy considerations.

Discussion topics included:

- Clarifying definitions based on group feedback
- Early conversations around zoning and land use
- Initial discussion of potential environmental considerations

This session helped ensure that the ordinance would be built on clear, agreed-upon definitions before moving into regulatory language.

Joint Planning Session #3: Ordinance Framework

The third session marked the transition from definitions into drafting the structure of the ordinance.

This meeting established the overall framework and direction of the ordinance.

Joint Planning Session #4: Draft Ordinance Review

The fourth session focused on reviewing draft ordinance language & refining specific standards.

Discussion topics included:

- Water use restrictions and prohibition of water-based cooling
- Noise standards and potential decibel limits
- Setbacks and buffering requirements
- Operational considerations such as generator use and reporting

This session moved the ordinance from concept into more detailed policy language.

Joint Planning Session #5: Ordinance Drafting Continued (March 18, 2026)

This session focused on working through the remaining components of the ordinance and preparing for final drafting.

Discussion topics included:

- Confirmation of zoning approach (Industrial Technology Zone with a Conditional Use Permit)
- Reaffirmation of zero water use for cooling
- Noise standards and setback requirements
- Energy use reporting and utility impacts
- Environmental review requirements: requiring an Environmental Impact Study (EIS)
- Decommissioning, financial assurance, and long-term accountability

The group also discussed how to ensure the ordinance is durable, enforceable, and protective of the community over time.

Joint Planning Session #6: Community Benefits Roundtable (April 1, 2026)

This meeting was designed to move beyond technical ordinance standards and focus directly on what the Harmony community would expect, need, and deserve if a future data center project were ever proposed. Rather than using a traditional meeting format, the City held a facilitated roundtable session that allowed residents, board members, and community representatives to engage in smaller group conversations.

Participants were divided into rotating discussion tables, each centered around a specific community topic. Residents were able to move from table to table, share ideas, ask questions, and speak directly with members of the City Council, Planning & Zoning Board, Economic Development Authority, city staff, and facilitators. This format was intentionally chosen to create a more open and comfortable environment where people could participate in meaningful dialogue rather than simply speaking at a podium.

Discussion topics included how future community benefit dollars could be invested locally, what protections should exist for residents, how complaints should be handled, what transparency expectations should be placed on a future developer, and how any project should contribute positively to Harmony over time.

Residents shared ideas such as supporting parks and recreation, improving public infrastructure, assisting schools and youth programs, strengthening emergency services, helping with storm shelter readiness, investing in community spaces, and supporting long-term quality-of-life improvements. There was also strong discussion around ensuring any future

company would be expected to communicate openly, respond quickly to concerns, and act as a respectful long-term community partner.

Another major theme of the evening was fairness and accountability. Community members discussed the importance of local hiring when possible, ongoing reporting to the City, honoring promises made during negotiations, and ensuring that Harmony, not outside interests, remains in control of local standards and expectations.

The roundtable process also gave public officials valuable insight into what residents care most about. Instead of assumptions being made on behalf of the community, the meeting created a direct opportunity for citizens to help shape future negotiation priorities.

This session represented one of the most community-centered steps in the overall process. It shifted the conversation from simply regulating impacts to asking a larger question: If Harmony chooses to allow future development, how should that development tangibly improve the community?

The ideas gathered during this meeting are intended to help guide future Community Benefits Agreement discussions and ensure that resident voices remain central in any future decision-making process.

Joint Planning Session #7 – Final Outstanding Items & Closing Direction (April 15, 2026)

The final joint planning session focused on resolving the remaining policy issues before ordinance drafting moves to legal review.

Major discussion items included:

- Whether the City should prohibit Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) for data center projects in order to preserve transparency.
 - The City decided not to allow Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDAs) for any data center projects.
- Establishing a 55-megawatt project cap for Harmony's ordinance framework.
- Water use monitoring triggers to ensure no unauthorized cooling practices occur.
 - Any water use over 60,000 gallons for more than 3 months would trigger a review by the City.
- Requiring an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW), to begin with and if the MPCEA recommends an EIS, making it mandatory for the developer to move forward with one before building.
- Community benefit expectations and how those negotiations should occur.
- Next legal drafting steps and formal review process.

This meeting concluded the joint planning phase after approximately more than twelve hours of public meetings and engagement.

Most Recent Public Steps Taken

Since the final planning session, the City has taken the following public-facing steps:

1. Meeting Minutes and Public Documents Organized

Meeting notes, summaries, and public process materials have continued to be compiled for community review, and will be posted online and will be available in person at the City office.

2. Ordinance Direction Sent for Legal Drafting

The policy direction created through the public meetings is now being translated into formal ordinance language for review.

3. Additional Specialized Legal Review Recommended

Because data center regulations are a new and evolving topic, outside legal expertise with Minnesota data center experience has been recommended to ensure Harmony's ordinance is thorough and enforceable.

4. Additional Public Hearings Still Ahead

The public process is not over. Residents will still have multiple formal opportunities to participate once the draft ordinance returns.

What Happens Next?

Once the draft ordinance is complete, the following steps will occur:

Planning & Zoning Review

The Planning & Zoning Board will review the full ordinance in a public meeting, discuss any changes, and vote on whether to recommend it to City Council.

City Council Public Hearing

City Council will hold a formal public hearing where residents may speak, submit comments, and review the final proposal.

Final Council Consideration

Following the hearing, the City Council may approve, amend, or deny the ordinance.

Continued Commitment to Transparency

Harmony remains committed to:

- Keeping residents informed
- Posting meeting notices through official public channels
- Providing multiple opportunities for public comment
- Taking a careful and measured approach
- Ensuring any future development aligns with local values

Why This Process Matters

The process Harmony has undertaken matters because it places local residents, local boards, and local values at the center of a decision that could shape the community for decades. Many communities across the country have found themselves reacting to large-scale development proposals after key conversations had already happened behind closed doors or after projects were already far along in the process. Harmony chose a different path by slowing the process down, asking questions early, gathering public input, and creating standards before any project is approved.

This approach helps protect the community by ensuring that expectations are clear in advance. Rather than negotiating from a position of urgency later, Harmony is taking the time now to determine what types of development fit the community, what impacts are acceptable, what protections need to be in place, and what benefits should be expected in return. That kind of planning gives the City stronger leverage, clearer rules, and a more thoughtful path forward.

The process also matters because it values transparency. Public meetings, open discussion, posted materials, shared minutes, and repeated opportunities for residents to participate help build trust in local government. Even when opinions differ, people deserve to know what is being discussed, how decisions are being made, and where they can provide input. Harmony's commitment to public engagement recognizes that good decisions are stronger when people are informed and involved.

Equally important, this process recognizes that rural communities should not be expected to accept outside development without careful consideration. Harmony has unique strengths, including available infrastructure, location advantages, and a strong sense of community. Those assets have value. By taking time to study potential impacts and establish expectations, the City is treating those local assets with the seriousness they deserve.

This effort also matters because it is about more than one project. The ordinance being developed is intended to create a framework for future proposals as well. That means the work being done now can help future councils, future boards, and future residents by providing

consistent standards, stronger protections, and a clearer review process for years to come.

Finally, the process matters because it demonstrates civic pride. Residents have attended meetings, asked difficult questions, shared ideas, challenged assumptions, and invested many hours into the future of their town. That level of participation shows that Harmony cares deeply about preserving its character while planning responsibly for economic opportunity.

No matter where someone stands on the topic itself, the public process has shown something important: Harmony believes major decisions should be made openly, carefully, and with the community's voice included every step of the way.