



**Ravenna City Council
Planning Committee Meeting Minutes
April 10, 2026**

The public meeting was held in person in City Council Chambers.

Council present: Council President Rob Kairis, Amy Michael, Paul Moskun, Tyler Marovich, Tim Calfee, Christina West, Matt Harper, Carmen Laudato

Also attending the meeting: Mayor Frank Seman; Police Chief, Jake Smallfield; Service Director, Tim Contant; City Engineer; Bob Finney; Finance Director, Tami Lorence; Council Clerk, Chelsea Gregor; Dennis West, Ron Fields, Bob Mathis, Maryan Mathis, Ray McDavid, Holly Brunswick, Krystel Tossone, Karen Hogan, Gary Hogan, Brad Ehrhart, Jenny Adams, Randy Corbett, Sue Tuttle, Larry Selinius, Denise L. Beefs, Pat Hyland, Paul Hyland, Jessica Mack, Leo Diamantis, Joni Holloway, Ray Harner, Mike Tinlin, Eileen Eberly, Vince Coia, Carl Nigh, Toni Lynn Harper, Allison Laudato, Jessica Winchell, Debra Sommers, Sam Schultz, Sabrina Christian Bennett, Paul Hyland, Heather May, Rachael Glenn-Dean, Orion Dean, Violet Dean, Cheryl Wood, Debra Singleton, Sue Vattkofsky, Lynn Waltenbaugh, Mark Kara, Miriam Frydrak, Robert Adams, Bill Barber, Jamie Jones, Kelly Braybon, Randy Dean Jr., Josh Howard, Donald Rankin, Will Hollingsworth, Laurie Adams, Fred Parrott, Racheal Stratton, Lorraine Miller, Paul Laun, Barb Niemiller, Pete Brostowitz, Denise Brostowitz, Mike Ciphert, Sherie Kolocic, Clifford Soudil, Mike Gut, S.T., Donald Rankin III, Tyler Robin, Kristi Hack, Mike Roberto, Rachelle Eaton, James Nichols, Sharon Campbell

Planning Committee Meeting was called to order at 3:02 P.M. by Committee Chair, Carmen Laudato

The first item was a discussion on Data Centers.

Ms. Laudato opened the discussion regarding the potential impacts of data centers on the community. She was joined by fellow committee members Ms. Michael and Ms. West, and noted that, although other council members were present, the gathering remained a committee meeting.

Ms. Laudato explained that concerns about data centers had been growing across Ohio, particularly in Central Ohio, where approximately 200 facilities are operating or proposed. She cited concerns raised by other communities regarding noise pollution, air pollution, water consumption, stormwater runoff, limited long-term employment opportunities, and the overall cost-benefit balance of such developments. Ms. Laudato said the issue gained urgency after Ms. Michael informed the committee that the City of Tallmadge was considering a moratorium or ban on data centers. She noted that recent meetings regarding potential data center projects had also taken place in nearby Shalersville and Windham, prompting Ravenna officials to proactively examine the issue. Ms. Laudato emphasized that the discussion was not solely about preventing data centers but also about ensuring the city has appropriate regulations in place should proposals arise. She expressed concern over potential impacts to the electrical grid and water supply and stressed the need for technical expertise to identify the questions communities should ask when evaluating such projects.

Because Ravenna's recently adopted comprehensive master plan does not currently address data center development, Ms. Laudato stated that a temporary pause on applications would allow the city time to study the issue, gather public input, and develop appropriate regulations. She explained that the special meeting time was selected to maximize opportunities for public participation while accommodating existing schedules. Ms. Laudato emphasized the importance of hearing community concerns and gauging public sentiment. She then introduced her daughter, Allison, an aerospace engineer, who she said could provide technical insight into how data centers operate and help identify considerations for future policymaking.

Ms. Michael expressed strong support for exploring a temporary moratorium, citing concerns about environmental impacts and infrastructure demands. She said she had been monitoring developments in Tallmadge and other communities and had shared articles and information with council leadership. Ms. Michael raised concerns about air and noise pollution, significant water consumption, potential impacts on Ravenna's drinking water supply, and the strain data centers could place on the city's utilities. She noted discussions with the city's water treatment staff indicating that Ravenna currently operates as a Class 3 water system and that increased demand could require upgrades to a Class 4 system, resulting in additional staffing costs. Ms. Michael also referenced conversations with the fire chief regarding the unique challenges of responding to data center fires, including the need for specialized equipment, training, and personnel.

She expressed concerns about potential noise impacts on nearby neighborhoods, possible effects on property values, and the limited number of permanent jobs typically associated with data centers. Ms. Michael stated that the long-term impacts remain unclear and emphasized that protecting Ravenna's environment and quality of life should take precedence.

Ms. West said she supports gathering more information before making any decisions, and noted that the issue has developed rapidly and that Council needs sufficient time to understand the potential impacts on the community. She expressed support for exploring a temporary moratorium to allow the City to establish appropriate ordinances and ensure any future decisions align with the community's needs and environmental priorities.

Ms. Laudato added that the City of Kent recently adopted a moratorium to provide time for officials to evaluate zoning and regulatory options. She reiterated that Ravenna's goal is to allow time for careful study and policy development.

Mr. Kairis emphasized that the discussion is focused on understanding data centers as a land-use issue citywide rather than responding to a specific proposal. He stated that any action taken by Council should be based on a comprehensive planning process rather than a single development application. Mr. Kairis said a temporary moratorium tied to a defined study process would allow the City to evaluate issues related to public safety, infrastructure, and zoning before adopting a well-considered and defensible policy.

Mr. Marovich explained that modern data centers require significantly more power than traditional server facilities. While older server racks typically consume 5 to 10 kilowatts of electricity, newer AI-focused data centers can require up to 70 kilowatts per rack. He noted that the increased energy demand generates substantial heat and raises concerns about water usage, electrical infrastructure, noise, and environmental impacts. Mr. Marovich emphasized that data centers require reliable, continuous power, often supported by large backup generators that can create prolonged noise, vibration, and other quality-of-life concerns. He urged the city to proceed cautiously and thoroughly evaluate the potential impacts before approving any projects.

Ms. Laudato acknowledged concerns she had read regarding vibrations and their potential effects on wildlife and surrounding areas.

Mr. Moskun said several homeowners had contacted him with concerns about the proposed project. He noted the presence of nearby businesses and healthcare facilities, including a hospital, nursing home, and assisted living center, which could be affected by noise and other operational impacts. Mr. Moskun said he had not yet seen information regarding anticipated decibel levels and stressed the importance of understanding noise impacts in the immediate area and surrounding neighborhoods.

Ms. West emphasized that the committee's discussion was not focused on a single location but on establishing citywide policies and procedures to ensure any future data center development can be safely integrated into the community.

Ms. Michael noted that Ravenna has limited land available for a project of this scale, meaning residents and businesses would likely be affected regardless of location. She said economic development opportunities must be balanced with environmental considerations when evaluating data center proposals.

Ms. Laudato added that potential effects on property values should also be considered, noting that data centers often carry a negative public perception.

Allison Laudato then presented technical information about data center operations. She explained that data centers rely on server racks, cooling systems, backup generators, substations, and large transformers to operate continuously. Ms. Laudato said most facilities operate 24 hours a day and require substantial electrical capacity, often equivalent to the energy use of thousands of homes. She also explained that dedicated substations convert high-voltage electricity from the grid for use within the facility and noted that specialized transformers have become increasingly expensive due to limited manufacturing capacity. Ms. Laudato expressed concern that increased demand for electrical infrastructure could affect utility costs for residents.

Referencing reports about other data center developments, including projects in Tennessee, Allison Laudato encouraged city officials to ask detailed questions regarding expansion plans, the number of substations and transformers proposed, generator permitting requirements, turbine fuel sources, and strategies for mitigating noise and environmental impacts.

Committee members thanked Allison Laudato for her presentation and requested that she provide her materials electronically so they could be shared through the city's public records process and potentially posted on the city website.

Following the presentation, Carmen Laudato announced that the meeting would move into the public comment portion and asked attendees to indicate whether they wished to speak.

Ms. Michael encouraged anyone interested in providing comments to ensure they had an opportunity to participate.

Resident Denise Brostowitz thanked the committee for taking a proactive approach to evaluating data centers. She said she had researched both the benefits and drawbacks of data center developments and found few examples of projects that had been positively received by host communities. According to Ms. Brostowitz, the successful projects she identified involved extensive legal agreements and public disclosure requirements. She questioned claims regarding job creation, noting that construction jobs are often temporary and frequently filled by outside contractors, and that permanent employment at data centers is typically limited and may not benefit local residents. Ms. Brostowitz expressed concerns about the strain data centers place on utilities and infrastructure, citing high water and electricity consumption, increased demand on the electrical grid, and the potential for higher utility costs for residents. She added that data centers often secure long-term power agreements and may receive tax incentives that reduce anticipated economic benefits for local governments and schools.

Additional concerns raised by Ms. Brostowitz included noise from backup generators, air and water pollution, land use impacts, and reliance on fossil fuel energy sources. She referenced proposed environmental regulations related to cooling wastewater discharge and cited reports of groundwater contamination near data centers in other states. Ms. Brostowitz said she believed tax incentives for data centers often shift infrastructure costs to residents while reducing revenues available to schools and public services.

In response, Carmen Laudato referenced a recent tour of the city's water treatment plant and shared concerns about how increased water demand could affect treatment processes. She explained that water treatment relies on periods of reduced flow to allow contaminants and biological agents to settle before further treatment. Ms. Laudato said sustained high-volume water usage could interfere with those processes and potentially increase risks related to water quality.

Resident Will Hollingsworth, an employee of Reed Memorial Library and former programmer and digital content creator, said he supports technological innovation but remains skeptical about the long-term community benefits of large-scale data centers. He shared his personal experience working with artificial intelligence technologies and described concerns about their impact on employment. Mr. Hollingsworth questioned whether the economic benefits of data centers justify their demands on local resources, arguing that facilities with substantial water and energy requirements often generate relatively few permanent jobs. He expressed skepticism about claims that closed-loop cooling systems eliminate environmental impacts, citing concerns about water consumption, wastewater management, and the potential release of contaminants. Mr. Hollingsworth also questioned the independence of industry-funded environmental studies and urged city officials to critically evaluate claims made by data center developers. Referencing past energy-related controversies in Ohio, he cautioned against approving large-scale infrastructure projects without sufficient public oversight and transparency, while adding that state lawmakers are examining the impacts of data centers and encouraged Ravenna officials to prioritize long-term stewardship of local water resources.

Donald Rankin, a lifelong Ravenna resident and musician who has dedicated more than two-thirds of his life to music, spoke about concerns related to noise and infrasound generated by data centers. Mr. Rankin, whose primary instrument is the organ and who has performed in 32 states as well as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, used his experience with sound to explain how low-frequency noise can travel long distances. He described infrasound as sound below the normal range of human hearing and noted that, although it is often inaudible, research has linked prolonged exposure to symptoms including dizziness, anxiety, nausea, fatigue, sleep disorders, cognitive impairment, and potential cardiovascular effects. Mr. Rankin expressed concern that infrasound generated by data centers could affect residents up to a mile away, including residential neighborhoods, the hospital, and the Ravenna School District. He urged city officials to carefully review available research and consider the long-term impacts before approving any projects.

Ms. Michael commended Rankin's remarks and noted that he is a graduate of Ravenna High School.

Frank Hairston, a resident of Lovers Lane who lives near the proposed development area, expressed concerns about the potential impacts of data centers on nearby neighborhoods and the broader Ravenna community. Mr. Hairston cited worries about noise, water consumption, and potential impacts on both the city's water system and local groundwater resources.

Representing residents of the Skeels-McGarrett communities served by Ravenna's water system, Mr. Hairston emphasized that the issue extends beyond city limits and affects residents throughout Ravenna Township and Portage County. He encouraged residents to speak out and work together to protect shared resources.

Sam Schultz, a volunteer with Portage Residents for Responsible Development and Conserve Ohio, informed attendees about a statewide petition effort to prohibit the construction of data centers larger than 25 megawatts. He encouraged residents concerned about data center development to follow the organizations on social media, volunteer as petition circulators, and participate in upcoming training sessions. Mr. Schultz explained that organizers aim to collect more than 400,000 signatures statewide by July, with petition drives planned across all 88 Ohio counties.

Miriam Frydrak, a resident of Fairview Street, expressed concerns about the potential impact of data centers on utility costs and questioned what benefits the development would provide to local residents. She said many residents are already struggling with rising expenses and worried that increased demands on water and electrical infrastructure could further increase costs for the community. Ms. Frydrak questioned whether the economic benefits of a data center would outweigh the potential burdens on residents.

Ms. Laudato clarified that the City of Ravenna is not actively seeking data center development but is attempting to proactively address the issue through the legislative process. She said the City is exploring measures to reduce risk and ensure appropriate regulations are in place should a proposal arise.

Ms. Michael added that private property owners retain certain development rights, making it important for the City to establish clear guidelines and gain a better understanding of potential impacts.

Denise Beets, a resident of Mantua Township, expressed support for Ravenna's efforts and emphasized that concerns about data centers extend throughout Portage County. Ms. Beets raised concerns about groundwater resources, and the potential impact of large-scale water use on private wells and aquifers. She referenced discussions from meetings in neighboring communities and criticized state incentives for data center projects, arguing that such developments provide limited long-term employment while placing significant demands on local resources. Ms. Beets encouraged residents to participate in petition efforts, attend public meetings, and contact state officials to voice their concerns.

Donald Rankin Sr. also addressed the committee, expressing concerns about the broader environmental impacts associated with data centers. Mr. Rankin discussed the energy demands of such facilities and their reliance on fossil fuels, backup generators, and emerging nuclear power infrastructure. He raised concerns about air pollution from gas turbines and diesel generators, electronic waste generated by frequently replaced equipment, and the overall sustainability of data center operations. Mr. Rankin urged city officials to thoroughly study the issue before allowing any such development in the community.

Resident Leo Diamantis of Aurora said he had been meeting with state legislators and other officials throughout the county regarding data center development. Mr. Diamantis emphasized that the impact of data centers on electricity costs is already being felt by consumers. He explained that regional grid operators conduct capacity auctions to ensure sufficient power generation and noted that auction prices have increased dramatically due to growing demand from data centers. Mr. Diamantis argued that additional data center development in Ravenna

would further increase energy costs for residents throughout Portage County and surrounding communities.

Resident Rachael Dean, a lifelong Ravenna resident and a 16-year employee of the Ohio EPA's E-Check program, urged officials to prioritize public health over technological development. Ms. Dean said her concerns stemmed from experiences with environmental issues in other communities and encouraged residents to research incidents such as the water crisis in Flint, Michigan. She stressed that the discussion extends beyond economic considerations and involves the long-term health and safety of local residents.

Resident Sue Tuttle of Shalersville said township trustees would share any information they gathered about data centers with neighboring communities. She also asked previous speakers to provide copies of their comments or research materials to township officials.

Ms. West reminded attendees that the meeting was being recorded and would be available on the city's YouTube channel and website for public review.

During public comment, one resident asked why the city could not simply prohibit data centers outright.

Ms. Laudato responded that Council has the authority to enact legislation more quickly than a citizen-led initiative process. She indicated that Council members had expressed opposition to data center development and intended to pursue legislative action.

Ms. West clarified that the meeting was a Planning Committee meeting involving only three Council members and explained that any recommendation would need to advance to the Committee of the Whole before proceeding to a vote of the full council.

Resident Josh Howard praised the strong public turnout and raised concerns about the potential impact of data centers on air quality. Mr. Howard questioned whether increased emissions could lead to additional environmental regulations and costs for residents, noting existing concerns about rising prices for gas, electricity, water, and property taxes.

A young resident asked whether data centers could harm wildlife and animals that depend on local water sources.

Ms. Laudato, an animal rescuer, said protecting water quality was one of her primary concerns regarding data center development. She explained that Ravenna currently maintains high water quality standards and emphasized her commitment to preserving those protections for residents, pets, and wildlife.

Ms. Michael reminded attendees that any emergency ordinance establishing a moratorium would require approval from at least five council members.

Another resident, Randy Dean Jr., expressed concerns about the broader social effects of technology and artificial intelligence, including the impact of online content on children.

Following public comment, the Planning Committee unanimously voted to advance discussion of a data center moratorium to the Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Kairis explained that the Committee of the Whole would consider the matter at its April 20 meeting. If approved, the issue could advance to a Special Council meeting later that evening for formal action by the full council.

Ms. Laudato stated that she intended to propose a 12-month moratorium on data center development.

Mr. Kairis clarified that the proposed moratorium ordinance would be prepared by the Law Director and placed on the special meeting agenda if it advanced through the Committee of the Whole.

Before adjournment, Ms. Michael encouraged residents to continue sharing concerns and information with Council members via email, assuring attendees that council members were reviewing all public feedback.

- The item was moved forward.

Management Update

There being no further business for discussion, the meeting adjourned at 4:10 P.M.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council

**Carmen Laudato, Chairperson
Planning Committee**