



**MINUTES**

A meeting of the Planning Advisory Commission was held Wednesday, March 4, 2026, in the Board Room of the Public Education Center.

**Commissioners Present:**

Chairperson: Brad Baker  
Vice Chairperson: Michael Ernst  
Commissioners: Gloria Thomas, Zarome Lackey, Lakshmi Karthik, Patrick Steed, Anthony Smith

**Absent:** Rick Stallings, Haley Lyman

**Staff Members:** Morgan Shepard, Principal Planner  
John Renfroe, Assistant Director  
Will Johnson, Director

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chairperson Baker called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. All in attendance stood for the pledge of allegiance to the American Flag. He explained the rezoning process to the audience.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Chairperson Baker asked for a motion on the minutes from February 18, 2026. No changes or additions by other commissioners. Motion carries, minutes accepted.

**ZONING CASES:**

- 1. REZN-02-26-0189:** A request to rezone 12.80 acres of land located at 5306 Buena Vista Road. Current zoning is Single Family Residential 2 (SFR2). Proposed zoning is Residential Multifamily 1 (RMF1). The proposed use is Residential Multifamily. Integrity Development is the applicant. This property is located in Council District 4.

Mr. John Renfroe read the staff report.

**Applicant:** Integrity Development Partners, LLC  
**Owner:** Heath Crowe Power of Attorney for Connie Crowe  
**Location:** 5306 Buena Vista Road  
**Parcel:** 095-045-019  
**Acreage:** 12.80 Acres

<b>Current Zoning Classification:</b>	Single Family Residential – 2 (SFR2)
<b>Proposed Zoning Classification:</b>	Residential Multifamily – 1
<b>Proposed Condition:</b>	1. Maximum height of 45 feet
<b>Current Use of Property:</b>	Vacant/ Undeveloped
<b>Proposed Use of Property:</b>	Multi Family Residential
<b>General Land Use:</b>	Inconsistent Planning Area E
<b>Current Land Use Designation:</b>	Vacant/ Undeveloped
<b>Future Land Use Designation:</b>	Single Family Residential
<b>Compatible with Existing Land-Uses:</b>	No
<b>Environmental Impacts:</b>	The property does not lie within the floodway and floodplain area. The developer will need an approved drainage plan prior to issuance of a Site Development permit, if a permit is required.
<b>City Services:</b>	Property is served by all city services.
<b>Traffic Engineering:</b>	<p>This site shall meet the Codes and regulations of the Columbus Consolidated Government for residential usage.</p> <p>The proposed 160-unit apartment development will generate approximately 1,064 new daily trips and 91 PM peak hour trips. The traffic impact is moderate and manageable. Ongoing major infrastructure upgrades by GDOT (Spiderweb Improvements, DDI at I-185, and road widening) will significantly increase corridor capacity and mitigate impacts. The rezoning from SFR2 to RMF1 is traffic-feasible given the arterial nature of Buena Vista Road.</p>
<b>School Impact:</b>	N/A
<b>Buffer Requirement:</b>	The site shall include a Category B buffer along all property lines. The 3 options under Category B are:

1) 15 feet with a certain amount of canopy trees, under story trees, and shrubs / ornamental grasses per 100 linear feet.

2) 10 feet with a certain amount of shrubs / ornamental grasses per 100 linear feet and a wood fence or masonry wall.

3) 20 feet undisturbed natural buffer.

**Fort Moore’s Recommendation:** N/A

**DRI Recommendation:** N/A

<b>Surrounding Zoning:</b>	<b>North</b>	Single Family 2 (SFR2)/NeighborCommercial
	<b>South</b>	Single Family Residential – 3 (SFR3)
	<b>East</b>	Single Family Residential – 3 (SFR3)
	<b>West</b>	Single Family Residential – 2 (SFR2)

**Attitude of Property Owners:** **Fifty-Five (55)** property owners within 300 feet of the subject properties were notified of the rezoning request. The Planning Department received no calls and/or emails regarding the rezoning.

**Approval** 0 Responses

**Opposition** 0 Responses

**Additional Information:** 160 units proposed with 1,2 and 3 bedroom units to be built in two phases.

**Applicant Presentation:** Carter Brown of IDP Properties addressed the Commission. Mr. Brown stated that, based on significant housing need in the Columbus area, the highest and best use for the property would be multifamily residential. He clarified that the 160-unit figure shown on the site plan was included purely for transparency to illustrate the maximum density allowable under the requested zoning. He stated that the current plan for phase one is approximately 60 to 70 units, and that a phase two is not certain.

In response to a question about pricing, Mr. Brown explained that the project would be income-restricted apartments competing in Georgia’s state and federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program. If awarded tax credits, units would be restricted to households earning 50% and 60% of Area Median Income (AMI). Estimated monthly rents would be: one-bedroom, \$580–\$725; two-bedroom, \$700–\$850; three-bedroom, \$800–\$950.

Mr. Brown indicated the applicant proposes a 20-foot natural buffer around the entire site and stated that all stormwater runoff would be addressed on-site per applicable building codes.

When asked about architectural design, he referenced architectural inspiration photos included in the application and described three-story, brick-exterior apartment buildings. He noted the Georgia Tech housing study and the City's comprehensive plan, which identify a significant need for housing across all income levels in Columbus. Regarding community outreach, Mr. Brown stated the applicant followed all zoning protocol requirements, personally reached out to the council member for District 4, and engaged a traffic study firm proactively. The applicant has also updated the site plan to include a deceleration lane turning into the property, per early coordination with the city.

**Public Comment:**

- **Tim Ryan (3715 Willow Bend Run)** spoke in favor. Mr. Ryan, a 5-year Columbus resident and 10-year homeowner who rented for approximately 20 years, stated that the area lacks sufficient rental properties, that rental prices have been increasing sharply, and that affordability is a significant issue. He encouraged the Commission to approve the request.
- **Sheila Fredel (5255 Brinkman Street)** spoke with concerns. Ms. Fredel's property is directly behind the proposed development. She expressed concern about water runoff from increased impervious surfaces, burden on sewer and water systems, burden on internet and phone services, additional traffic, potential increase in crime, possible property value decreases, and the impact of removing vegetation. She also noted that she did not receive a notification letter about the hearing. Staff clarified that notification letters are mailed to property owners within 300 feet of the subject property, and that renters may not receive notification directly if they do not own the property. The Chairman further clarified that notification goes to the owner of record. Staff offered to follow up with Ms. Fredel to ensure she is properly notified for future mailings.
- **Evette Cody (5257 Brinkman Street)** spoke with concerns. Ms. Cody, a 23-year resident whose family has been in the community over 50 years, expressed concern about quality of life, noting the neighborhood was originally developed as a military, retirement, and family-oriented community. She raised concerns about crime, the adequacy of the proposed natural buffer, traffic congestion near the fire station and school zones, and potential increases in utility service demand. She asked whether the buffer would include physical fencing. The applicant responded that the natural buffer was currently proposed but that the developer was open to installing a fence if it would ease concerns.
- **Joshua Broomfeld (3700 Buena Vista Road)** raised concerns about economic development along the Buena Vista Road corridor, noting that recent construction has caused several businesses to close and that the remaining commercial establishments are limited. He questioned how residents of the proposed development would be supported economically given the low-wage jobs available in the immediate area. He also asked about the use of local Columbus labor during construction and minority business participation. The applicant responded that hiring locally is more cost-effective and that the company prioritizes local and minority contracting, though the formal state requirement for minority business participation has been eliminated.

**Motion:** Approval by Commissioner Ernst and seconded by Commissioner Thomas. Approved 4-2.

2. **REZN-02-26-0189:** A request to amend the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), Sections 2.5.25, 10.2.9 and Table 3.1.1 to create a Technology Overlay District. CCG is the applicant.

Before proceeding, the Chairman provided an extended explanation for the benefit of the large audience in attendance. He emphasized that today's action is not the rezoning of any specific property for a data center. He used the analogy of a filing cabinet: each zoning designation (SFR, RMF, Uptown, etc.) is a "file folder" containing rules and regulations, and today's action concerns whether to create a new file folder called "Technology Overlay District," with its own set of minimum standards. Any future proposal to apply the overlay to a specific property would require a separate, full rezoning process with its own public hearings and notification requirements. The Chairman set expectations for public decorum, noting all commissioners are volunteers who are also neighbors in the community.

Mr. John Renfroe read the staff report.

To provide an overlay to permit and regulate data centers and related technology uses that support and encourage the siting of new technology, computer systems, data infrastructure, and data hosting. The underlying zoning of any property would remain unaffected. Cryptocurrency mining (the commercial process by which cryptocurrency transactions are verified and added to the blockchain) is expressly not permitted as a data center use. Maximum building height limited to 75 feet. Minimum acreage of 75 acres. All cooling and ventilation equipment must operate on a closed-loop system and must follow watershed standards for use and disposal, with flushing and refills regulated by CCG and Columbus Water Works.

In addition to required setbacks, a minimum 200-foot-wide buffer (which may include required setbacks) is required along all property lines abutting a residential district to provide a visual screen. The overlay includes noise limitations consistent with the existing Muscogee County noise ordinance (65 dB daytime, 55 dB nighttime), as confirmed during discussion. The overlay would be available for application to properties zoned RE10, RE5, RE1, RO, CO, General Commercial, Light Manufacturing/Industrial (LMI), Heavy Manufacturing/Industrial (HMI), and Technology.

#### **Invited Presentations:**

- **Jeremy Cummings**, President and CEO, Columbus Water Works (9651 Whitesville Road) Mr. Cummings provided background on the water and sewer evaluation process. He explained that when Choose Columbus or the Chamber of Commerce evaluates prospective industry, projects are submitted under generic names (this project was called "Project Ruby"). Columbus Water Works evaluates water demand and wastewater treatment capacity without knowing the specific end user. Mr. Cummings stated that the project's water usage is not substantial and that he initially had no knowledge it was a data center.

Regarding water capacity, Mr. Cummings noted that Columbus has a 90-million-gallon-per-day withdrawal permit from Georgia EPD and currently averages 32 million gallons per day—barely one-third of permitted capacity. In 2007, the city sold 37 million gallons per day, compared to 32 million gallons per day currently, meaning the city sells 5 million gallons less per day now than it did nearly 20 years ago. The proposed project’s usage of 87,000 to approximately 230,000 gallons per day at full buildout would not rank among the city’s top 10 water users. Columbus returns over 90% of its water to the Chattahoochee River.

On sanitary sewer, Mr. Cummings stated that sewer service is not currently available at the site. Columbus Water Works’ 2049 master plan includes a \$30 million project to extend sewer to the area. The developer has offered to construct the sewer extension at its own cost, which would provide a significant savings to ratepayers and bring essential services to that part of the community. Mr. Cummings emphasized that existing residents would not be required to connect to the sewer, contrary to rumors circulating in the community. He explained that when septic systems fail, residents typically choose to connect voluntarily because it is more cost-feasible and environmentally beneficial.

Regarding drought management, Mr. Cummings stated that Columbus Water Works submits a drought management plan to Georgia EPD and that he serves as chair of the ACF (Apalachicola–Chattahoochee–Flint) Stakeholders for the Middle Chattahoochee basin. Drought management plans are developed proactively and implemented when drought conditions arise, applying conservation measures to all users—residential, industrial, and commercial alike. He stated that the data center’s water usage would not change the drought management calculus. Regarding water quality, Mr. Cummings explained that all industrial dischargers into the public sewer system must be permitted by Columbus Water Works, submit water quality samples, and meet pre-treatment standards before discharge is accepted. The state enforces environmental protection requirements regarding setbacks and buffers on water sources.

- **Missy Kendrick**, President, Choose Columbus and Development Authority of Columbus, Georgia. Ms. Kendrick addressed the proposed overlay district language. She stated that the overlay provides greater restrictions than the existing heavy industrial zoning category, including increased setbacks, buffer areas, noise limitations, building height restrictions, acreage minimums, and the closed-loop cooling system requirement. She noted that the overlay preserves the ability for community leaders and residents to evaluate each project individually through the full rezoning process. She stated that the Development Authority has not offered any incentives and has no development agreement with the developer. The site was chosen and acquired by the developer (Habitat Partners), not by Choose Columbus. Ms. Kendrick stated there is a commitment of 195 permanent jobs, plus approximately 1,500 construction jobs. She acknowledged that the end user is expected to be one of the five major hyperscale technology companies but that the specific end user has not been identified. Ms. Kendrick indicated that Choose Columbus has been operating as a standalone economic development

entity since approximately May 2025, having previously operated under the Chamber of Commerce, while the underlying Development Authority has existed since 1972.

**Public Comment:**

*Approximately 100–200 members of the public were in attendance. The following is a summary of public comments received. The Chairman repeatedly reminded speakers that today's action concerns the text amendment to create the overlay district, not the rezoning of a specific property. Names and addresses included in these minutes are recorded to the best of staff's ability and may be subject to minor discrepancies.*

- **Tim Ryan (3715 Willow Bend Run)** raised concerns about drought impacts and competition between residential and data center water needs; questioned the affordability impact on Columbus residents; noted that construction jobs are temporary and often filled by out-of-state contractors; expressed concern about rising utility costs associated with Georgia Power's nuclear reactor cost overruns; and urged the Commission to investigate health effects of subaudible infrasound noise pollution reported at data center sites in Texas and elsewhere.
- **Paul Olsen (13830 Upatoi Lane)**, a 34-year resident, expressed concern about noise levels, stating that data center exterior noise can range from 55 to 85 dB continuously and backup generators can exceed 90 dB, potentially exceeding the Muscogee County noise ordinance limits. He raised concerns about impacts on pets and livestock, property value decreases requiring disclosure upon resale, and electricity cost increases of 10–28% reported in other data center communities.
- **Mickey Bruner (8032 Dearwood Court, Upatoi)** asked whether the technology overlay district concept had been used previously. Staff and city representatives explained that Columbus has used overlay and standalone zoning ordinances in the past, including the Special Activity Center Overlay for TSYS (now Global Payments) and the Brookstone Center's Commercial Office designation, though neither was at this scale. Will Johnson, representing the city, noted that the overlay concept helps maintain local control and prevents the state legislature from potentially preempting local zoning authority over data centers.
- **Leslie Landy (7747 Layfield Road)** asked Mr. Cummings specific questions about Columbus Water Works' ability to filter contaminants from data center discharge. Mr. Cummings clarified that the data center, not the water utility, would be responsible for pre-treatment before discharge into the public system. Ms. Landy expressed concerns about potential contamination of Kendall Creek, aquifers, and underground springs. She provided personal testimony about her family's 70-acre property, purchased 10–11 years ago as a retirement and family compound, and stated she felt the community had not been given adequate time to research and ask informed questions. She specifically asked whether connection to the sewer could be funded by the developer as a concession if the project goes forward. She requested a moratorium to allow residents time to gather information.
- **Joshua Ferguson (6839 Whitesville Road)**, an IT consultant, spoke in favor. He stated that having a collocated data center within driving distance of Columbus would be valuable for medium-sized local businesses that cannot afford to build their own data

centers and currently rely on facilities in North Atlanta. He expressed general support for Choose Columbus's efforts to attract business.

- **Jeff Brantley (6328 Brookstone Boulevard)** raised concerns about the cumulative impact of multiple data centers being proposed statewide, questioning how water availability can be guaranteed as demand increases across Georgia. Mr. Cummings responded by citing Columbus's unique infrastructure capacity as a former mill town and reiterated the water usage math.
- **Matt Gilbert (Mobly Road)** expressed concern about creating the technology overlay for future use. He cited the degradation of Weracoba Creek, Lindsay Creek, and other Columbus tributaries due to historical industrial development, arguing that industrial oversight has been inadequate. He urged the Commission not to create an overlay for an industry with a history of the environmental problems Columbus already suffers from.
- **Jessica Warshel** thanked the commissioners for their volunteer service. She asked whether staff reports and supporting documents are available to the public. Staff confirmed that all materials are available online at [columbusga.gov/planning](http://columbusga.gov/planning) under the rezoning header, via a Trello board tracking all active cases. She requested access to all information that has been provided to the Commission and city officials regarding the project.
- **Casey Burdett (2977 Victory Circle)** asked what specific technologies and uses are allowed under the overlay and why CCG requested it. Will Johnson responded that a primary concern is maintaining local control, noting that there are bills pending in the state legislature that could remove local zoning authority over data centers. The overlay ensures Muscogee County retains control over restrictions. Ms. Burdett acknowledged the value of the overlay concept but asked the Commission to slow down for the community's comfort level.
- **A speaker identifying herself as Johnson (Valley area)** raised concerns about the 330,000-gallon-per-day closed-loop water system, which she stated had not been adequately explained. She raised extensive concerns about lithium-ion battery thermal runaway risks, citing a September battery explosion at a South Korean data center that halted over 600 government services and required nearly 200 firefighters and 10 hours to control. She described the five stages of thermal runaway and noted that evacuation of a 10-mile radius could be necessary. She asked whether the overlay language includes provisions for public utility facilities, generators, and nuclear modules (small modular reactors). She urged more precise regulatory language, an independent industrial hygiene expert, and a moratorium on the overlay.
- **Mick Ederson (2121 13th Street)** asked whether the overlay is solely for data centers or could accommodate other large-scale technology projects. Staff confirmed the focus is data centers and related technology uses. He asked about hazardous waste handling provisions; staff responded that such matters are typically regulated at the federal level and addressed on a site-specific basis rather than in zoning ordinances. He urged the Commission to allow more time for deliberation.
- **Shiara Richardson (2018 Paris Drive)** acknowledged the importance of economic growth but noted the scale difference between existing Columbus data centers (e.g., Synovus at

approximately 50,000 sq. ft.) and the proposed hyperscale facility. She asked whether the overlay is intended solely for the currently proposed project or as a permanent zoning tool for future application across Muscogee County. She also asked whether the city, Development Authority, or utilities have already signed any economic development or infrastructure agreements. Ms. Kendrick responded that the Development Authority has not entered into any agreements and is not offering incentives, and that the end user is expected to be one of the five major hyperscalers but has not been identified.

- **Rick Rivera (6255 Charing Drive, District 5)**, who manages computer servers professionally, raised economic concerns. He argued that AI represents a speculative investment bubble similar to the 2006 housing bubble, funded by circular debt among a few companies. He stated that hyperscale data centers do not create meaningful local jobs, as physical security and custodial work may be contracted locally but equipment management and HVAC are typically handled by out-of-state personnel sent by vendors. He distinguished hyperscale AI-focused data centers from the smaller credit card processing and insurance data centers already in Columbus, noting that his own company recently vacated its Corporate Ridge facility due to shrinking IT footprints.
- **Christine D. Felicia Antonio (313 Sumac, District 8)**, representing Clean Energy Columbus and St. Thomas Episcopal's outreach partnership with Georgia Interfaith Power & Light, asked whether the overlay creates an open door for additional data center campuses with cumulative environmental effects, and whether minimum requirements could instead be written into a contract specific to the proposed hyperscaler. The Chairman responded that the overlay does not create a fast-track pathway, as any future application would require the full rezoning process with public hearings. She requested the Commission extend the timeline for public input.
- **Lydia Ray (Midtown Columbus)**, a professor of computer science with 20 years of cybersecurity research experience, challenged the national security argument for data centers. She stated that building a data center within a specific state or country does not inherently increase the security of cloud-stored data, as the internet has no physical boundaries and cloud security requires extensive specialized planning. She argued that unregulated growth of AI data centers increases information security risks until the research community develops better understanding of agentic AI threats.
- **Cindy Hutchkins (912 South Willowcross Way, LaGrange)**, a leader of the Troup County Anti-Data Center Coalition, provided detailed testimony based on her personal experience in Fayette County, where she was forced to sell her home due to a Georgia Power substation expansion associated with the QTS data center. She described high-voltage transmission monopoles installed 50–75 feet from homes, the demolition of two brick million-dollar homes, and over 330 properties affected by the Ashley-Wansley transmission line. She urged commissioners to visit Fayette County before making a decision. She raised concerns about NDAs in economic development processes, Georgia Power's infrastructure expansion authority, utility bill increases, PFAS contamination found near data center sites, and potential small modular reactor (SMR) deployments. She noted that she was laid off from her graphic design position the previous Friday due to AI automation. She announced her candidacy for Georgia State House District 138.

She mentioned an upcoming town hall hosted by Clean Energy Columbus scheduled for the following Monday evening at the library from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.

- **Joshua Broomfeld (3700 Buena Vista Road)** questioned how the Commission could vote when the end user has not been identified. He argued that the overlay timeline appears to be running parallel with the data center proposal rather than preceding it, noting that the overlay request and Project Ruby discussions appear to be concurrent. The Chairman and staff reiterated that today's action creates the regulatory framework and does not approve any specific project. Will Johnson emphasized that the overlay provides protections that would not exist if the project were pursued under existing heavy manufacturing zoning.
- **Dan V. (14 West Fifth Street)** sought clarification that the vote would only create the overlay district and its preliminary standards, not rezone any property. The Chairman confirmed this. He recommended an independent environmental study not connected to development or business interests and asked about the process for adding to the overlay's requirements. The Chairman explained that both the Commission and City Council have authority to recommend or enact amendments to the overlay language.
- **Jeremy Gibson (7628 Layfield Road)** characterized the overlay as an opportunity to be more restrictive and prescriptive but stated the current draft is not sufficiently restrictive. He sought clarification on how RE1 zoning interacts with the 75-acre minimum, and staff explained the history of properties on Layfield Road being voluntarily rezoned from RE1 to RE5 and RE10 around 2010. He expressed concern that the overlay could be amended later to benefit the facility operator (e.g., increasing permissible noise levels). Will Johnson clarified an important distinction: because the overlay is part of the Unified Development Ordinance (zoning code) rather than a standalone noise ordinance, any amendments must go through the full rezoning and public hearing process. Amendments to the noise ordinance, by contrast, require only six votes of City Council.
- **Darlene Leard (2111 Forest Court)** asked who proposed the overlay. Staff stated it came from the city administration (deputy city managers and mayor with council's knowledge), not from Choose Columbus or the Development Authority. Ms. Leard urged commissioners to research hyperscale data centers independently, noting that 600 megawatts of power could serve roughly 400,000 to 600,000 households and that no existing infrastructure supports that demand. She stated that other municipalities across the country have been voting against data centers and urged the Commission to pause and do more research.
- **Ronnie Wilson (7725 Carthage Road)**, a resident since 2009, spoke about quality of life concerns and the impact on three counties (Muscogee, Harris, and Talbot). He asked whether archaeological reviews are conducted for proposed developments. The Chairman confirmed that site-specific studies, including archaeological assessments, may be required when a rezoning application is submitted for a particular property, but that this is not part of today's text amendment action.
- **Alicia Heracort (2666 McKee Road, Harris County)** reminded the Commission that the proposed data center site borders Harris County and Talbot County. She stated she would live approximately two miles from the facility and expressed concern that existing

high-voltage power lines along her property could act as conduits for noise and pollution. She stated that 200 feet of buffer would be insufficient given the terrain and that a facility of this size would require 150 to 200 generators, raising significant noise and pollution concerns. She noted the proximity to Upatoi Ravines, a natural area managed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

- **Courtney Brian (8008 Jenkins Road, Upatoi)** questioned what improvements the closed-loop system is designed to address compared to earlier evaporative systems. Ms. Kendrick explained the evolution from evaporative cooling (requiring millions of gallons per day) to closed-loop systems (significantly less water usage), and noted that future technologies may further reduce water consumption. Ms. Brian raised concerns about the National Wildlife Federation's findings on sensory danger zones for wildlife near data centers, the impact of continuous 24/7 noise (as opposed to intermittent noise from Fort Benning), the impact on property values, and the construction timeline and disruption to the Upatoi community. The Chairman noted that construction details would be addressed when and if a specific rezoning application is submitted.
- **Debbie Jackson (7900 Layfield Road)**, whose property is fewer than 1.7 miles from the proposed site, asked why notification was not sent to Layfield Road residents. The Chairman reiterated that today's action is a text amendment, not a rezoning of a specific property, and that notification within 300 feet will occur if and when a site-specific rezoning application is filed. Staff noted they have gone beyond 300 feet in past cases. Ms. Jackson expressed concerns about well water contamination, archaeological burial sites on family property (including her late husband's grave on the family's lakefront property, recorded in the historical society), and the risk of thermal runaway requiring immediate evacuation.
- **Robert Landy (7747 Layfield Road)** asked two direct questions: (1) What precipitated the creation of this overlay? Staff responded that the city administration directed the planning department to develop the ordinance; it was not initiated by Choose Columbus or the Development Authority. (2) Did the planning department consult with outside industry experts when developing the ordinance? Staff acknowledged that no outside experts were retained, citing budget constraints. Mr. Landy urged the city to hire experts to help craft appropriate protections, stating this is "a big deal" that warrants expert input.

*Commissioner Lackey stated for the record that he lives within two miles of the proposed data center site (in the Dearwood area) and that this issue affects all Columbus residents regardless of proximity. He stated he did not want anyone to believe the commissioners have predetermined their positions or are unaffected by the outcome.*

- **Jenny Davidson (Upatoi Lane)** asked whether an existing zoning classification (such as heavy industrial) could accommodate the proposed use, and what would happen if the overlay is not approved. Will Johnson explained that the property could potentially be rezoned to heavy manufacturing, but without the overlay there would be no data-center-specific protections—no 200-foot buffer, no 75-acre minimum, no closed-loop system requirement, and no noise provisions beyond the general noise ordinance. He further noted that proximity to the Oglethorpe Power Center on Carthage Road in

Talbot County could provide a legal basis for heavy manufacturing rezoning that might not constitute spot zoning. He emphasized that the overlay provides more protections than a heavy manufacturing classification.

**Motion:** Commissioner Lackey made a motion to table the request until further information can be obtained and the Commission can better understand the issues raised. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Thomas. Tabled with a 4-2 vote.

**NEW BUSINESS:** N/A

**OLD BUSINESS:** N/A

**ADJOURNMENT:** 12:15 P.M.

**RECORDING:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-h0A2QQ4oo>

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**Brad Baker, Chairperson**

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**Morgan Shepard, Principal Planner**