



**WEST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP  
Planning Commission  
Agenda  
Tuesday, March 17, 2026  
7:00 P.M.**

[Etiquette for  
hybrid meetings](#)

Meeting will be held in-person and via Zoom

[Register for Zoom Meeting](#)

Call by Phone: 1-646-558-8656

Meeting ID: 873 0897 0242      Passcode: 507637

Meeting Packets can be found on the Township website

**CALL TO ORDER**

**REVIEW OF MEETING MINUTES**

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes: March 3, 2026

**PUBLIC COMMENT/CONCERNS/QUESTIONS**

Comments or questions regarding issues NOT on the agenda should be raised at this time. Members of the public will have an opportunity to ask questions and comment upon agenda items during the discussion on those items.

**PLANS**

**NEW BUSINESS**

**OLD BUSINESS**

Draft ordinance regarding data centers.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Next Meeting:** April 14, 2026



# MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Planning Commission  
**FROM:** John R. Weller, AICP  
Director of Planning and Zoning  
**SUBJECT:** **Proposed zoning regulations for data centers**  
**DATE:** February 6, 2026

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Staff has prepared the attached draft amendment to the Township Zoning Ordinance for the regulation of data centers, based upon our earlier conversations at meetings, various model ordinances, and other research. We would like to discuss the attached draft at our meeting on February 17. This memorandum will guide you through the text and will also give you some background on our thinking, explaining why some elements have been included – and why we have NOT included some elements found in the models.

The attachment is in the form of an amending ordinance, which is how the Board will eventually adopt the final version. The amending ordinance lists all of the changes being proposed, in the order which they appear in the Zoning Ordinance:

- **Section 1** lists new definitions to be added to Article II. The only term we’re proposing to add is a definition for “data center.” The definition shown is based upon the model ordinances and is the same as what was discussed at the January 6 meeting. Some of the models define other terms, but we thought them superfluous. If you disagree, we can discuss on the 17<sup>th</sup>.
  - **Sections 2 and 3** amend the use regulations for the Limited Industrial (I-1) and General Industrial (I-2) zoning districts to allow data centers as a conditional use. This is based upon our prior discussion, but we can discuss further – as long as we allow the use somewhere. You will recall that any non-residential use with more than 20,000 sq.ft. of floor area must be reviewed as a conditional use, so it may seem redundant to add the conditional use requirement to the district regulations. But we it doesn’t hurt to make that requirement clear.
  - **Section 4** contains the actual regulatory language. The regulations are proposed as a new §325-38.4 in the Zoning Ordinance, which locates them in Article VIII, “Supplementary Land Use Regulations.” This article provides additional standards for specific uses that apply in all zoning districts.
  - **Section 5** amends our parking regulations to cite data centers specifically. We have noted that even very large data centers require remarkably few employees, so this amendment is necessary in order to prevent our regulations from being interpreted to require acres of unneeded asphalt.
  - **Sections 6 and 7** are administrative items.
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## Comments on the proposed regulations (Section 4).

The quality of regulations is not a function of their length. In fact, our experience has been that more words provide more opportunity for misinterpretation and the creation of unintended loopholes. If you have read any of the model ordinances, you may note that what is proposed excludes some elements found in the models. In many cases this is because those elements are addressed by our existing regulations. Examples include a variety of impact studies to be included with the conditional use application (already required by §325-124.A(5) of the Zoning), landscaping (required by §§281-33 thru -37 of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance), and stormwater management (required by §281-38 of the S/LDO and the Stormwater Management Ordinance).

We also need to be sure that any new regulations cannot be interpreted as unreasonably discriminatory. Relying upon existing regulations – as described above – makes us less vulnerable to such an accusation: these regulations already apply to all applications and are not affected by this amendment, so there is no basis for claiming that they place a more onerous burden on data centers. And if some issue arises in the course of the review process, the Township has a right to attach a condition to their approval to address that issue – which is why they're called **conditional** uses.

In addition to these general concepts, please note the following more specific items.

1. **Subsection B** restricts the applicability of the requirements to larger data centers. As we have discussed, smaller facilities are of limited concern, have limited impact (but are still subject to the performance standards in §325-41 of the Zoning), and are so prevalent that controlling them with these regulations would be a burden on the Township. The 20,000 sq.ft. threshold was chosen for two reasons. First, 20,000 sq.ft. of new non-residential floor area is the existing threshold beyond which all uses are subject to conditional use review. Second, this is also an industry standard: data centers of 20,000 sq.ft. or less are considered "small" or "micro" (when smaller than 5,000 sq.ft.); at 20,000 sq.ft. and above, they are deemed "average" or "hyperscale."
2. The common accessory uses in **Subsection C** are based upon the various models we reviewed. Even so, it's unlikely that we could anticipate all possible accessory uses, so paragraph C(7) is a catch-all provision.
3. Cell towers – or "wireless communications facilities" – are common accessory uses, which are provided for by **paragraph C(3)**, citing our existing regulations. These regulations limit tower height to 120 ft., but many towers are taller than this. The two microwave towers approved as part of the data center development in East Whiteland are each 150 ft. tall. **Do we want to amend the height limit to allow taller towers?**
4. **Subsection D** lists supplementary information to be provided with the conditional use application for a data center. This information addresses concerns peculiar to data centers: water and energy consumption, and an emergency response plan. Note that paragraph D(2)(d) requires the data center developer to offset their energy consumption through the development or purchase of new renewable energy. This is consistent with the Township's commitment (through the WCACOG) to sustainability and renewable energy and is a feature of data center regulations that we have found in other communities.

5. Where a data center application proposes 500,000 sq.ft. or more of floor area, §325-124.A of the Zoning already requires a traffic impact study, a recreation impact study, a fiscal impact analysis, an environment and sustainability analysis, and a historic resources impact study (when such resources are within 300 feet of the project site).
  6. We are not suggesting any use-specific area-and-bulk standards, so these aspects will be controlled by the standards of the I-1 and I-2 districts. In the I-1 district, the minimum front yard setback is 75 ft., the minimum side yard setback is 35 ft., and the minimum rear yard setback is 50 ft. For the I-2 district, the setback requirements are 100 ft. (front) and 75 ft. (side and rear). The building height limit in both districts is 35 ft., but both districts also include a provision whereby this can be raised to 50 ft. if the building is set back an additional one foot for each foot above 35 ft. of building height. So the setbacks for a 50 ft. tall building would in each case be 15 ft. more than the numbers shown above. The data center buildings approved in East Whiteland are each 60 ft. tall. **Do we want to consider adjusting the height limit to allow buildings taller than 50 ft., perhaps with a higher additional setback requirement?**
  7. As noted previously, our regular landscaping requirements will apply, but paragraph D(3) clarifies that a "screening buffer" will be required around the perimeter of the site. This is a 50-foot wide, landscaped strip that will visually screen the site from surrounding properties.
  8. A number of other communities include architectural standards for data centers. We have not included any here, but we can discuss these if you like. We are hesitant to include them for three reasons. First, we do not have any such standards for other large structures, like warehouses (although we could add them). Second, since we require extensive landscaping to shield the building(s) from public view, one could question the justification for such standards. Third, some of the standards we have seen in other communities are extensive and detailed, creating concerns about interpretation and enforcement.
  9. **Subsection E** provides operational standards to address concerns unique to data centers. We bring attention to the existing performance standards in §325-41, which address air quality, odor, noise, and vibration, among other parameters. You will note that paragraph E(1) adds a noise limit based upon C-weighted decibels (dBC) in addition to the more common A-weighted limit (dBA) in §325-41. The C-weighted scale specifically addresses the low-frequency hum associated with data centers that has been a cause of concern. The limit of 60 dBC is from the model ordinance developed by Food & Water Watch.
  10. The operational standards also address concerns about the safe storage of batteries and provide for an annual inspection.
  11. **Subsection F** addresses the Community Benefits Agreement that is an increasingly common element of data center proposals. These are sometimes proffered by the data center developer, but we thought it would be helpful to put any developers on notice about the kinds of benefits we're really interested in – and that are obviously related to the data center operation and not just a random wish list.
  12. **Subsection G** is the decommissioning requirement. While we don't have this requirement for any other use, Staff agrees that it is appropriate for data centers given the extraordinary size of the buildings and the likelihood of their obsolescence. The language – including the financial security requirement – is based upon the model ordinances we consulted.
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We trust that this background will be useful to you as you review the proposed language. If you have any questions regarding these provisions, they must be discussed at a public meeting, but if you provide them to us in advance, we can be prepared for such discussion.

Please note that the Township Solicitor has yet to review the proposed language; they may direct changes based upon legal concerns.

PC MMO's - Miscellaneous\2026\260206 - data center zoning

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
WEST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP  
CHESTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA**

**ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 325, "ZONING," OF THE WEST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP CODE OF ORDINANCES TO PROVIDE FOR THE REGULATION OF DATA CENTERS AS A PERMITTED USE IN THE TOWNSHIP, INCLUDING DEFINITIONS OF TERMS, ESTABLISHING PERMITTED LOCATIONS, CONDITIONS FOR APPROVAL, OPERATIONAL STANDARDS, AND DECOMMISSIONING**

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**BE IT HEREBY ENACTED AND ORDAINED** by the Board of Supervisors of West Whiteland Township, Chester County, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as follows:

**Section 1.** Section 325-8, "Definitions," of Chapter 325, "Zoning," of the West Whiteland Township Code of Ordinances is hereby amended to add definitions for the following terms:

DATA CENTER - A building or a portion of a building that houses computer systems and associated components for the purpose of storage, management, processing, and/or transmission of digital data. These systems and components may include but are not limited to servers, switches, routers, communication hardware, and back-up energy sources, including but not limited to battery storage.

**Section 2.** Section 325-18, "I-1 Limited Industrial District," of Chapter 325, "Zoning," of the West Whiteland Township Code of Ordinances is hereby amended by the addition of a new Section 325-18.B(10)(d), as follows:

- d. Data centers with a total floor area of more than 20,000 sq.ft. or as the principal use of a property, regardless of size, subject to the additional provisions of §325-28.4 of this Chapter.

**Section 3.** Section 325-19, "I-2 General Industrial District," of Chapter 325, "Zoning," of the West Whiteland Township Code of Ordinances is hereby amended by the addition of a new Section 325-19.B(11)(l), as follows:

- l. Data centers with a total floor area of more than 20,000 sq.ft. or as the principal use of a property, regardless of size, subject to the additional provisions of §325-28.4 of this Chapter.

**Section 4.** Article VIII, "Supplementary Land Use Regulations," of Chapter 325, "Zoning," of the West Whiteland Township Code of Ordinances is hereby amended by the addition of a new Section 325-28.4, "Data Centers," as follows:

## §325-28.4: Data Centers

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### A. Purpose.

The purpose of this section is to assure that the operation of data center will not adversely affect the health, safety, or general welfare of the occupants of neighboring properties or of the public generally.

### B. Applicability.

- (1) The provisions of this section apply to all data centers that are the principal use of a property and to data centers that are accessory to some other principal use of a property where the total floor area occupied by the data center use is 20,000 square feet or more. Where a single building contains multiple areas meeting the definition of a “data center,” the applicability of this section shall be based upon the combined floor area of all such data center areas.
- (2) Data centers smaller than 20,000 sq.ft. are permitted as an accessory use by right in all zoning districts.

### C. Accessory uses.

The following uses are specifically permitted when ancillary to the data center operation:

- (1) Administrative offices.
- (2) Security provisions, including offices and other accommodations for security personnel, and security structures, including but not limited to fences and barriers.
- (3) Wireless communications facilities, subject to the provisions of Article XXII of this Chapter.
- (4) Storage facilities, except that outdoor storage is prohibited.
- (5) Electrical substations.
- (6) Water treatment facilities, including facilities for storage of water, provided that the Applicant can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Township during the conditional use review process that such facilities will not present a hazard to any surrounding property or to the public generally.
- (7) Any other use or structure required to support the data center operation, provided that the Applicant can satisfy the Township

as to the need for such use or structure in the course of the conditional use review process, and that such use or structure will not present a hazard to any surrounding property or to the public generally.

D. Conditional use requirements.

In the course of the conditional use review required for data centers subject to the provisions of this section, the applicant shall address the following issues to the satisfaction of the Township, in addition to the impact studies and statements required by §325-124.A of this Chapter.

- (1) Water usage. The conditional use application shall include a description of the water needs of the data center and all proposed accessory uses. This description shall be prepared by a qualified professional satisfactory to the Township, and shall, as a minimum:
  - (a) Provide estimates of the volume of water to be withdrawn and consumed, and of the volume of wastewater to be discharged.
  - (b) Identify the source(s) of all water to be used by the facility. Where the source(s) include a public utility, the Applicant shall provide documentation from such utility stating that they have the capacity to meet the needs of the project.
  - (c) Quantify the impacts of usage and discharge upon the natural environment and the existing users of the water source(s), including the impacts upon groundwater and surface waters, and the fiscal impact upon existing users and the general public.
- (2) Energy consumption. The conditional use application shall include a description of the energy needs of the data center and all proposed accessory uses. This description shall be prepared by a qualified professional satisfactory to the Township, and shall, as a minimum:
  - (a) Provide an estimate of the energy demand of the facility.
  - (b) Identify the source(s) that will meet the projected energy needs of the facility. Where the source(s) include a public utility, the Applicant shall provide documentation from such utility stating that they have the capacity to meet the needs of the project. If the documentation from the utility indicates the need for capital improve-

ments to the generation and/or distribution infrastructure in order to meet said needs, the estimated cost of such improvements shall be noted.

- (c) Describe the impact of the facility upon the energy infrastructure and the existing customers of any and all public utilities that have agreed to supply the facility, including but not limited to any impact upon service reliability and the fiscal impact upon existing customers and the general public.
- (d) The data center operator shall be required to develop or purchase sufficient new renewable energy to offset one hundred percent (100%) of the projected electricity consumption of the data center operation. The effects and timing of such development and/or purchase shall be included in the analysis required by §325-28.4.D(2)(d), hereabove.
- (e) Provide a description of provisions for back-up power, should any or all of the utilities and other energy providers cease to provide energy temporarily.

(3) Design requirements.

The data center shall be in full compliance with the area and bulk requirements of the zoning district within which it is located. The plan provided with the conditional use application shall demonstrate the feasibility of full compliance with the landscaping requirements of Article IV of Chapter 281, "Subdivision and Land Development," of the Township Code of Ordinances, including the provision of a "screening buffer" around the perimeter of the site, pursuant to §281-35.D of the said Article.

(4) Emergency response plan.

- (a) The information submitted with the conditional use application shall include an emergency response plan ("ERP") outlining potential emergency situations, including, at a minimum, fire, flooding and other weather-related events, and structural damage to the building(s).
- (b) The ERP shall include detailed procedures for responses to all identified emergency situations, including provisions for fire suppression and containment, evacuation of the building, and notification of first responders and other emergency service providers as may be needed in a given situation.

- (c) If the ERP identifies an emergency situation with the potential to affect other properties, the ERP shall include a procedure for providing public notice.
- (d) The ERP shall be reviewed by and found satisfactory to the Township's Emergency Management Coordinator ("EMC"). Should the EMC require the services of a professional consultant to review the ERP, the cost of such consultant shall be borne by the applicant.

E. Operational requirements.

- (1) Data centers shall operate in compliance with the physical performance standards established in §325-41 of this Chapter. In addition to the noise limits established by Chapter 213 of the Township Code of Ordinances and cited in said §325-41, the data center and accessory uses on the property shall not produce sound exceeding 60 dBC at any time, as measured at the property line of the data center property.
- (2) Any accommodations for energy storage devices, including but not limited to batteries, shall comply with National Fire Protection Association Standard 855, "Installation of Stationary Energy Storage Systems," and shall be provided with a fire suppression system(s) designed for the devices being used.
- (3) Electronic waste generated by a data center shall be disposed of through an entity specializing in the recycling and safe disposal of electronic waste. Such entity shall be acceptable to the Township, and the data center operator shall be required to maintain a log of all such waste provided to such entity. This log shall be available to the Township upon request.
- (4) The data center shall be inspected at least once annually to confirm continuing compliance with fire safety standards.
  - (a) This inspection shall be conducted by or at the direction of the Township Fire Marshal, or by a third-party entity retained by the data center operator acceptable to the Township Fire Marshal.
  - (b) In addition to documenting compliance with said standards, the inspection shall note if any site-specific training and/or equipment should be provided to first responders.
  - (c) Should any necessary, site-specific training and/or equipment for first responders be identified, such training

and/or equipment shall be provided to the first responders at the expense of the data center operator and at no cost to the first responders, the Township, or any other public entity.

F. Community Benefits Agreement (“CBA”).

The Township shall have the right to require a CBA as a condition of approval of a conditional use application for a data center. The intent of a CBA is to define how the data center operator will be required to offset the impacts of the data center upon the community. Benefits required by a CBA shall be established in consideration of the following:

- (1) Impacts upon the community identified by the impact studies and statements required pursuant to §325-124.A and §325-28.4.D of this Chapter, particularly including the impacts upon traffic, the natural environment, and historic resources.
- (2) The need for specialized equipment and/or training to monitor compliance with the provisions of this Chapter as well as any conditions imposed by the conditional use decision and order.
- (3) The need for specialized equipment and/or training for emergency service providers as identified in the ERP or in consultation with such providers.
- (4) The potential for stream and floodway restoration projects that will enhance stormwater management facilities, reduce flood risk, and/or support the Township’s Pollution Reduction Plan.
- (5) Options for enhancing public open spaces and recreational facilities, including but not necessarily limited to how best to satisfy the requirements established in §281-47 of Chapter 281, “Subdivision and Land Development,” of the Township Code of Ordinances.
- (6) Opportunities for the preservation, restoration, or adaptive reuse of historic resources upon or in proximity to the site.
- (7) Other concerns as may arise in the course of the conditional use hearing.

G. Decommissioning and closure.

The conditional use application shall include a Decommissioning Plan for the safe shutdown, removal of equipment, disposal and/or recycling of materials, and site restoration of the data center buildings and property for implementation at such time that the data center operation ceases.

- (1) The Decommissioning Plan shall establish that the decommissioning process will begin within one year of the cessation of data center operations and that the entire process will be completed within a period of eighteen months thereafter, unless a longer period is agreed to by the Board of Supervisors.
- (2) The Decommissioning Plan shall provide for:
  - (a) The removal of all above-ground structures and equipment;
  - (b) The removal of sub-surface infrastructure, including but not limited to building foundations, underground tanks and other storage, and utilities;
  - (c) The disposal of any hazardous materials in accordance with applicable law;
  - (d) The safe disconnection of all utilities; and
  - (e) The stabilization and landscaping of disturbed areas and the restoration of the site generally to a condition compatible with the surrounding area to the satisfaction of the Township.
- (3) The Board of Supervisors may exempt features from the above removal requirements where they determine that there is sufficient public benefit to such features remaining;
- (4) The Decommissioning Plan shall include an estimated cost for the decommissioning process.
- (5) As a condition of final approval of the land development plan for the data center, the applicant shall be required to provide financial security in a form acceptable to the Township sufficient to cover the full cost of executing the Decommissioning Plan.
- (6) In the event that the Decommissioning Plan is not executed to the satisfaction of the Township, the Township shall have the right to draw upon the financial security to complete the work. Should the cost of completing the decommissioning exceed the amount of the financial security, the Township shall have the right to pursue all legal means to reimburse the Township for costs incurred relative to the decommissioning, including placing a lien upon the subject property.
- (7) The Township shall have the right to direct the data center operator to review the Decommissioning Plan from time to time (but not more than once in a 24-month period) for the purpose of

confirming its viability, updating the cost estimate, and adjusting the financial security accordingly.

**Section 5.** Section 325-39.H(6) of Chapter 325, “Zoning,” of the West Whiteland Township Code of Ordinances is hereby amended by the addition of the following to the chart in that section.

Data centers (20,000 sq.ft. or less)	2 spaces; or 1 space/4,000 sq.ft. of floor area, whichever is more
Data centers (larger than 20,000 sq.ft.)	As needed, to be determined in the course of the conditional use hearing for the facility

**Section 6.** The provisions of this Ordinance are severable, and if any section, sentence, clause, part, or provision thereof shall be held illegal, invalid, or unconstitutional by any court of competent jurisdiction, such decision of the court shall not affect or impair the remaining sections, sentences, clauses, parts, or provisions of this Ordinance.

**Section 7.** This Ordinance shall take effect and be in force five (5) days from the date of enactment.

ENACTED AND ORDAINED this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2026.

**BOARD of SUPERVISORS  
WEST WHITELAND TOWNSHIP**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Brian Dunn, Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Rajesh Kumbhardare, Vice-Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Libby Madarasz, Supervisor

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pam Gural-Bear, Township Manager