

## PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES - CITY OF INVER GROVE HEIGHTS

Tuesday, April 7, 2026 - 7:00 p.m.  
City Council Chambers - 8150 Barbara Avenue

### 1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Weber called the Planning Commission Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

### 2. ROLL CALL

Commissioner(s) Present: Jonathan Weber (Chair)  
Scott Clancy (Vice-Chair)  
Lance Twedt (Secretary)  
Jason Teiken  
Connor Gosell  
Aida Schaefer  
Robert Heidenreich  
Amy Hunting  
Dennis Wippermann

Commissioner(s) Absent: None.

Staff Present: Jason Ziemer, Community Development Director  
Kevin Shay, Planning Manager  
Stacy Bodsberg, Community Development Support Specialist

### 3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Twedt, Second by Clancy, to Approve the Agenda as Published.

Ayes: 9

Nays: 0      Motion Carried.

### 4. CONSENT AGENDA

#### A. Minutes of the March 3, 2026, Planning Commission Meeting.

Motion by Hunting, Second by Clancy, to Approve the Minutes as Submitted.

Ayes: 9

Nays: 0      Motion Carried.

### 5. PUBLIC HEARING

**A.** Consider a Request for Approval of a Major Site Plan Review on the expansion of the current dealership building, and development of a new parking structure and parking lot changes; a Conditional Use Permit for the proposed building height of the new parking structure, an Amendment for the expansion and replacement of the detailing center, and an Amendment to expand the current dealership building; and an Easement Vacation of an existing Stormwater Easement, and a Drainage Only Easement on property located at 4600 Akron Avenue and 1037 50th Street. *(Item was tabled at the March 3, 2026, Planning Commission meeting and will be tabled to the May 5, 2026, Planning Commission meeting)*

Motion by Twedt, Second by Schaefer, to table the item until the May 5, 2026, Planning Commission meeting.

Ayes: 9

Nays: 0      Motion Carried.

**B.** Consider a Request for Approval of a Major Site Plan Review for an Xcel Substation Expansion and a Variance from the Maximum Fence Height Requirements Located at 11548 Clark Road.

### **Reading of Public Notice**

Commissioner Twedt read the Public Hearing Notice.

### **Presentation of Request**

Planning Manager Shay presented a request for a Major Site Plan Review and Variance for the existing Xcel Substation located at 11548 Clark Road. The property is zoned I-2, General Industry and guided GI, General Industrial. The proposal includes a 3.8-acre expansion of the existing 49-acre site, a new northern access from Clark Road, and installation of a chain link security fence around the expanded Substation area.

### **Site Plan Standards Evaluation**

- Structure Setbacks: Met
  - Required setback from Clark Road is 40 feet; proposed setbacks exceed 100 feet and meet City Code requirements.
- Road Access Location: Met
  - Proposed northern access is more than 800 feet from the existing southern access and meets spacing guidelines; reviewed and approved by Engineering.
- Impervious Surface and Stormwater: Met with conditions
  - Plan includes a new stormwater pond north of the expansion area; minor outstanding Engineering conditions remain to be addressed.
- Tree Preservation: Met with conditions
  - Tree inventory completed for the impacted area; mitigation may be required if removal exceeds 60% threshold, with option for fee-in-lieu.

### **Variance Criteria Evaluation**

- Harmony with the City Code and Comprehensive Plan: Met
  - A federal mandate requires substations to have at least ten-foot-tall security fencing, using enhanced materials for durability and intrusion deterrence.
- Use of the Property in a Reasonable Manner: Met
  - The substation is already secured with substantial fencing.
- Unique Circumstances Not Created by Landowner: Met
  - This requirement is not due to circumstances created by the applicant, but rather a federal mandate.
- No Alteration to Essential Character of the Locality: Met
  - The surrounding area along Clark Road is entirely industrial in nature, and a ten-foot-tall fence will not adversely impact the character of the area.
- Not Based Solely on Economic Considerations: Met
  - The installation of a taller fence reflects a higher cost improvement rather than a cost-saving measure.

### **Recommended Action**

Approval of the Major Site Plan Review and Variance to allow the Substation Expansion and installation of a ten-foot-tall fence at the property.

Commissioner Teiken stated that similar requests for a fence Variance have been approved previously and inquired if this request is the same type. Shay stated that the request is the second identical request but at a different location. Staff may consider a City Code Amendment to avoid future Variance requests.

### **Opening of Public Hearing**

Bryan Sullivan, Xcel Energy, 414 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis, Applicant, stated that he received and understood the staff report. He clarified that the project would include two ten-foot fences; the material of the fences is proposed to be chain link and expanded metal for added security. The expanded metal fence is more solid while still allowing visibility. Mr. Sullivan clarified that the item on tonight's agenda for a data center is not affiliated with this item.

Alex Bruns, 2406 Blueberry Street, inquired as to how the use of two different fence types meets the Economic Consideration criteria, noting that selecting a less expensive material for part of the site may not align with the intent of the Variance. He also requested clarification on the tree requirement, specifically how the fee-in-lieu option works and whether it allows payment in place of completing required landscaping improvements.

Shay stated that the Economic Considerations for the Variance relate to the fence height, not the fence material, as both proposed materials are permitted under City Code. A ten-foot fence is more expensive than a seven-foot fence, indicating the request is not driven by cost savings. For tree mitigation, applicants may either plant on-site or pay a fee-in-lieu, evaluated on a case-by-case basis. In this instance, a fee-in-lieu is recommended, as landscaping would be more beneficial in a public setting, with the final amount based on the site's tree inventory and applicable requirements.

Chair Weber closed the Public Hearing at 7:15 p.m.

### **Planning Commission Discussion**

Commissioner Hunting stated that Xcel Energy has made similar improvements to a Substation she frequently passes. The ten-foot fence appeared clean and appropriate, that the proposed fence would likely improve the site's appearance, and landscaping around such a fence is not practical. There are no concerns with approval.

Motion by Wippermann, Second by Hunting, to Approve the Major Site Plan Review for the Substation expansion; and Approve the Variance from the maximum fence height of 7 feet to allow for a 10-foot-tall fence subject to the conditions listed in the staff report.

Ayes: 9

Nays: 0      Motion Carried.

This item is tentatively scheduled to go before the City Council on April 27, 2026.

**C.** Consider a Request for Approval of a Major Site Plan Review of the Proposed Development of an Approximately 55,000-Square-Foot Data Center located at 5890 Carmen Avenue.

Motion by Clancy, Second by Teiken, to enter the three resident emails into the public record.

Ayes: 9

Nays: 0      Motion Carried.

### **Reading of Public Notice**

Commissioner Twedt read the Public Hearing Notice.

### **Presentation of Request**

Planning Manager Shay presented the Major Site Plan Review for 5890 Carmen Avenue for a proposed data center. The 13.9-acre site is zoned I-1, Limited Industry and Guided Industrial Office Park. The former building on this site has been demolished. The proposed data center is a permitted use and includes a 54,070 square foot building, with the initial phase proposed up to 3-MegaWatt and the full build out proposed to be 5-MegaWatt, along with a closed-loop water system for cooling the equipment. The proposal is being reviewed for compliance with zoning standards, including structure setbacks, parking requirements, impervious surface, landscaping, screening, architecture, lighting, and trash enclosures.

### **Site Plan Standards Evaluation**

- Building Setbacks - Met
  - The proposed building meets setback requirements, with 50 feet from the north property line and 40 feet from all other property lines.
- Parking Setback - Met
  - The parking setback meets requirements with a 20-foot front yard setback.
- Parking Spaces - Met
  - The proposal meets parking requirements by providing one stall per 2,000 square feet, with 28 required and 89 provided.
- Impervious Surface - Met
  - The impervious surface meets requirements, with 57% proposed compared to the 70% maximum allowed.
- Landscaping - Met
  - One tree is required per 1,000 square feet of gross floor area, totaling 55 trees. 15 existing trees will be preserved along the north lot line. The proposal includes the equivalent of 57 trees, consisting of a mix of overstory, evergreen, ornamental trees, and shrubs.
- Screening - Met
  - All ground-mounted mechanical equipment will be screened. The mechanical equipment yard will be enclosed by a 23-foot-tall screening wall, and smaller equipment in front will be screened by a 13.5-foot-tall wall.
- Architecture - Met
  - The building will use insulated metal panels with a zinc grey finish, along with limited glass for windows. The materials meet architectural requirements for the industrial district.
- Lighting - Met
  - Lighting will be shielded and limited to 1 foot-candle at the centerline of the street and 0.4 foot-candles at the north property line adjacent to residential properties.
- Trash Enclosure - Met
  - The trash enclosure will be screened and constructed of concrete masonry with a metal gate.

Shay stated that a neighborhood meeting was held on March 26, 2026, at the Veteran's Memorial Community Center, with approximately 175 attendees and significant public feedback. While not typically required, the meeting was held in advance of future applications.

### **Recommended Action**

Motion to approve the Major Site Plan Review for a new data center at 5890 Carmen Avenue, subject to conditions including a Site Improvement Performance Agreement, issuance of a building permit, resolution of staff review comments, and a Shared Maintenance Agreement upon subdivision of the lot for the stormwater basin. Outstanding Engineering comments are primarily related to stormwater and minor grading and do not affect the site layout.

Commissioner Schaefer inquired for clarification on how data centers are classified within the land use categories, noting difficulty finding the subject in the City Code and questioning why they are considered a permitted use.

Shay stated that data centers were not listed in the City Code prior to 2017 but were reviewed by the Planning Commission and City Council at that time. The outcome of that process was to designate data centers as a permitted use in certain districts, including Industrial and B-3, General Business where they are now specifically listed in the zoning table.

Commissioner Hunting questioned whether City Code limits building exteriors to being no more than one-third of metal.

Shay clarified that the City Code specifically restricts corrugated steel, not all metal, and that approved metal panel systems are permitted materials.

Commissioner Hunting inquired about a letter included in the packet requesting a response from the applicant and whether a response had been received.

Shay stated that a response had been submitted, but due to timing, staff were unable to fully review the letter prior to packet publication. Updated plans were received, and some revisions are reflected in the materials, but conditions remain until full review is completed, particularly regarding stormwater requirements under the City Engineer's review.

### **Opening of Public Hearing**

Rayd Alfraihah, T5 Data Centers, 2151 W. Warren Boulevard, Chicago, IL 60612, stated that the staff report was received and understood. The neighborhood meeting was successful, and questions addressed.

Commissioner Schaefer stated that the project initially seemed straightforward but later questioned the electrical usage, noting that a 5-MegaWatt continuous load appeared closer to 3,000-5,000 homes rather than the small number mentioned earlier. Is concerned about potential impacts on Citywide demand and infrastructure.

Mr. Alfraihah clarified that the smaller comparison referred to water usage, not electricity, and confirmed the facility will use up to 5-MegaWatts once complete and 3-MegaWatts initially. He added that a dedicated, developer-funded electrical feed will be built, avoiding impacts on the existing grid.

Eric Simonson, Xcel Energy, 414 Nicollet Avenue, Minneapolis, stated that a 5-MegaWatt continuous load is approximately equivalent to the energy use of about 150 homes, noting the difference between steady commercial demand and fluctuating residential usage. The project will be supplied by a separate Substation, with the developer responsible for funding the necessary infrastructure.

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Commissioner Schaefer inquired as to whether the 150-home comparison referred to annual consumption or simultaneous usage.

Mr. Simonson confirmed it applies to both, explaining that a 5-MegaWatt data center runs continuously, equating to the total annual energy use of about 150 homes with fluctuating demand.

Commissioner Weber asked for clarification on the substation and direct feed.

Mr. Simonson explained that the project will be served by a separate substation with sufficient capacity, and as a public utility, Xcel Energy ensures service availability. The developer will fund the feeder infrastructure, and once operational, will pay for electricity like any other customer.

Commissioner Heidenreich questioned whether increased demand would require purchasing more power from the national grid and whether costs would be passed on to residents or limited to the data center.

Mr. Simonson stated that the consistent 5-MegaWatt load is predictable and already accounted for within existing capacity. Additional generation or system upgrades are not needed in this case, and the customer will pay for the usage like any other customer.

Commissioner Heidenreich stated that his background as an electrician, 5-MegaWatts is a significant load and estimated it could equal 3,000-5,000 homes based on typical household usage.

Commissioner Teiken inquired as to whether alternative energy sources, such as solar or other future options, had been considered for the development.

Mr. Simonson stated that Xcel Energy is in ongoing discussions with the developer and is working toward an agreement, though details are not yet public. This project is relatively small compared to larger data centers.

Commissioner Gosell asked for clarification on what an edge data facility does and what type of processing and data activity would occur.

Mr. Alfraihat explained that edge facilities support everyday technology by improving speed and efficiency of data processing for end users, such as faster access to applications. The specific use will depend on the eventual tenant, which has not yet been finalized. The facility will be built in phases, starting smaller and expanding to the full 5-MegaWatt capacity over time, and could serve a range of users, including large companies, handling varying types of data and workloads.

Commissioner Gosell, noting his background as a software engineer, inquired about design capacity and referenced the large noise wall, assuming it relates to cooling systems such as outdoor fans or heat exchange equipment.

Mr. Alfraihat stated that a sound wall is required and has been enhanced based on studies and neighborhood feedback to meet noise limits, targeting 45 dB at the property line (below the 50

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dB requirement). The site includes generators and chillers. Adjustments have been made to reduce noise impacts.

Commissioner Teiken inquired about the closed-loop cooling system, specifically how much water will be used, whether evaporated water will be captured, and the overall water source and usage.

Mr. Alfraihat stated that the closed-loop system uses air-cooled chillers and retains most of the water with minimal loss. Total water use is relatively low, about equal to four homes including domestic use, and calculations will be submitted with the building permit for review.

Commissioner Twedt inquired about the noise characteristics of the facility, specifically whether it would produce low- or high-frequency noise beyond what is typically audible.

Noah Brehmer, Kimley-Horn, 11995 Singletree Lane, Suite 225, Eden Prairie, stated that his firm completed the acoustic study and that low-frequency noise, while not locally regulated, was a key concern raised by residents. He explained they are targeting levels 5 dBA below the 50 dBA limit at property lines and are exploring mitigation measures such as silencers, louvers, and layout adjustments. He added they are also referencing industry standards and aiming for low-frequency levels 5 to 10 dBC below those benchmarks.

Commissioner Twedt questioned whether the noise reduction goals are realistically attainable.

Mr. Brehmer stated that initial modeling shows they are achievable, the analysis was not required in the submittal but will be verified after construction to ensure compliance.

Commissioner Schaefer inquired about generator noise, including the highest levels neighbors might experience and how often generators would run.

Mr. Brehmer stated that standard operations and testing will remain within limits, below 50 decibels at residential property lines, and that modeled noise is only slightly above ambient levels. He noted generator use is primarily limited to emergencies, with some testing, and is regulated by EPA air permits that cap emissions.

Commissioner Schaefer stated that she's concerned that generators can be loud, especially at night when background noise is lower, and inquired about variability during outages.

Mr. Brehmer stated that generators would primarily run during emergencies, which are allowed under ordinance, with limited testing outside of those situations.

Mr. Alfraihat stated that generators can reach 90 to 100 decibels at close range but include mufflers and enclosures to reduce noise. The applicable standard is measured at the property line, where a sound-rated wall reduces noise to about 50 dB, with a goal of 45 dB. Studies have been completed, and compliance will be required as part of permitting.

Commissioner Schaefer stated that residential homes are about 200 feet away and is concerned with the noise of the generators.

Mr. Alfraihat stated that the project is being carefully evaluated to avoid impacts, with adjustments already made such as relocating chillers and increasing the sound-rated wall to target 45 dB at the property line, potentially lower. Generators would operate only for brief

daytime testing (about 30-60 minutes) or during emergencies. The project must also meet strict Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) permitting requirements, including detailed modeling and an 8-9-month verification process to ensure compliance with noise and emissions standards.

Commissioner Twedt inquired on how compliance with noise and operational limits would be monitored daily.

Mr. Alfraihat stated that data centers are highly sophisticated facilities with 24/7 on-site staff, including engineering and security teams. Operations are continuously monitored through extensive sensors and data systems, with safeguards such as leak detection and fire suppression in place. Facilities also follow strict management standards, and experienced operations teams are expected to maintain continuous uptime and compliance.

Commissioner Hunting inquired as to why a metal exterior was chosen.

Mr. Alfraihat stated that the material fits the industrial setting, is not visually intrusive, and offers efficiency and constructability benefits. Landscaping and exterior improvements are expected to enhance the site's appearance.

Commissioner Hunting inquired as to whether the Applicant would be open to using different exterior material.

Mr. Alfraihat stated that decision is outside their authority and could not be addressed.

Commissioner Wippermann questioned whether the mechanical equipment yards are the primary source of noise, what other equipment generates noise, how often generators operate, and what the noise levels are when generators are not running.

Mr. Alfraihat stated that most noise comes from equipment in the mechanical yard, while the front of the building is not expected to produce noise beyond typical household levels. Other equipment includes a primary utility meter, automatic transfer switches, and switchgear transformers, though these produce relatively low noise, with chillers and generators being the main sources. Generators operate only during emergencies or limited monthly testing, typically 30 minutes to one hour, and would start automatically during outages. Emergency use is regulated through permitting. He added that chillers do produce some noise but are modeled to remain below required decibel limits. Exact non-generator noise levels were not immediately available, though generators are considered the primary noise source.

Commissioner Teiken inquired about daytime staffing levels.

Mr. Alfraihat stated that daytime staffing is expected to range from 6 to 10 people, with 2 to 3 staff on the overnight shift, depending on operational needs and phasing. Construction is anticipated to take 16 to 18 months, with most work occurring inside the building or within the generator yard and is expected to support local labor and provide economic benefits.

Commissioner Wippermann inquired for clarification on what, if any, air emissions would be generated by the facility.

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Mr. Alfraihah stated that air emissions are regulated through EPA permitting, with required modeling and review currently in process. The project must remain below established compliance thresholds to receive permits.

Brad Carson, 401 North Houston, Dallas, Texas 75202, clarified that emissions would only come from generators during testing or emergencies, and that mechanical equipment itself does not produce emissions.

Commissioner Heidenreich inquired about generator capacity and whether multiple units would be used.

Mr. Alfraihah confirmed there would be five primary generators supporting the load, along with a smaller administrative generator to maintain operations during outages.

Commissioner Heidenreich stated that he has concern about the high noise levels of large generators, noting they can exceed 100 dB and questioning whether acoustic walls, which typically reduce sound by about 25%, would be sufficient to bring levels down adequately.

Mr. Alfraihah stated that noise reduction depends on the design and rating of the acoustic walls.

Mr. Carson stated that generators are enclosed in sound-attenuating housing rated around 85 dBA, with additional acoustic screening that absorbs sound and directs it upward rather than outward. Noise modeling accounts for all equipment and ensures compliance with a 45 dBA limit at the property line across the entire site. He noted that while generators can reach around 100 dB at close range, multiple mitigation measures significantly reduce noise at surrounding properties.

Bill Thornton, 7621 Addisen Path, stated that he is concerned that current City standards may not fully address impacts from modern data centers, particularly related to power demand, potential increases in electricity rates, and noise. In areas with significant data center development, high energy use has contributed to substantial increases in utility rates and said this issue had not been addressed in project discussions. Infrasound is a key concern, explaining that it can travel long distances, may not be captured by standard noise measurements, and could have health impacts. He questioned whether existing noise limits adequately account for these factors and whether sufficient mitigation and monitoring plans are in place, while also highlighting potential effects on nearby residents and the need for clearer information as the facility expands.

Heather Thornton, 7621 Addisen Path, referenced her experience working on data center facilities in the late 2000s and early 2010s and said modern data centers differ significantly from those evaluated in older studies. She urged reconsideration of classifying data centers under light industrial zoning, recommended adopting standards that address infrasound, and suggested pausing automatic approvals to allow time to better understand potential impacts on residents, animals, and the broader community.

Daphne Martin, 6215 Carleda Way, a student from Inver Grove Heights Middle School, expressed concern about the potential health and environmental impacts of a data center on the community. She noted that data centers can require large amounts of energy and may contribute to noise, light, and air pollution, which she said could affect public health. She referenced potential impacts such as stress, sleep disruption, and other health issues, and raised concerns about broader economic costs associated with data centers. Speaking on behalf of

younger residents, she emphasized concerns about growing up in an environment that could place added strain on the health and well-being of the community.

Tamara Martin, 6215 Carleda Way, stated that she lives about 500 yards from the proposed site and raised concerns about infrastructure capacity, including whether upgrades like substations or transmission lines would be needed and if costs could impact residents. She also questioned water usage details, including replenishment, pressure impacts, and drought considerations, noting that clear data had not yet been provided. She expressed concern about noise compliance and asked how it would be monitored over time, as well as potential environmental risks related to fuel or chemical storage, spill response, and stormwater contamination. She concluded that key questions remain unanswered and urged the commission to pause and reevaluate the proposal, considering community concerns.

Alex Brun, 2406 Blueberry Street, stated that he understood the commission's role is limited to determining whether the project meets zoning requirements established in 2017, making approval largely procedural if those standards are met. However, he raised concerns about requested variances related to shared stormwater systems, water supply, and noise, noting these could have long-term impacts and set precedents for future developments. He referenced a prior project where shared stormwater was a concern and questioned similar arrangements for this proposal, particularly given the division of the site.

Alex Diamond, 1359 4th Street East, St. Paul, stated that he has experience in the tech industry and expressed opposition to the project, arguing it could negatively impact the community and questioning whether developers would meet noise and environmental commitments. He raised concerns about health effects, industry practices, and a lack of detailed answers during the meeting. He also questioned the project's overall benefit, noting limited local employment and potential broader job impacts, and urged the commission to weigh these factors carefully.

Jon Mathisrud, 6080 Claude Way, stated that data centers can produce vibration and noise and questioned whether those impacts could disturb employees or affect their work environment.

Veronica Meyer, 6130 Boyer Path, questioned where the water for the closed-loop system would be sourced, noting that it would require replenishment over time and questioning whether it would come from City resources. She also questioned how annual energy use could be accurately projected given seasonal fluctuations and asked what operations would be maintained during power outages, including whether lighting and other systems would remain in use.

Zachary Gullerud, 7090 River Road, raised concerns about energy usage, citing estimates that a 5-megawatt data center could consume 36,000 to 43,000 megawatt-hours annually, which they said could be comparable to the energy use of thousands of households. He questioned whether the project represents efficient use of land given the relatively small number of jobs created and asked whether the impact could increase if the facility expands in the future.

Brenda Sabistina, 10380 Brent Avenue, stated that she is opposed to the project and asked whether the closed-loop cooling system uses chemicals and if there is any risk of discharge into the water supply. She also noted that details on initial water use and ongoing replenishment have not been clearly provided.

Chair Weber closed the Public Hearing at 8:34 p.m.

### **Planning Commission Discussion**

Commissioner Heidenreich stated that he initially supported the proposal at the neighborhood meeting but, after further research, raised concerns about underestimated impacts related to electrical usage, water usage, and noise. Noted a lack of verifiable information and transparency, expressed distrust in the developers, and stated opposition to the proposal.

Commissioner Schaefer raised concerns about outdated regulations and lack of City policy to properly evaluate the proposal. Noted high energy use, low job creation, insufficient information, and feeling misled, and opposition expressed in its current form.

Chair Weber clarified that the commission's role is limited to evaluating land use and zoning compliance, noting that a data center is a permitted use in the district and that the proposal aligns with City Code.

Commissioner Schaefer questioned whether the proposal is truly allowed, noting that the City Code is silent on data centers and does not clearly define what is permitted.

Commissioner Hunting stated that after visiting the site, she observed that most surrounding buildings are constructed with concrete and that a metal structure would not fit the area's character. She expressed concern that a metal building would be visually incompatible with the existing development.

Chair Weber noted that the proposed building materials differ from older corrugated metal structures and described them as more modern. However, he expressed concern that the plans resemble a typical pole building and requested clearer visuals or materials to better understand the intended design.

Shay explained that the proposed building material is insulated metal siding, similar in concept to lap or vinyl siding, and noted it is permitted under the City Code. While design changes can be requested, they cannot be required if the proposal meets City Code standards.

Chair Weber asked for clarification on whether the proposed metal siding is comparable to modern large-scale commercial buildings, such as newer warehouse designs.

Shay stated that he could not confirm a direct comparison to specific examples.

Commissioner Hunting added that nearby airport structures are metal buildings resembling storage sheds and expressed concern that the proposal could appear similar, reiterating her preference for concrete materials to better match surrounding buildings.

Commissioner Heidenreich stated that although the proposal is said to meet City Code requirements, he does not believe the impacts have been fully researched or accurately presented. He expressed concern about lack of verified data, potential changes after construction, and a lack of trust in the information provided, suggesting denial or a moratorium until better information is available.

Commissioner Teiken agreed with prior concerns, noting that the City Code is unclear and outdated given the growth of data centers. He emphasized unanswered questions and expressed a cautious approach, suggesting the need for clearer City standards.

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Commissioner Heidenreich made a motion to deny the site plan review, citing lack of information and the need for clearer standards, including noise impacts.

Shay clarified that denial must be based on findings supported by City Code and that factors outside City authority cannot be used as justification.

Commissioner Heidenreich reiterated his motion to deny, stating he does not trust the information provided.

Chair Weber stated that the commission's decision must be based on findings of fact tied specifically to the information in the record and City Code.

Commissioner Gosell made a motion to recommend denial of the application, citing uncertainty about whether data centers should be allowed in the I-2, General Industry zoning district and recommending the City Council evaluate their appropriateness in I-1, Limited Industry and I-2, General Industry zoning districts.

Chair Weber responded that data centers are currently a permitted use under the City Code as of the application date.

Shay clarified that, under existing rules, data centers are clearly listed as a permitted use in the I-1, Limited Industry zoning district, and this cannot be used as a basis for denial.

Commissioner Gosell asked what options are available to recommend denial while also expressing opposition to data centers in both of those districts.

Shay reiterated that data centers are a permitted use under Section 1062 of the City Code across multiple zoning districts, including I-1, Limited Industry and I-2, General Industry.

Commissioner Schaefer asked whether there is a formal definition of a data center in the City Code.

Community Development Director Ziemer provided the definition, explaining that a data center is a facility used to house computer systems and related components for storing, managing, and distributing data.

Shay explained that staff must evaluate proposals based on the current City Code in place at the time of application and cannot apply standards that do not exist. He stated that the proposal meets the conditions required for site plan review and that issues such as noise fall under the authority of other regulatory agencies. He added that a moratorium or policy changes would need to be addressed by the City Council, and that denial would require specific findings showing noncompliance with City Code.

Chair Weber stated that the commission's role is to evaluate land use and compliance with City Code, noting that the proposal meets those standards and should move forward to the City Council for further consideration. He emphasized that broader policy decisions fall to the Council.

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Commissioner Gosell acknowledged that the developer has met the required standards and indicated support for approval as written, while noting that prior discussions and motions may signal concerns for the City Council to consider.

Chair Weber added that a motion to approve with recommendations is an available option.

Motion by Gosell, Second by Hunting, to Approve the Major Site Plan Review to construct a data center subject to the conditions included in the staff report, with the recommendation for further review.

Ayes: 6

Nays: 3 (Wippermann, Schaefer, Teiken) Motion Carried.

This item is tentatively scheduled to go before the City Council on April 27, 2026.

## **6. REGULAR BUSINESS**

None.

## **7. COMMISSION AND STAFF COMMENTS**

Planning Manager Shay provided updates on prior items, noting that the cell tower application will go to City Council on April 27th and that a separate plat application has already been approved. He also explained that the commission will now meet once per month following a recent Ordinance change, with additional meetings held only as needed. The Ordinance is in effect following the City Council approval on March 24th.

## **8. ADJOURN**

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Tammy Greenlee, Recording Secretary.