



**Enrolled Memorandum of the Meeting
Data Center Citizen Advisory Committee
Monday, Sept. 9, 2024**

The Data Center Citizen Advisory Committee met on Monday, Sept. 9, 2024, at 5 p.m. in the Merrillville Municipal Complex, 7820 Broadway, Merrillville, Indiana 46410.

Silent Roll Call: Town Councilor Leona Chandler Felton, Fire Chief Ed Yerga, Police Chief Kosta Nuses, Adam Mitchell, Sherita Mitchell, Curt Hildebrand, Rolando Gonzalez, Bryon Mesarch, Building Inspector Dan Brown, Plan Commission Member Brian Dering, Darrell Riddell, Town Council President Rick Bella, Town Councilor Keesha Hardaway, developer Randy Hall, Town Councilor Shawn Pettit, Clerk-Treasurer Eric January. Content Manager/Media Officer Chas Reilly memorialized the proceedings.

Others Present: Patrick D. Thompson, of ADL Strategies; Jake Finley, CEO of Karis Critical; Brett Rogers, Chief Investment Officer of Karis Critical; Attorney Richard Anderson; and other Karis Critical representatives were present.

General Substance of Matters Discussed

1. **Introductions/Meeting Overview.** Attendees introduced themselves and Town Council President Rick Bella explained the need to create the committee.
2. **Data Center Projects.** Town Councilor Shawn Pettit explained that there are two proposed data center projects in Merrillville. Karis Critical is pursuing one of the projects, which includes the possibility of nine buildings on nearly 180 acres of property on 101st Avenue, east of Deep River. This is the only project that has filed for town approval. It went before the Plan Commission for a proposed zone change, and that panel gave it a favorable recommendation. There is a separate project

proposed for property in the AmeriPlex at the Crossroads business park. That project could include five buildings. The land already has the appropriate zoning, but officials would need to define the appropriate uses there if that initiative would advance.

3. **Review of Aspects of Importance.** Members and officials discussed different aspects of data centers to obtain a better understanding of how those facilities operate. When appropriate, representatives from Karis Critical responded with information related to the company's proposed project.

Mr. Mesarch asked if the Karis development would be co-located (multiple tenants in one building). Mr. Rogers explained Karis isn't looking to co-locate entities at this site.

Plan Commissioner Dering indicated he read a report about data centers emitting subharmonic frequencies that are beyond human hearing, but vibrations could be felt. Mr. Rogers said he wasn't familiar with that report, but that Karis has taken many steps to keep noise minimal. That includes berms proposed around the property. Mr. Mesarch also stated that vibrations would be detrimental to data centers, which is why they use many rubberized materials, which would address Dering's concern.

Mr. Gonzalez indicated he would like to see data centers collaborate with local educational institutions so students can gain experience with them for potential careers.

Advisory committee members asked Karis representatives what benefits the possible development would bring to Merrillville. Karis officials indicated there would be at least 30 employees at each building. This doesn't include the construction jobs this would create. Job fairs would be used to attract local workers to the new facility. The property tax revenue is projected to be around \$1 million annually for each building. Karis officials also said the development would have minimal impact on town services because the site would have its own security and private roads.

Mr. Mitchell inquired about the use of water for cooling. Mr. Rogers explained that a closed water loop system would be used. This would likely use less water than what is typically used at a school

Members inquired about diesel fuel deliveries and backup generators. Mr. Rogers indicated the backup generator would hold enough fuel so the generators could operate for 48 hours. Fuel deliveries only would occur when fuel is needed. Backup generators run 8-12 hours each year for testing and when power goes out during a storm or other event.

Fire Chief Ed Yerga and Police Chief Kosta Nuses discussed public safety at the site. Fire Chief Yerga said the height of the building isn't a concern for the Fire Department. He also indicated he would require training for his firefighters at the site. Fire Chief Yerga also inquired about the use of lithium-ion batteries. He said he isn't opposed to the use of lithium-ion batteries, but he also explained there isn't an adequate water supply to fight lithium-ion battery fires. Mr. Rogers indicated he understands that position. He said battery banks are necessary, and Karis would avoid lithium-ion batteries as much as possible at the site. Police Chief Nuses inquired about plans to address potential physical and cyber-attacks. Mr. Rogers said there will be security fences around buildings and private security hired to monitor buildings. It will be up to the end-user to determine their security needs, and the user will work with the Police Department to establish plans.

Real estate developer Randy Hall asked about the potential timeframe to construct the data center buildings. Mr. Rogers said the land is currently under contract. If the deal is finalized, building construction could take about 18 months. He also indicated that it could take about 12 months to lease each building, but that could happen quicker because it "isn't a hard sell" to attract companies to Merrillville. The number of buildings for the site will be dependent on the amount of power NIPSCO will authorize there. The first phase of construction would include two buildings. It would be several years before the site is completely built out.

4. **Support of Karis Project.** Advisory Committee members, town officials, and other guests all indicated they are supportive of the Karis project. Commissioner Dering explained data centers provide immense economic benefits while they use fewer municipal services than most businesses. Mr. Mesarch said if this project becomes successful, then it could attract similar initiatives that would benefit the town.
5. **Next Steps.** Attendees inquired about the next steps the town could take to help advance the project. It was indicated that the zoning ordinance was going before the Town Council on Sept. 10 (it was approved at that meeting). Mr. Mitchell indicated he would like attendees to visit an existing data center so they can observe functions like noise. Karis representatives indicated their closest facility is in DeKalb. Karis representatives indicated NIPSCO authorization is key to this project. Advisory Committee members and town officials indicated they wanted to help advance the initiative by sending letters of support to NIPSCO.

There being no further business necessary or desired to be discussed by the Data Center Citizen Advisory Committee, the panel adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Chas Reilly