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MONROE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

August 3, 2026

Jacob Pride, Chairman
Smithfield Township Board of Supervisors
1155 Red Fox Road
East Stroudsburg, PA 18301

Re: Data Centers (Revised)
Zoning Ordinance Amendments
Smithfield Township
MCPC Review #121-26

Dear Mr. Pride:

The above cited amendments were reviewed by Eric Koopman, Lead Senior Planner, on behalf of the Monroe County Planning Commission. You will find the comments enclosed.

All comments are preliminary and will be acted upon by the Planning Commission at its regular meeting on August 11, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. at the Monroe County Planning Commission office. This action is in keeping with the Planning Commission's review policy and allows the municipalities and other interested parties to respond to the review comments before the Planning Commission's public meeting.

If these comments are not amended and are found to be acceptable by the Board at the next meeting, they should be considered to be approved as enclosed.

If you have any questions, or if we can be of further service to you, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely yours,

Christine Meinhart-Fritz
Director

CMF/ek
Cc: Julia Heilakka, Township Manager

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MONROE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

TO: Christine Meinhart-Fritz, Director

FROM: Eric Koopman, Lead Senior Planner

DATE: August 3, 2026

SUBJECT: Data Centers (Revised)
Zoning Ordinance Amendments
Smithfield Township
MCPC Review #121-26

The Township of Smithfield is proposing amendments to its zoning ordinance concerning data centers and disaster recovery facilities. Specifically, the amendments would remove data centers as a permitted use within the Economic Development (ED) and the Industrial (M-1) district. The amendments would also establish a Heavy Industrial (H-1) district in which data centers would be permitted as a conditional use. The schedule of uses is also to be updated to reflect the addition of this new zoning district. Data center provisions concerning dimensional standards, aesthetics, screening, utilities, power, water, emergency management, decommissioning, and sound/noise are also proposed.

The above mentioned zoning ordinance amendments have been reviewed on the basis of generally accepted planning principles and the provisions set forth by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (PMPC), as amended. The following comments are offered:

1. The proposed zoning ordinance amendments are generally consistent with the PMPC, Act 247 of 1968, as amended, in terms of following required procedures.

2. This office has previously reviewed data center amendments (MCPC Review #147-25, #56-26) on October 7, 2025 and April 16, 2026, respectively. While a number of previous comments have been addressed, previous comments that remain relevant are included within this review.

3. While data centers are no longer to be permitted in the ED district, the Township should be made aware that data centers proposed before adoption of the amendments may not be subject to them. It is our understanding that a data center project has entered the conditional use process and the Township should discuss whether this would be considered as a formal land development submission that would therefore be subject to the existing ordinance provisions.

4. The amendments proposed to confine data centers and their accessory uses to the H-1 district as a conditional use. The proposed H-1 district is to replace the existing southernmost M-1 district. This area may prove unfeasible for data center development due to environmental site constraints, required setbacks and buffers, limited area, and proximity to sensitive receptors. All land uses need to be accommodated for by municipalities in at least one district to prevent exclusionary zoning, and the Township is encouraged to discuss whether this district appears sufficient to reasonably accommodate this land use with their engineer and solicitor.

5. The proposed amendment would place a maximum square footage cap on data centers of 50,000 square feet. While this may be appropriate for 'regional' and small scale data centers (typically 10,000 to 50,000 s.f.), this would not likely be feasible for 'hyperscale' and larger data centers (100,000+ s.f.). Data centers over 50,000 s.f. are not addressed by the amendments, and the Township should discuss whether such a cap is reasonable and not exclusionary.

6. Decommissioning provisions are to be inserted into data center requirements along with sound/noise standards, and required plans for thermal impact mitigation and electronic waste. This is to be encouraged. Such requirements are encouraged to facilitate the mitigation of potential negative impacts.

7. It is recommended that an equipment transportation route plan be required for this land use. Such a plan could may include frequency of major equipment moves, proposed routes that avoid residential areas, and coordination with police, fire, and public works.

8. It is recommended that a minimum separation distance be established between the generator and principle structures in the interest of safety.

9. Conditional use approval will be required for data centers. The Township should carefully consider site-specific circumstances when discussing reasonable conditions to place on such land development plans. The conditional use process is a valuable tool for land development negotiations, and the Township should ensure that potential impacts to the natural and built environments are properly mitigated.

10. If any revisions are made to the proposed zoning ordinance amendments, they must be resubmitted to the MCPC for review prior to adoption. This requirement was affirmed by the Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court in Hanover Healthcare Plus, Inc. v. Zoning Hearing Board of Penn Township 875 A.2d 1255 (Pa. Cmwlth 2005). It is recommended that the Township discuss this with their solicitor.

11. The Staff has reviewed the proposed zoning ordinance amendments and recommends that they be adopted subject to the above noted comments being satisfactorily addressed.

In an attempt to maintain a library of municipal ordinances, we request that any adopted ordinance amendments (Zoning, Zoning Map and SALDO) be sent to the MCPC within 30 days of enactment as specified in the PMPC.

This review is subject to the approval of the Monroe County Planning Commission at its next regularly scheduled meeting.