

January 20, 2026, Council Meeting
Minutes

The second meeting of Clarion Borough Council was held on January 20, 2026, in the Clarion Free Library. President Lapinto called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Councilmembers present were Mr. Harbaugh, Ms. Whitling, Mr. Garbarino, Ms. Logue, Ms. Hampikian, and President Lapinto. Mayor Fulmer Vinson, Mr. Colosimo, Mr. Wolf, and Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston were also present. Solicitor Marshall participated by telephone.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: Agenda Items

There were none.

Having no other Committee reports, President Lapinto moved down to Housing and Zoning.

HOUSING AND ZONING

On a motion by Ms. Whitling with a second by Ms. Logue to adopt Ordinance #2025-851, an ordinance amending certain provisions of the Clarion Borough Zoning Ordinance #2013-795 (as codified by Ordinance #2013-798, Chapter 210) to add data infrastructure facility and data infrastructure accessory uses as permitted use in the CI Commercial and Industrial Zoning District.

Mr. Harbaugh thinks the wording could be a little bit stronger, but at least Council is putting some guardrails on these facilities. Currently, the Borough is driving on a cliff with no guardrails. Mr. Harbaugh prefers to have more than just a guardrail in place and look out for everyone. When data centers come in, generators, electric lines, cooling and waste water, and other things come in as well and aren't necessarily covered in the accessory uses. This usually gets passed onto the residents. Mr. Harbaugh feels there is a potential for loop holes for different compliance for the way the equipment is screened, ground mounting, and things on the public street. Battery storage can lead to commercial waste. If this passes, Mr. Harbaugh prefers Council to stay on top of it. This isn't going to be the end of a data center discussion. Utility costs are already going up as stated in December and this will put more of a strain on it.

Ms. Logue recommended that anyone with concerns discuss this with the Commissioners and Planning Commission as any sort of major improvement and land development will have to go through the Planning Commission.

Mr. Harbaugh understands that.

Ms. Logue pointed out this is really just permitting where data infrastructure or data center can be located. If this ordinance isn't adopted and restricted to a district, these companies can ask to be anywhere in the Borough. So, if anybody would like stricter regulations, they should reach out to the Commissioners and Planning Commission.

Mr. Harbaugh agrees but would feel more comfortable if Council makes regulations as tight as possible to protect everybody. That's his number one concern. This ordinance is putting guardrails on it right now so that nobody can just come in and do this without restrictions in place. Mr. Harbaugh didn't have a chance to discuss this much beforehand with other members of Council.

If this ordinance is adopted tonight, Ms. Hampikian verified the Borough can amend it later on to add more restrictions down the road?

Ms. Logue reported this has been discussed in committee meetings for a while, and it was discussed with all Councilmembers prior to tonight.

Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary agreed ordinances can be amended at any time.

Ms. Logue thinks it is important to adopt this ordinance because she doesn't want somebody buying up a city block in a residential district and then asking for an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance because it is not permitted anywhere. If one is going to come to Clarion Borough, Ms. Logue prefers it to come in a district where it should be zoned like the glass plant. That is the Commercial Industrial Zoning District, which is for this reason.

Mr. Kiser asked why this can't be restricted completely?

Ms. Logue announced that is too discriminatory, and a lawsuit could be filed against the Borough. Municipalities cannot discriminate about a business coming in and building just because Council doesn't like it.

Mr. Kiser stressed there is plenty of vacant land outside the Borough.

Ms. Logue reported they can go there. This amendment is to protect the Borough and residents. That is what Council is trying to do.

Mr. Garbarino doesn't feel the property located in the commercial industrial district is big enough for a data center. If anyone looks at the ones in other communities, they would probably look at the golf course rather than the glass plant property. It's just too small. Like Ms. Logue stated, this amendment restricts them to a specific area. Mr. Garbarino feels they will look somewhere else.

Mr. Harbaugh stressed he is not against these facilities but feels that the Borough's ordinance needs to be as strong as it can to be in front of any problems.

Mr. Jon Stants, a property owner along Grand Avenue, agrees with Mr. Harbaugh and wishes to see stricter regulations.

Ms. Logue repeated it would be the County to enforce stricter regulations. Clarion Borough has to establish where the data infrastructure or centers can go and require regulations. Since this will be a major land development, the County's Planning Department will get involved and follow their processes. It is no different that solar panels or gas wells coming into Clarion County. This ordinance establishes where they can be located.

Mr. Stants voiced fear because the County has lied to him before.

Ms. Logue cannot speak to that.

Ms. Whitling thinks it's important to acknowledge that this is a new thing happening all over the country. It is going to change, develop, and grow as it moves forward. Clarion Borough Council doesn't have to be flexible to it but is trying to put in safeguards that if one would want to come to Clarion Borough where they can be located and regulations they must follow. Ms. Whitling stated this is the first step.

Mr. Harbaugh agreed and wished to keep an open dialogue going forward.

On a request by President Lapinto, the motion carried after the following roll call vote: Mr. Harbaugh, yes; Ms. Whitling, yes; Mr. Garbarino, yes; Ms. Logue, yes; Ms. Hampikian, yes; and President Lapinto, yes.

RECREATION

There were none.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston had nothing to report.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Fulmer Vinson thanked the community members for coming out tonight in the cold weather to question what this was about.

OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR PERSONNEL: President Lapinto called for an Executive Session for personnel, including the Councilmembers, the Mayor, Solicitor Marshall, Mr. Colosimo, and Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston, beginning at 7:10 p.m.

President Lapinto called the meeting back to order at 7:25 p.m.

After the Executive Session, Solicitor Marshall asked the minutes reflect that no official action will be taken.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: Non-Agenda Items

There were none.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was none.

On a motion by Mr. Garbarino with a second by Ms. Logue, the meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Linda LaVan-Preston, Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary