

January 20, 2026, Public Hearing

The Clarion Borough Housing and Zoning Committee held a Public Hearing on January 20, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. in the Assembly Room of the Clarion Free Library, the purpose of the hearing was to receive comments on 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 uses in the CI Commercial and Industrial Zoning District.

A list of those people in attendance is attached to the Official File Copy of these minutes.

Ms. Whitling, Chair of the Housing and Zoning Committee, called the hearing to order at 6:30 p.m.

Chairman Whitling commented the purpose is to receive any comments, thoughts, or questions on the proposed ordinance relating to add data infrastructure facility and data infrastructure accessory uses as permitted used in the CI Commercial and Industrial Zoning District. Anyone wishing to speak will have 3 minutes and is asked to state their name and address for the record. The ordinance was advertised properly and available for review on the Borough's website and office.

Linda provided copies of the proposed ordinance to the public members.

Mr. Jon Stants, property owner in Clarion Borough, asked where the facility will be located?

Ms. Whitling commented it is permitted where the old glass plant used to be.

Mr. Stants owns property in that location and asked how this will benefit Clarion?

Ms. Whitling thinks this is more of a safeguard versus a benefit situation. Council is basically indicating that if a data center would want to locate in Clarion Borough where they can go and protects it from being put anywhere.

Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston added that currently the Zoning Ordinance does not include anything for data infrastructure or data centers. At least 6 months ago, municipalities were being encouraged to address them sooner than later. If someone wanted to put a data center in the Borough now, it could be located any zoning district. By amending the ordinance, the data infrastructure and facilities can be located only in the CI Commercial and Industrial District and there are restrictions as far as electric, water, fences, and other regulations they must follow. Also, this would have to go through the building permit process and through the County Planning Commission as far as land development approvals. Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston stressed the Borough is protecting the citizens of the Borough by adding this into the Ordinance whereas right now it could go anywhere.

If somebody comes in and wants to do this, Mr. Stants asked if they have to come before Council and if the citizens will get involved at that point?

Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston stated no.

Mr. Wolf commented the contractor would go through the normal building process. Site plans would be required, zoning would be checked to make the requirements are met, and then the County would have to address it as far as land development.

President Lapinto stressed Council is trying to be proactive so that someone doesn't come in and buy up a block and put it anywhere they wish. This amendment will give the Borough some control.

Ms. Lyn Ferguson, 45 Campbell Avenue, questioned if this is a defacto permission for them to come in and build in the Borough and if someone is already interested in building one here?

Mr. Colosimo stated there are no known projects or developments that the Borough is aware of.

Ms. Ferguson asked why is Council looking at that specific area?

If a data center were to come to Clarion Borough, Ms. Whitling informed everyone that the Commercial and Industrial District, which is where the glass plant used to be located, feels like the best spot. The infrastructure is already set up. Again, the company would have to go through the building and permitting processes through the Borough and County. Ms. Whitling repeated there is nothing in place. Potentially, someone could buy a block, demolish the buildings, and put in a data center anywhere right now.

Ms. Ferguson verified they can just do that?

Right now, Ms. Whitling confirmed they could.

President Lapinto announced that's why Council wants to permit them in the CI district only.

Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston reported this is to protect the residential areas.

Mr. Phil Kiser, 202 South Street, asked why Council just doesn't restrict them from coming in Clarion Borough all together?

President Lapinto commented you cannot do that.

Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston pointed out the Borough cannot discriminate.

Mr. Colosimo agreed that is problematic.

Mr. Harbaugh thought the same thing and realizes that is not feasible. The proposed ordinance can be amended down the road to add more restrictions. But at least this is a start. These data centers are going up in Pennsylvania and Virginia. Mr. Harbaugh added his 2-cents that this isn't the worst idea considering the impacts the centers have on communities once they come in. Again, the purpose is just getting some guardrail in place versus having nothing right now.

Ms. Ferguson asked if anyone was aware of PA House Bill 502?

President Lapinto hasn't and asked Ms. Ferguson to enlighten Council on what this would do?

Ms. Ferguson stated it's pending legislation that would take away local authority over where power generating authorities can be located and for local authorities to put protections in place. Usually, these generators are built close to the data centers for supply. Ms. Ferguson feels it would be better if there was a statewide moratorium.

Mr. Harbaugh and President Lapinto both agreed to look into it.

If this ordinance is passed, Mr. Stants asked for clarification if the landowners will be notified. There was a project on Grand Avenue, and the property owners were never notified.

President Lapinto pointed out that was a county project.

Once a building permit is issued from the Borough Office, Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston reported a notification is sent to all the adjoining property owners. They will have 30 days to appeal the issuance of the permit. That is for any kind of building permit even if it is just for a porch. This is a requirement of the Municipalities Planning Code.

Mr. Colosimo reported the County's Planning Commission will also have to go through the process for their Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, SALDO.

If the County is involved, Mr. Stants reported they didn't notify them for the project they did in front of his property at 118 Grand Avenue.

Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston stated that was an MTF Grant that the County received and no permits were required for the Borough.

Mr. Colosimo added that the Uniformed Construction Code doesn't apply to a civil engineering project (water, pavement, and/or storm sewers), which is what the County's project was on Grand Avenue. The County obtained a Multi-Modal Transportation Fund Grant to pay for construction and materials for their project. That is different than a private concern applying for building a new house or building.

Being the recipient of a notice of a simple addition of a porch next to his property, Mr. Harbaugh verified what Chief Administrative Officer/Borough Secretary LaVan-Preston stated.

Mr. Stants voiced concern as the property owners on Grand Avenue were never notified when the street and sidewalk project was completed there.

President Lapinto understands that and noted that was out of the Borough's control.

Mr. Kasey Martin, 45 Campbell Avenue, asked if there is a restriction on how close the data infrastructure can be built to the residential neighborhood close to the commercial and industrial area?

Mr. Colosimo informed everyone there are requirements for front, side, and rear yard setbacks in the Borough Table of Dimensions in the Zoning Ordinance, depending on the use and district involved. Mr. Colosimo doesn't know what those specific requirements are right now, but it is provided in the ordinance. General criteria on screening, light, noise, odor, and other items are covered. Also, with this amendment, there are a number of conditions that they have to meet for this particular use. Council tried to cover that in the accessory uses and so on.

Mr. Martin lives two blocks away and was just curious.

Hearing no more comments or questions, Ms. Whitling adjourned the Public Hearing at 6:45 p.m. with action to be taken at the Council Meeting to follow.

Linda LaVan-Preston, Chief Administrative Officer/
Borough Secretary