ORDINANCE NO.: _____

AN ORDINANCE to create Section 115-413 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of La Crosse to establish a temporary moratorium on data centers.

ORDINANCE

WHEREAS, Data Centers may be permitted in certain City of La Crosse Zoning Districts;

WHEREAS, the La Crosse Municipal Code does not currently define “Data Centers” and does not sufficiently address the possible environmental, economic, health, safety, land use, infrastructural, and general welfare concerns that may result from the location, construction, and operation of Data Centers;

WHEREAS, the City is currently undergoing a recodification of its Zoning Code that entails, among other things, updating and clarifying definitions, permitted uses, zoning district regulations, and more;

WHEREAS, Data Centers typically feature high-performance servers, storage arrays, networking equipment, cooling systems, and power backup solutions to ensure uninterrupted operation;

WHEREAS, concerns have been raised about the potential environmental, economic, health, safety, land use, infrastructural, and general welfare issues related to the location, construction, and operation of Data Centers, including electrical connections, energy demand, electromagnetic fields, noise pollution, impacts on air quality and water resources, water use, and fire hazards;

WHEREAS, in May of 2026, the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors authorized the creation of an ad hoc committee (Educational Committee on Data Centers) to study Data Centers and make recommendations to the Executive Committee and full Board of Supervisors [Resolution #2-5/26];

WHEREAS, the City will be a participating member of such ad hoc committee;

WHEREAS, in June of 2026, the La Crosse County Board of Supervisors approved an eighteen (18) month moratorium “on the receipt of applications and the granting of all permits or approvals for the siting or construction of Data Centers” to allow the ad hoc committee to complete their study and make recommendations to the Executive Committee and full Board of Supervisors [Resolution #6-6/26];

WHEREAS, a moratorium would allow the City time to fully explore, analyze, and research the environmental, economic, health, safety, land use, infrastructural, and general welfare impacts of Data Centers and develop consistent zoning and regulatory standards to be applied to Data Centers in the City of La Crosse;

THE COMMON COUNCIL of the City of La Crosse do ordain as follows:

SECTION I: Section 115-413 is created to read as follows:

Sec. 115-413. – Temporary moratorium on data centers.

(a) Notwithstanding any other provision in La Crosse Municipal Code Ch 115, there shall be a moratorium on the receipt of applications and the granting of all permits or approvals for the siting or construction of Data Centers. The purpose of this moratorium is to allow the City of La Crosse and La Crosse County time to research the possible environmental, economic, health, safety, land use, infrastructural, and general welfare effects of Data Centers and establish consistent zoning and regulatory standards to be applied to Data Centers in the City of La Crosse and La Crosse County. The City of La Crosse is in the process of recodifying its Zoning Code; the moratorium will allow City staff time to research these effects and provide recommendations to the City Council. It will also allow the County's ad hoc committee to complete its study and make recommendations. The City desires to see the results and recommendations of this study.

(b) The moratorium shall be in effect for a period of eighteen (18) months from the date this ordinance is published or until the City Council adopts any amendments to the Zoning Code recommended by the ad hoc committee, adopts any amendments to the Zoning Code recommended by City staff pursuant to the Zoning Code recodification project or other specified research, rescinds this moratorium, or any combination of these.

(c) For purposes of this moratorium only, "data center" and "data centers, data hosting and similar data storage or processing" means one or more facilities housing computing, networking, or data-management equipment that can store, process, retrieve, or distribute more than 1 petabyte (1,000 terabytes) of data or that consume more than 2MW of electricity.

SECTION II: Should any portion of this ordinance be declared unconstitutional or invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this division shall not be affected.

SECTION III: This ordinance shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage and publication.

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Shaundel Washington-Spivey, Mayor

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Nikki M. Elsen, City Clerk

Passed:
Approved:
Published: