

DRYDEN — The Dryden town board banned the construction of data centers and cryptocurrency facilities on Thursday during its regularly scheduled meeting. By passing the resolution, Dryden became the first town in New York to take such action, according to Deputy Supervisor Dan Lamb.

The public overwhelmingly spoke out against data centers being allowed to operate in the Town of Dryden during a public hearing in December regarding a planning board proposal that would establish guidelines for the facilities to be built inside the town.

“I think some folks have asked why we’re doing this,” Lamb said. “The primary concern is energy use. We all see the rising demands of energy, the scarcity and what that can do to energy prices. That was the main concern, not having such a high-energy use center, leaving less energy on the grid for others.”

Lamb said the board had many other concerns, such as what the facilities would actually contribute to the town and its impact on the environment and neighborhood.

One of the many influential opinions against data centers at December’s public hearing was the letter from the town’s climate action committee. It’s chair, Jack Wright, spoke again at Thursday’s public hearing.

“I wanted to voice our support on behalf of the climate action committee for this ban,” Wright said. “Thank you all for the time and effort that you put into this. We do appreciate you making the effort to not only protect our environment, but also to protect the Dryden community.”

Lamb also thanked Wright for the committee’s close look at the legislation.

Tompkins Co. Environmental Management Council Unique Natural Areas Committee Member David Weinstein said he is thankful that the board is taking steps against these facilities.

“I’m unfortunately involved with the nightmare happening in Lansing and I’m thrilled the town is taking steps to having us avoid those kinds of issues,” Weinstein said, referring to the AI data center TeraWolf is attempting to build in Lansing.

The resolution to amend the zoning code to ban the data centers and cryptocurrency centers was passed unanimously. Lamb said he’s happy that the town has made these steps, as they’re now the first town within the state that has done this. Lamb hopes other towns follow suit.

Agricultural Advisory Committee Member Austin Beck also presented the board with a potential resolution to help protect the farm land within the town.

Beck said the committee's resolution for an 18-month moratorium on developing projects while soil samples are taken in various areas within the town and tested to a USDA soil classification.

"We feel like, as the zoning code is being rewritten, that there's a chance to provide agricultural protection zoning, specifically to support those goals of promoting affordable housing in a strategic way while protecting local agricultural and prime soils. Once we lose those soils, there's no getting them back," Beck said.

Lamb said the board needs to have further discussion on how the implementation of the moratorium would work and ask questions to the town attorney on it.