

February 2026 VBH BOT Meeting Public Comment

President Cecola [00:00:27]:

Okay, thank you. Okay, thank you, Wes. And we'll go on to our public meeting. This time we'll go on to public comment. You'll have 3 minutes. Your first and last name are necessary, your address is not. So if anybody would like to come to the podium, please.

Carson Rice [00:00:45]:

Hello, my name is Carson Rice. I'm a resident of Barrington Hills. I wasn't able to come to the last meeting, so didn't get to ask questions there, but I'd like to ask a few here. As you know, a big topic was the data center. Just wanted to ask, at what point, date and year, was each trustee aware of the data center proposal? If you can answer, that would be great. If not, that's also fine, but just wanted to know when was the first date that you were aware or approached by the Brennan Group for the data center?

President Cecola [00:01:23]:

Unfortunately, this is not a— it's not a Q&A, so you can talk for 3 minutes. It's the trustee's wish to— if you want to email them and ask them, you can definitely do that, but it's not a question and answer at this point.

Carson Rice [00:01:34]:

Okay.

President Cecola [00:01:35]:

Yeah.

Carson Rice [00:01:36]:

So just refusing to answer?

President Cecola [00:01:39]:

We just don't engage in back and forth conversation, so you can definitely email them. Okay. Any questions you have, and they will, they will respond back to you.

Carson Rice [00:01:46]:

Okay.

Carson Rice [00:01:46]:

Do I email each individually?

President Cecola [00:01:48]:

You can. Yep.

Carson Rice [00:01:49]:

Okay. Absolutely. All right, um, that is all. I just also have to voice my displeasure with the entire way that that was handled. Um, seems like it was done in the dark, trying to pull a fast one on the entire village. Um, and it's extremely disappointing that it got as far as it did and caused as much, uh, angst and, uh time for us to put together our voice in opposition to that. So that is all I have to say. Thank you very much for your time.

President Cecola [00:02:26]:

Thank you.

Carson Rice [00:02:27]:

Thank you.

President Cecola [00:02:31]:

Anybody else?

Karen Traska [00:02:38]:

I'm Karen Traska, Pondgate Farms. It's kind of good that I'm following him because I might have a few of your answers. You know, before I came here, I was pretty mad. And now I'm standing in front of you guys and I'm sad. Like, I'm really sad. Last time I was standing up here, we were talking about this data center that came out of nowhere, right? It just sort of popped up. They just showed up like 5 minutes before the meeting. It wasn't on the agenda because, you know, they just kind of showed up, and one, the last time I was here, I was also waiting for my FOIA request, and I got my FOIA request. So turns out, October 8th, our village administrator, Anna Paul, put a meeting in the calendar with the Brennan Investment Group and what seems to be their attorneys for the data center. October 21st, you guys had the meeting with Brennan. October— November 10th, Brennan followed up with Anna to see what the feedback was. A week later, November 17th, Board of Trustee meeting. It wasn't on the agenda. It wasn't brought up. December 15th, 2 months after the meeting, Board of Trustee meeting again. It wasn't on the agenda, but now, as we all know, 25-minute presentation discussion, but apparently not even some of the trustees knew about it until that moment. Community didn't know about it. We couldn't show up to listen or engage. It wasn't until mid-January that word really gets out to the community. All hell breaks loose, right? We're all here at the meeting, January 26th. And President Sikola, Brian, you sat here and repeatedly stated that no one, no one on this board wanted a data center, right? No one wanted it. And nobody raised their hand,

contradicted him. No one said, well, actually, no, I did. Well, Tuesday, December 16th, the day after the presentation with Brennan, Trustee Strauss, who's not here unfortunately, to Wes Levy, the Village Treasurer, and Anna Paul, the Village Administrator. Wes, nicely done last night. Can you ask Anna to share the information we received last night from Brennan Investment Group about a possible data center development? Levy responds, hi, Trustee Strauss. Anna brought this one to my attention a couple weeks ago. I am sure there will be concessions and property tax forgiveness as part of a deal to bring them in, but if they do come, it will be significant revenue. Then Strauss emails Sikola, Brian, my opinion is we need to take this very seriously. Opportunities like this do not surface often. We would need to make certain we can lock up the project and the necessary requirements short-term and long-term, but based on the location, I believe the developer is for sure going to be very open to making concessions. Same time, Trustee Hoffman was sending an article citing energy usage concerns. Thank you. And Strauss replied with an article of his own regarding some small town in Quincy, Washington, and how they love the data center. He shared, I have done a lot of research the last 2 days, and these centers are legit. Below is a small community and the impact that I sent to Brian yesterday. And it was all these statistics, to which then Trustee Clark responded. Thanks. I agree with Trustee Strauss. That's just what was sent to me. There were 2 emails with a staff member and the attorney not sent to me, apparently due to some attorney-client privilege, which I don't understand because I thought the village was the client, like the residents were the client, but maybe not. I will be asking about that later. Allegedly, other conversations were had off record with more than just Strauss and Clark being in favor of the data center. Allegedly, allegedly, allegedly. I do want to thank Trustees Ekstrom and Hoffman, whether in emails that I received or in public meetings in front of all of us, or both, for standing up for our village and its unique character, as well as for calling for transparency, not just in the community but within your own board. I hope in the future we can go back to the transparency that we had with our previous village president. Again, this whole thing makes me really sad. So that's all I have to say. Thank you.

President Cecola [00:06:46]:

Anybody else?

Julie Becker [00:06:50]:

My name is Julie Becker, and I'm a resident of Barrington Hills. Good evening, Village President and trustees. I want to speak tonight about trust. At the last meeting, we were told that everything surrounding the data center was informational only. We were told that there was no proposal on the table. We were told that no one on this board supported a data center, and that this board had consistently stood against commercial, let alone industrial development in our community. However, through a FOIA request, residents learned that this conversation with the

developer began in October, months before the public was informed. In December, the developer addressed the board for 25 minutes. Far beyond the standard 3-minute public comment timeframe, and he was not listed on the agenda. That was not a casual introduction. That was engagement. During that December meeting, the developer even offered an easy way out when he said this may be a quick no and that he would understand if it was. But instead, the board allowed the presentation to continue. A trustee even asked whether the developer would cover legal fees associated with the anticipated opposition. You don't discuss legal defense costs for something you're not seriously considering. Those actions are difficult to reconcile with the statement that this board never supported moving forward. So, when residents are now told that no one supported this, and that this board has always stood firmly against commercial development, it is hard to align those assurances with the documented timeline and discussions we now know about. This is no longer about whether the developer has backed out. This is about credibility and trust. Transparency does not mean informing residents after months of prior discussions. Transparency means involving residents at the beginning, especially when the subject is industrial-scale development in a community committed to low-density residential zoning, open space, and conservation. The developer may have bowed out, as you said, but he did not wake up on his own. He backed out because residents organized, circulated petitions, and made it very clear where this community stands. The community stopped this, not the board. And I'll end with this: trust, once broken, requires more than reassurances to rebuild. Many of us want to believe that you have the village's best interests at heart, but belief is strengthened by consistency between words and actions, and right now those don't align. And until those words and actions align, this community will continue to hold the board accountable. We're paying attention now, and this is your opportunity to restore our confidence and trust, and we hope you take it. Thank you for your time. I appreciate it. It's your turn. This is Austin Becker. Um, he wanted to speak at our last meeting, and when there were the last-minute changes, we didn't have him speak, and he was really disappointed that he didn't have, um, be able to share what his thoughts were. So he's wanting to speak right now. Just tell him your name.

Austin Becker [00:10:05]:

And hi, my name is Austin Becker, and I just wanted to tell you that when I think about the data center, I feel scared that it And I feel sad and scared. I'm scared that the data center will make a lot of noise and I won't be able to sleep well. I'm sad because that is nature's area and we also see many animals like our friends Roger and Harriet and Bo and Penelope, who are sandhill cranes. We see them every year. That's why I'm feeling sad and scared. Please don't build a data center. Thank you for letting me talk to you.

President Cecola [00:10:53]:

Thank you.

Julie Becker [00:10:55]:

Thank you.

Aaron Becker [00:11:03]:

Hello, everyone. My name is Aaron Becker. I'm a resident in Barrington Hills. That was my son. I'm very proud of. Um, I'm here this evening to follow up on a formal written notice that I submitted on January 27th. You all should have received a copy. It was sent certified mail as well as email to the Village President, this board, the Village Administrator, and the Village Attorney regarding procedural irregularities and transparency risks associated with the early board discussions with Brennan Investment Group concerning the proposed data center. That letter is not about merits or the merits of a data center. It was about process integrity, Open Meetings Act risk, and the need to preserve what's called a neutral and defensible record should the matter ever proceed to a formal land use petition. As reflected in the village's own approved meeting minutes, the board engaged in project-specific merits discussions with the developer prior to any formally filed petition. Those discussions addressed substantive impacts, including groundwater usage, noise, energy demands, police impact, compatibility with comprehensive plan, and extremely large tax projections. The minutes further recorded that following those discussions, a board consensus was reached to seek resident input and to move it to the Planning Commission. The concern I raised clearly and respectfully in my letter on January 27th is that early merits deliberation combined with recorded consensus language creates avoidable legal exposure, and it erodes public confidence in the neutrality of any future process. Even if the intent was informational, the appearance of prejudgment matters under Illinois transparency and land use law. And I'd say just off, you know, off the cuff here, it was far more after reading the FOIA information than appearance of prejudgment. It's crystal clear that it was prejudgment. It wasn't just appearance, which is disturbing. Um, the request in the letter was made in good faith and in the interest of protecting the village, the board, and its residents. Uh, the requests are about ensuring that future decisions, whatever they may be, it's made lawfully, transparently, and on a clean record. So, as of tonight, I still haven't received a written response from the attorney or the village. So, my public comment tonight is pretty simple and focused. When will the village respond in writing to the January 27th, 2026 notice? And will the board confirm whether the requested corrective steps are being implemented? If the village believes the current approach is procedurally sound, a written explanation will resolve that. If adjustments are needed, acknowledge them and explain how they'll be addressed. Silence is not a resolution. Silence undermines public confidence, and silence leaves residents wondering whether established process is going to be applied consistently. The board regularly emphasizes transparency, fiscal responsibility, and adherence to procedure. Those principles matter most

when projects are large, complex, and consequential. Thank you for your time and for your work on behalf of the village. I look forward to a clear and timely response. Thank you.

President Cecola [00:14:28]:

Thank you. Anybody else? Going once, going twice. Okay, close public comment. Go on to chair, entertain a motion to approve the board