

TO: PWC Board of County Supervisors

FROM: Virginia Run Board of Trustees

DATE: February 11, 2022

SUBJECT: Data Centers in Prince William County's Rural Crescent

To all those who read this, greetings.

Let it be it known that the Virginia Run Board of Trustees supports the citizens of Prince William County and both Fairfax County (FXCo) and Prince William County (PWC) Board of Supervisors (BOS) in their demands for more information and thereby rejecting the proposal by developers to build data centers in the "Rural Crescent". We also support the Sully District Council (SDC) and the Western Fairfax Council of Citizens' Association (WFCCA) resolution on the matter.

Let me start by saying thank you to all those who support rejecting the notion that placing data centers in the Rural Crescent is a good idea. Thank you for taking steps to denying access to the PW Digital Gateway Project (Industrial Corridor). For all the environmental and quality of living reasons given in the letters and resolutions, this is not good for the Northern Virginia region. The lack of and unwillingness of the developers to provide information on electrical and water usage is enough reason to reject the proposal outright. Those who oppose this development have a single major point in their favor – they are on the right side of this issue – period. Any further development of data centers must be in the designated Data Center Overlay District in PWC. It is an available and acceptable option, as this will not negatively impact the Rural Crescent or the rest of Northern Virginia!

Since when has it been appropriate to approve a land use application, if the applicant refuses to disclose the potential water and electricity consumption – especially for a data center application? How can the PWC BOS properly evaluate the impacts of the proposal and potential damages and hazards on infrastructure and the environment, where the applicant insists on secrecy? Does the additional tax revenue the county hopes to garner justify secrecy, the lack of transparency and accountability, and abdication for scrutiny?

Thomas Friedman, a renowned American political commentator and New York Times bestselling author wrote in his book *Thank You for Being Late: An Optimist's Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations* that "We're in the middle of 3 accelerations; the market, mother nature, and Moore's law. Moore's law says the power of microchips will double every 24 months, mother nature is climate change, biodiversity loss and population, and the market is digital globalization." We are at the crossroads of this now in Northern Virginia.

The *market* "greed" of developers and politicians were any indication there will be more developments to be sold in the hopes of generating more county tax revenues and profits for developers. While this might speak well for the residents in the hopes of lowering taxes – it just isn't going to happen. There exists an insatiable desire on the part of developers and politicians alike for more things that will generate new sources of revenue that have done little to improve the quality of life for county residents. The cost to county residents will be uprooting our rural way of life, degradation of air and water quality, and a devastation of the environment.

We need to protect the Rural Crescent and the Occoquan Reservoir Watershed for ourselves and future generations and in turn protect *mother nature*. There is a direct link to the environment and our changing climate where *mother nature* is our only salvation. The Rural Crescent was formed in 1998 to control urban growth and to help protect much of the Occoquan Reservoir Watershed. The Occoquan Watershed is the most important factor in protecting water quality, as they provide natural filtration of rainwater, slow down storm water runoff, and help create good quality drinking water. Many in the region rely on well water for their only source of quality drinking water.

As of the time of this writing, we still do not know how much water it will take to cool the massive data center requirements. Building and paving over nearly all of the proposed 2200 acres in the Occoquan Reservoir Watershed leads to a higher velocity of the storm water runoff from roads and buildings, carrying sediment, salt, and other chemicals into the aquifer. California has seen the impacts already, where 400M gallons per day are required to cool the facilities there. Devastation of forested lands; adverse impacts to the aquifer; pollution by data center wastewater, noise, and soil contaminants (watch the PBS documentary entitled “The Age of Nature”), it takes a generation to restore the damage.

Moore’s Law “says the power of microchips will double every 24 months” makes us wonder, where will it end? Will 2200 acres off Pageland Lane be enough? My guess is no, so there will be more needed to support our insatiable desire for more data. According to Friedmann, we’re in a world where technology is threatening to outpace human adaptability. How will we adapt? Can we adapt? At the current pace of technology, attempts by our adversaries, and lack of common sense security measures by us – the future looks pretty dim.

On this anniversary of President Reagan’s birthday, I am reminded of something he said at his farewell speech to the country. He said, “We the People” tell the Government what to do, it doesn’t tell us. “We the People” are the driver – the Government is the car. And we decide where it should go, and by what route, and how fast.” It would seem that in this day and age of much needed transparency and accountability it might be a good time for all of government, especially at the local levels where they are the closest to their constituents, heed these most appropriate words.

Joseph W. Johnston

President

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