Growing Concerns About Hyperscale Data Center Plans Now Include Large Gas Plant Approved to Begin Construction Today
https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/freshwater-accountability-project-ohio-growing-concerns-about-hyperscale-data-center-plans-now-include-large-gas-plant-approved-to-begin-construction-today-302678130.html

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(Bowling Green, OH) Large projects can be kept secret from the public for a long time. A good example is the Meta hyperscale data center now being built in Wood County Ohio. Local residents are finding out this project has been planned for years with prime farmland property acquired along with a substantial tax abatement of 75% for 15 years negotiated. People are just now comprehending the implications of Ohio's massive data center buildout, including water use, the streamlined general permitting proposed for discharges, and energy requirements. Locally, people question how a huge data center with the code name Accordion pieced together by a shell company, Liames LLC, could be built with little information in advance and questions answered. In addition to the non-disclosure agreements signed and tax breaks given, there are growing concerns about impacts to agriculture, property values, electrical rates and water quality.

There are even more unanswered questions now with the Will-Power, "Apollo," 350 MW gas-fired power plant to serve Meta, causing even more concern. This Title V polluter was approved today by the Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB) to begin construction. The Will-Power Letter of Notification dated November 5, 2025 was the first step to fast-track permitting by the OPSB. The OPSB then issued its report recommending approval on January 27, 2026 resulting in final approval by February 3, 2026 with construction starting on or about February 6 just three months later.

This accelerated permitting process is another example of how the public is left out of decisions to build major polluting facilities. Concerns include the impact on air quality and health, not only for the two residences located within 1,000 feet of the electrical generating equipment, but for overall air quality. Even though Wood County is designated as an attainment area for air quality, it is still given a grade of C for ozone with Lucas County given an F by the American Lung Association.

Apollo could be allowed to emit over 2.4 million tons of carbon dioxide yearly, a potent greenhouse gas. The problem with providing energy for the data center boom is growing, with the US leading the world in gas-fired power for AI demands, costing the climate. According to a recent article in The Guardian, "The gas projects in development in the US will, if all completed, cause 12.1bn tonnes in carbon dioxide emissions over their lifetimes, which is double the current annual emissions coming from all sources in the US. "

In addition to carbon emissions, water usage and higher utility rates, Ohioans increasingly question the massive tax giveaways. "The average cost of their megadeals

is astronomical: $1.9 million per job," writes Kasia Tarczynska, a research analyst with Good Jobs First. "At that price, taxpayers will always lose.'"
"So now the data center industry is mounting a public relations campaign, spending millions to paint a rosy picture of the industry when that money could be much better spent to pay their fair share," asserts Lea Harper of FreshWater Accountability Project located in Wood County. "Where is the benefit to local residents and Ohio taxpayers and ratepayers when very few jobs will be given? I see no upside to these projects."

Tax breaks for behind-the-meter (BTM) gas plants were given by the Ohio legislature which also proposes to classify natural gas as renewable energy for additional incentives. Even though Apollo is classified as a BTM facility, it makes sense Apollo will want to connect to the grid in the future to gain revenue for electricity generated not needed by the data center, especially after decommissioning. Hyperscale data center life cycles are only 10-15 years before major retrofitting or decommissioning is required. Servers have a lifespan of up to six years, chips even less. Gas plants have a life span of 30 – 40 years when well-maintained. When Apollo applies to connect with the grid, will the tax breaks and other incentives be reimbursed?

Apollo requires two 16" diameter pipes to connect to the gas supply. Where are the pipeline permit applications, and how can that permitting be done separately? Is that a way to avoid furnishing a statement of benefit? How can the gas plant be built without all the permit approvals required? Will the plant, with the same parent company as Nexus (Williams) be using fracked gas? Who has considered the overall greenhouse gas impacts not only from this gas plant, but from the pollution and greenhouse gases emitted to supply the gas?

Among the many unanswered questions is the statement in application documents asserting, "The proposed project will not meet the definition of a major stationary source." How can that be?

For construction to start next week, it appears that the Apollo project has assumed that permits will be granted. What construction contracts have been awarded? What materials have been ordered, including turbines, in advance of gaining necessary permit approvals to begin construction? This makes the fast-track permitting process appear to just be a matter of checking boxes.

Although some people say it is futile to make public comments or attempt to have questions answered and concerns addressed, there are local residents like Tracy Wyatt who continue to demand transparency and accountability. "My family has already suffered from severe asthma," stated Tracy, "How much worse will their health get by living next to a gas plant?" There is a growing number of people like Tracy who are resisting data center projects and questioning their tactics to gain fast-tracked approval without community knowledge or a community benefit plan.

Even though the Will-Power application touts "early involvement," it appears the bare minimum has been done to engage the public with total transparency and a complete

cost-benefit analysis to justify the entire project. Time will tell who will be paying the price for Ohio's data center boom, but projections show it may be a bust for the Ohio's taxpayers and utility ratepayers.