

Data Centers in Ludington?

The Story So Far...

By Marco C. Iafrate

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Introduction:

By searching in different areas of the county... and outside of it... for puzzle pieces... we think we are really far ahead in what we believe is all one secret plan to put a Data Center... here on our land.

Where... we don't know exactly. But I'm going to present the puzzle pieces we've all been gathering up... since I began my research on June 8.

Most important... is that we are guests in this private club, the employees have to stay until we leave so they can lock-up after us. And for this reason, I want them to know that they were respected as we occupy this rental space.

How this Investigation Began:

As for the investigation... On June 8, The Ludington City Council made a big step in the direction of bringing a Data Center here... and it was against the wishes of the people.

What they did... was they approved a program called CPACE, that stands for commercial property assessed clean energy. CPACE finances clean energy projects.... and Data Centers.

We have seen the example in Missouri... CPACE Provided the Finances to PATMOS for a Data Center to be built in Kansas City, MO.

We know the same pattern is going to be used in Mason County because an anonymous source told us that Consumers Energy would not let them build a commercial property in Pere Marquette Township... Consumers was quoted by our source... "we need to save all the land and resources for the Data Center..." That's what they said.

My response... I went to the Township Hall there after I made an appointment with the Zoning Administrator Kristen Lange.

I asked her if any permits have come through by hyperscale developments or shell companies. She said none have come in... no public records have come in. I asked her if she'd heard anything vocally, she said she'd heard nothing... But we have.

If the people have heard something and the Zoning Administrator has not... does that say something about her diligence in her job or that a Non Disclosure Agreement was signed. That... is my question.

When I asked her for the building permits where that anonymous source was building a commercial property in the township... the Zoning Administrator asked me three times why I was requesting them... I didn't answer that question.

Now... there is a conflict in what she said. Because... more recently I asked the Township Supervisor, Kelly Smith, whether he was aware of potential secret plans to bring a Data Center to the area... at the time he said he was aware. But when I posted it on Facebook he denied what he said and doubled down on his denial in the post comments.

I think he is free to deny it... but I also think that his constituents don't appreciate it.

What we gotta understand are Non-Disclosure Agreements. When people sign one of those agreements.. they signed a legal document that holds them accountable for more than I think we know... money... maybe they've been threatened... Who knows?

I would only feel bad for them if they didn't put their own families and community in danger by signing... but they most likely did because there are signs.

My question is this: When is it ever acceptable to sacrifice the community to preserve your own interests. I don't care what kind of threats could have potentially been made. Our elected officials are accountable to us... the people... and not the Data Center developers or Consumers or the State.

Now, one thing I've read about non-disclosure agreements is that they don't have to disclose any preliminary conversation before anything is officially filed. The officials, they might be lying or they might be telling a narrow truth.

STOP HERE: Let's take a few minutes to absorb this: *What do we make of this? Feel free to speak from where you are or approach the podium. I'm sure we have some questions so far?*

A Texas Connection?

Based on what we have so far... we can reasonably speculate that a Data Center would connect to the City's new CPACE program, since that program funds Data Centers.

The interesting thing here... is that there seems to be... a Texas connection... to our city's CPACE program.

According to USA Today, Texas wants to be the industry leader in data centers in the U.S. I'm suspicious that Michigan wants to follow in those footsteps. It's because of our Great Lakes and our many inland lakes. Ludington, I believe, is a prime target.

When I was a reporter for the Ludington Daily News, I interviewed a man from Texas. This man is the current CEO of Great Lakes Castings, our local foundry. He told me that he was brought to Ludington because of his experience as a general manager of Southwest Steel Casing Company in Texas.

His advisors have been directing him to make big changes to our little Ludington foundry.

His name is Robert McMahon, and the Ludington Daily News currently reports that he is eager to be working with the newly approved CPACE program. And now, what I gather is that GLC, Great Lakes Castings, is the poster child for the data center.

Bear in mind that nobody at the meeting mentioned a data center. This all has been kept under wraps, it seems, for at least 13 years... since an LDN article reports on a Data Center that long ago.

As for the present day, it appears to be the culmination... of their plans to turn this into Traverse City or Little Chicago.

I know people who have overheard a dinner conversation between certain city officials and certain business people. And they said, "let's turn Ludington into a Little Chicago." That's the quote they used. That private meeting was in 2011.

At the June 8th meeting this year, Mr. McMahon and the council, the city council, appeared to be each on a script.

They say CPACE will bring in a lot of jobs. I researched the situation in Texas of what businessmen and governments are saying about it. They're saying the same thing. If you do your research, you'll find out that it didn't bring in any jobs for the locality.

They bring people in from other counties and other states...what these jobs are is big tech jobs for tech people... and they move 12-20 people to a hyperscale Data Center.

Here are the Sources that show us the Workforce talking point they're making is false.

Ark Data Centers, Ohio: A \$136 million campus expansion whose final job count is exactly 10, per public records cited by Futurism (reported by Quartz).

Microsoft in Boydton, VA: The local IBEW head said Microsoft brought in outside technicians to do most of the work, and about 25 local residents got jobs, primarily as administrative assistants or janitorial staff, according to a Quartz report.

Good Jobs First notes a New York Times piece describing electrical jobs at data centers filled by workers traveling across the country project to project, and says they've yet to see a subsidy agreement stipulating local hiring.

Genesee County, New York: The local Industrial Development Agency anticipates 60% of the construction workforce at a proposed Stream US Data Centers project will come from outside the 14-county region. Good Jobs First Reported.

STOP HERE: "What do we make of this? How do we feel about it? Feel free to speak from where you are or approach the podium."

Laws and Policies Utilized for Data Centers

In Ludington, here is what a data center would look like... They would take Lake Michigan, they would take Pete Marquette Lake, the river, they would take Lincoln Lake, Hamlin Lake, Tallman Lake, Ford Lake, Round Lake, Bass Lake, they would take land too... destroy the fertility of livestock... and us too... our showers will give us brown water.... I don't think they plan on doing it any differently in Ludington... I really do not.

Tech companies that are trying to build Data Centers get the local governments on a script to say "small scale ones don't do what the big ones do." Since I got my journalism degree... I have given so much grace for people like this... but now and as a general rule I no longer believe the promises that Data Centers make unless I see their words line up with their actions... but they never do.

Anyway... If secret plans succeed here... all the stories about how wonderful the job growth is and the quality of life... would be seen for what they truly are.... and... that is not the way I want Ludington to learn about destruction... I'd rather we learn now from the misfortunes of other communities so we can help ourselves... and eventually... other communities... no community is deserving of destruction... and I hope... for a state-wide coalition.

I'm gonna list some secret methods that are used by utility companies and tech companies... they might align with our local situation. (pause a lot to help people write)

Number 1: Maybe the application hasn't been filed yet. Consumers Energy may be securing land and infrastructure in anticipation of a data center deal that hasn't reached the permitting stage. Utilities, like Consumers, often do pre-development work, like locking up capacity, negotiating easements, and they do this well before a developer files with the township. They even do land surveys before the permitting stage.

Number 2, it might be going through a different jurisdiction than Pere Marquette Township. Zoning applications sometimes go to a county level rather than the township or city. They could apply through any one of our local governments... so we gotta keep an eye not just on our township boards... but the committees beneath them too.

Number 3: The entity applying may not be recognizable as a data center yet. Usually, Data Center applications are filed under shell companies described generically. An example is "industrial facility."

All of these methods are backwards... and they have laws and policies backing them. In 1776, communities took up their civic duties against people who enforced bad ideas disguised as laws and policy. What are we gonna do in 2026?

Our Michigan governing body that can override local governments is called the Michigan Public Service Commission... In 2024 Governor Whitmer signed Public Act 233 into law.

Public Act 233 gave the Michigan Public Service Commission... the ability to overstep local governments when they say no to data centers and clean energy. That commission is a three-member panel. Three people are trying to dictate our local governments... Why would the governor sign such a thing?

I'll tell you that Mason County has been threatened. When I worked for the newspaper... I covered the county commission meetings where DTE employees... from Detroit... were trying to get our county to agree to build a massive solar farm...

When they realized they weren't getting the support they wanted... They brought in a lawyer. None of them would disclose anything beyond their first names... and I had to pull teeth to get that. It all ended when the county kept saying no thank you... so two of the three DTE ladies got mad and threatened us with the Michigan Public Service Commission. They said: "the commission will just override you."

What I gather is now... the law is being weaponized in Mason County.

I think our utility companies are working together with the Michigan Public Service Commission.... I really do.

Since DTE and Consumers charge the Data Center's bills to residents in the counties that surround it... isn't it reasonable to say they are working with the Data Centers?

It is a clear violation of life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. It's very clear that our local governments are openly betraying us... and the State too... because now our Secretary of State is saying she wants Data Centers in Michigan.

Because of secret plans like the one we seem to be uncovering... All people... all walks of life in this nation... even the kind of people that some of us may not like at all... are being put into the same boat... and it is sinking whether we say it is or not...

All are getting hurt... it's starting to look like ALL are being marginalized... and since that is the case... I think we should stick to one another like glue when we say... not

in our community... and not in Michigan... not as long as this is the United States of America... which is the country that my family settled in the 1960s to get away from... the memory... of the Nazi bullies in Italy... during the 2nd World War.

I'm a 26 year old young man... I'm preparing myself to be able to lead a family and I want to do that in Ludington. I want to do that right here. I moved here three years ago and I don't intend on leaving. I want my home to be an example of the freedom that my family settled when they came from Italy... I never want the pilgrimage that they did so that I could be born free... I never want that to be squandered. That's one of my motivations for doing this.

The people united are stronger than the people who sign bad ideas disguised as state legislation and local ordinances... The people united are stronger than DTE and Consumers who charge the Data Center's bills... to the residents that never wanted the Data Centers... the people united are stronger than every local puzzle piece that seems to connect to secret plans.

And... I want us to help ourselves... and other communities who fell for the Data Center trap.

STOP HERE: "What do we make of this? Can we add anything? Feel free to speak from where you are or approach the podium. Are there questions?"

A Word from a Utah Activist

Here's a method that they've used in UTAH... to be replicated throughout the nation... this comes from Caroline Gleich, she's an environmental activist on Facebook.

She said that a Utah state agency... much like an agency we use in Mason County... facilitates non-disclosure agreement contracts.... Between tech companies... local governments... and utilities.

Gleich said they would publicly schedule an environmental assessment to test the land after... after they decided on where to put the Data Center.

When I worked for the Ludington Daily News, it seemed to me that this pattern was commonplace for much of our local government business. I suspect they are doing this with their apparent Data Center plans.

The Utah activist said the pattern looks like this. The state picks the land, the counties sign a consent paper, and it's done. Everything beyond that is a show. They intend to push it through no matter what.

I read Section 2 of the Ludington City Charter. I think such an action would violate that section.

Gleich also said that the Utah state agency used... eminent domain... to secure property in the groundwater underneath it. Eminent Domain is this: I had to look it up. It is... the legal power of the government to seize private property... for public use... without the owner's consent.

I believe that the Constitution's Fifth Amendment has been twisted to legally allow this.

Moreover, they prevent outside auditors and investigators from doing their watchdog duty and instead... do an in-house investigation.

Gleich said people in outside states need to be concerned because the Utah state agency referred to their model as a... **replicative model... for other states.** They are using this model as a precedent for every other Data Center they want to build, and it's against the wishes of the people in those communities.

Furthermore, Utah's House Bill 60 keeps people from being able to fight this in court. That one is very dangerous because lawyers who aren't good use legal precedents like this to sway juries.

And this woman, Gleich, she's a researcher, so we can take her word as true. She's not speaking from just her own mind alone. She is speaking from other sources.

To me... all of this is evidence that our checks and balances, our Constitution, are becoming unusable. Through data centers, they're setting legal precedents to take away more and more liberties secured by our ancient ancestors. We need access to paper trails since it is apparent that it is happening in our community

If you don't believe in America, you better believe in it right now because choosing a life that's comfortable is about to be non-existent. If you think college debt is bad right now, more stuff is being piled on it. Right now, our life and our liberty and our happiness is up against the firing squad wall and they take shots at it little by little year after year.

I used to not believe in our country. As a teenager and my first couple years of college... I used to just say, "leave it to the dogs."

But in the last few years of my life, I have been slowly seeing that the dogs in our governmental system are in a system of checks and balances that we can use. We can use those checks and balances to take back our communities if we run for office.

For those of us that would rather do other productive things... We we can petition... we can speak out... we can organize to effectively reach a goal. I'll talk more about that later...

Kristi-Lucas Zimmerman/The Right Place

I mentioned agencies that facilitate Non-Disclosure Agreements... I mentioned the Right Place.

It's the economic development consultant that communities in West Michigan use. We use it. I read... an article where Kent and Lowell and residents of other communities united and discovered that the Right Place was facilitating Non-Disclosure Agreements with their local governments and the Data Center developers and the utility companies.

Over the last 2-3 weeks, I have three times called our local Right Place consultant. I wanted to give her the benefit of the doubt. First I got the voicemail... I waited a few days and called again... I asked the desk attendant how often she was in the office, not often was the answer... she is often busy... with meetings. I then asked if she had been in the office since I called, she said she has. I said oh she must be busy then... yes was the response. The counter lady asked me if I wanted to leave a message... instead I asked if she would write a note so she could remind our Right Place consultant that I called. We hung up after that.

The third and last time I called was on July 6. I asked if she was in and the girl who answered the phone... went to check... and she said she wasn't in...

I don't know how you'd need to check because the building the Right Place works out of is very small.. and the front desk person would have seen her coming and going. I didn't say that to her... instead I asked if she listens to all her voicemails... the girl on the phone told me yes... then I left a voicemail to the Right Place consultant.

Now... I am disappointed and reluctant that it has come to this:

Our Right Place consultant's name is Kristi-Lucas Zimmerman. Kristi, I gave you the benefit of the doubt that you'd call back... I respected your space, but you have failed to respect the people you are hired to report to... therefore I'm having to call you out in front of us.

I didn't want it to get to this point... you should have called back.

Here is the question that I have been waiting three weeks to ask you: have you and the Right Place been facilitating non-disclosure agreements between our local government, our local utility, and a company trying to get a Data Center in our area? Have you been doing the same thing with clean energy developers?

I never ever want to call people out but we need answers even when our calls seem to be ignored. I've experienced Zimmerman doing this in the past and it is a recurring pattern not unique to the last three weeks that I've been calling. This is what I've had to resort to in order to get answers....

Kristi if you would answer now or call me later we would all appreciate it.....
ma'am.

STOP HERE:

Erin Brockovitch

The kind of person who should be an economic consultant is Erin Brockovitch. She is an environmental activist from the 90s who is a fine example of coming out of retirement to get on the front lines again at an older age. I respect her very much because of her character to fight again... but now against Data Centers.

She's got a website and it's got a map of where the Data Centers are. They are blips on her map and the blips have four categories:

Communities report to her that a data center is in secret plans and she turns it into a community reported blip on her map. There are five categories of blips on the map.

The **First** is a **Community Reported Blip**. I contacted her and said that we have a community report and I'm expecting to see a blip.

The **Second** kind of blip is the **Developer Proposed Blip**. That's where it becomes public.

The **Third** is the **Township Approved Blip**.

Fourth, the **Under Construction Blip**. Saline is just about at that point now.

And the **Fifth**... would be an **Operational Data Center Blip**.

All Saline once had was a community reported blip... and we need to learn from their mistakes so we never have to see a Data Center being constructed in our area.

We want our town to be the same peaceful, beautiful one that everyone knows about. I don't want people to think about a Data Center when I'm out of town and I tell them I am from Ludington.

My Proposal for Solution

My proposal for a solution is clear. We must get moving on this petition to get Ludington's PACE program repealed. PACE is what funds Data Centers.

As for Pere Marquette Charter Township residents... please take notes because I researched what you can do...

We are gonna have to attend all the Township Board meetings and the Planning Commission meetings. It'll have to be an... organized... turnout of speakers and people taking notes. We gotta go in observing our governments like watchdogs but keeping our woofs respectful and professional.

If the township starts to publicly entertain a Data Center... it would most likely start in the Planning Commission. If they get a proposal from a Data Center or a shell company... Section 402 of the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (MCL 125.3402) lets township residents ...challenge... a zoning ordinance or amendment... that the board has already adopted.

If the township adopts and publishes a zoning amendment... residents need to file a notice of intent within 7 days of publication of that amendment... it would be published in the Ludington Daily News.

You would then have 30 days to submit petition signatures equal to at least 15% of the township's total gubernatorial vote from the last election where a governor was chosen. That suspends the amendment until voters decide it at the polls. I know that poll workers are interested in taking the lead on this...

Hamlin Township... it's the same with you... if you guys think the noise at Stix is bad... What data centers do is they have diesel generators that power their servers. It's not just the hyper scale Data Centers. All sizes of the Data Centers they're building now shake the ground worse than Styx could. They claim, these data centers claim, that they can build a wall around it to block the sound. Styx built a bandshell and still I see houses for sale on my mail route.

Right now... I'm speaking everyone... to Grant, Free Soil, Meade, Victory, Sherman, Fountain, Sheridan, Ludington, Amber, Scottville, Custer, Branch, Pere Marquette, Summit, Riverton, Eden and Logan... the mail is gonna be delivering your the bills you're gonna have to pay for the Data Center... whether its out of sight out of mind or not.

I... do not want to have to see residents that I deliver to have to sell their homes...

If we want our homes... we gotta fight for them.

If we want our sleep, I know that a lot of people do not sleep because of Styx. If we want that, then we have to fight for sleep.

If we want our water to not be stolen from us and used to cool those Data Center server rooms, then we have to fight for it. If we want our water to come out clean instead of... dirty and contaminated... then we have to fight for our water.

If we want our livestock to get pregnant, then we have to fight for our livestock. Our livestock are mammals, and so are we. Too many farmers are already in debt... and some farmers feel they have nothing to lose in selling out to Data Centers and clean energy.

If we want our utilities and our taxes to go back to normal, we have to fight for those too... As we may know the Saline Data Center is in talks to get tax breaks.

Meta/Facebook Vice President eyeing Ludington

If it's still not real enough for you... I had a development this week.

A Vice President of Meta and Facebook has 44 people that she's following on Facebook... and 72,000 are following her. Her name is Derya Matra and she also an executive... and spokesperson for Meta and Facebook in... the Middle East, Europe and Africa. She tried to follow me on Facebook this week... for some reason she wanted the 45th person she follows to be... a guy in little old Ludington.

I turned the request down... but the reason I think she requested to follow me is because we are not just defending Ludington... from a Data Center. I think... part of these secret plans is that they want... to plug in... to our Ludington Pumped Storage Plant...

WE ARE STANDING BETWEEN THEM AND OUR POWER PLANT... which is powered by Consumers. We, the people, decide what happens with our land and many of our local representatives need to be reminded. Our power plant powers a large part of the Midwest, we are not just defending Ludington...

Our hydroelectric plant covers most of the Lower Peninsula...Grand Rapids, Muskegon, Ludington itself, Kalamazoo, Flint, Saginaw, metro Detroit and southeast Michigan... even outside of Michigan.

In Closing

I have given all members of our local government the benefit of the doubt... I didn't move into town and think of them as liars just because they are in office. As a newsman I observed and I waited to make my opinion.

I'm making this stand because our local government has left people with no other choice than to take a stand... all the while maintaining respect and discourse... non-violence... no violence... just guerilla journalism and taking back our government through the civic process.

Who agrees?

Good. And I'll tell ya this... as bad as our City Hall may look... There are some good people in there. In the conference room where I met with the City Clerk to figure out how to do a petition... I saw on the whiteboard this quote: "those who won our independence believed liberty to be the secret of happiness... and courage to be the secret of liberty."

Since that quote was openly written in City Hall... by what I think was an employee... I believe there is hope... for us.

Thank you for being here,
Marco C. Iafrate