



CONTROVERSY OVER AI IN HOPEWELL JUNCTION –ARE MACHINES TAKING OVER?

BY: Keith S. Shikowitz, Editor in Chief/Investigative Reporter



The controversy over AI and the data centers that are needed to run it is reaching a boiling point. There are protests all over the country for against these centers. The groups against them will use too much water and too much energy thus taking away these things from the communities around them. They also say that the local energy costs will rise a lot.

There is also the fear about AI taking over. There are those out there that feel that we are heading for a Terminator type scenario if we continue down this path. Remember the Terminator movies start in the year 2029 with robots trying to take over the world.

There is a proposal to put an AI plant in the East Fishkill area. The people assembled are totally against this. They held a rally outside the East Fishkill town hall on May 21, 2026, to let the government know how they felt. They also seem to be against reopening Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant.

“While they were setting up a lady started trying to rile up the crowd.” We're going to support East Fishkill. That's what we want to do here. We've got two impacted communities too, those who are here, numbers of us. I'm from the Indian Point area. I've been, while Melissa's warming up and getting all the details set, I live in the, I can see Indian Point from the 2nd floor of my, old house, turn of the century house, and we have been fighting the impacts environmental impacts now with the decommissioning of Indian Point to do it correctly. We developed a New York State oversight board as part of our activism. Yes, we can do this. If we join together, and so we're going to hear about this, hearing, setting up the hearing, public hearing, if we come back in June, that's our goal to get people back in June, also to sign this petition locally which is circulating, and Fran, our local advocate, will explain that to you and, we also have a moratorium petition that's on the state level that's circulating too. So, thank you so much for showing up.”

Melissa Hoffman, who was apparently one of the organizers, took to the mike to officially kick things off.

<https://youtu.be/z-gheZJEjIM>

She then introduced the first speaker. “First I would like to introduce Fran who is a local East Fishkill resident.

“Hi, my name is Fran Caracapa. I have lived in East Fishkill for 37 years. I'm speaking today because of my concern over the potential irreparable changes which may lie ahead for all of the residents of East Fishkill, those residing in District 21, where the data

centers, where the data centers will be located. Today there are 2 active data center projects in East Fishkill under review by the New York State Independent system operator, which Melissa had mentioned ISO. ISO is a not-for-profit organization which is responsible for operating our New York State grid.”

She says that the first project, which is number 1738, the 1 gig data center listed in ISO's interconnection review queue dated July 17, 2025, and that in February 26, ISO approved the scoping summary to evaluate the project and in it noted a proposed date of October 28th for a 500-megawatt load with an additional 500-megawatt load to be added in 2030. So, we are talking about a 1000-megawatt load. The consumption pattern for the project is to run 24/7 without interruption.

Continuing she added, “The project proposes on-site diesel generators as its alternative source of power. The second proposed project is number 1760, the IPark data center interconnection is also scheduled to be online in 2028 and potentially adding another 150-megawatt data center. It, like the 1 gig data center, will run 24/7, but proposes to participate in ISO's demand response program which will require it to reduce usage as the grid gets stressed. On May 14th, ISO approved the impact study to evaluate this data center project's impact on the grid. And approved considering evaluating the load of the one gig data center in conjunction with the proximity of the IPark data center and also another scenario which would look at its connection and its stress on the grid with Orangeburg.”

There were a few things that she is concerned about with these projects: First, the electrical infrastructure as it exists today will need to be upgraded for the proposed 1100 megawatt load and costs to local customers. Two large data centers often require substantial cooling infrastructure in a town which a newly adopted comprehensive plan notes the majority of East Fishkill's water is from private wells. What will be the impact on the sand and gravel aquifers which are very susceptible to contamination?

“We are not willing to add another superfund to East Fishkill. Adding large scale data centers to any location will add both noise and light pollution to what we residents consider a town of a natural rural charm. The 1 gig data center particularly borders residential property, a house of worship, and a daycare center. What will be the impact on those in such close proximity? Projects of this size may have long term implications for East Fishkill.

Agreed, these projects have not come before the planning board of the town, and I urge the town board to move to a 3-year moratorium for data centers and warehouses. This will provide more time for independent analysis of the community, the environmental impact on our limited and already stressed resources. As residents, we must be relentless about these issues and stay involved. I know I will, and since I am living in the district which will be mostly impacted, I encourage you to sign the Change.org petition so that we can get more signatures to stop the data centers in East Fishkill.

Next up is Mike Shade.

<https://youtu.be/rKmYHGns2XQ>

Melissa did her job as emcee introducing Greg Totino who is a member of the Fishkill town board.

“Thanks everyone and thank you all for coming out here today. This is an important part of the civic process.

Over in Fishkill, just a few miles down the road, we take pride on, on being very open and community centered, government that loves to hear feedback from our citizenry and to see you here engaging in that process in East Fishkill is exactly what democracy is all about. I would also like to start by saying I, I'm here to support the East Fishkill Town Board, putting an AI data center moratorium as part of their industrial moratorium, which they were set to renew next month is the way to put your constituents, public health, and their quality of life first. That is our primary duty as elect . If we don't do that, do not re-elect us.”

He said that it's simple, but they need to talk about data centers because they're new, they're emerging, and let's be real, they're not going away. He's not against AI. He thinks that the potential of AI to revolutionize things like healthcare, industry, economy, and culture is something that we should support in a responsible and sustainable way.

“If we're talking about responsibility and sustainability, then putting a 1-gigawatt data center in the middle of a heavily populated area is about as ridiculous as it gets. Let's talk specifics here because the scale is something that's really difficult to grasp. Cricket Valley, the power plant that was built just a few years ago over in Dover, produces about 1.2 gigawatts of

This data center would consume about 80% of its total output. That's never going to work. Let's think, how else might we be able to provide power to a data facility like this? Maybe with renewable energy like solar. Great. Do you have 9 square miles for a solar farm? That's how large a solar farm in New York would need to be to provide enough power for a data center."

Let's talk about the data center itself. How much noise does it produce? You ever been to a Major League Baseball game? Anyone ever been to see a World Series game at Yankee Stadium? Well, imagine standing right outside Yankee Stadium during the 9th inning of a World Series game, 95 to 110 decibels of noise. That's its sound output, except it isn't just for a few hours every October. It's 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. It produces so much noise, both at auditory levels and low frequency vibrations that it can disrupt human sleep. It can agitate cardiovascular problems and pose a serious public health risk out to a range of 2 miles or more.

<https://youtu.be/ThCpFz--sy0>

Hoffman came back the mike and tried to get the crowd excited by calling out her chant of "What do we want? When do we want it?" She then called up Lisa Call, who is a Dutchess County Legislator, who tried again with the chant.

"Hey, so tree tops, Treetops plans for a data center here are quite simply outrageous. There's no other word for it, right? This is complete nonsense. I'm really glad that the town board is stepping up and is going to consider a moratorium. They really need to do that, as many have talked about already. Do you know what this proposed data center, the energy consumption of it would be?"

She claimed that it would be the same amount of energy that is consumed by the city of Buffalo. But she did not offer any statistics to back up this claim. The city of Buffalo right here in East Fishkill, that's not happening. And guess what happens when you need this much energy? You need to build out the grid. Who pays for that? We do. Did we say yes to that?"

"No, no, we have not said yes to that today and we are not going to say yes to that tomorrow. What about the water this is going to consume? We need water for people. The disturbance of the ecological balance, the noise pollution." Again, not offering any stats on this.

A couple of days ago, a reporter asked me and said, "I forgot to mention I'm the chair of the Environment Committee in the legislature. They said to me, well, you know, AI is the future. Don't you want New York State to be a leader in AI?"

"This is what I said, I want New York State to be the leader in regulating AI."

Then they said, "But AI is the future."

I've got news for you out there. You know, who's the future and what's the future? People, people are the future and that's what government's job is to take care of people, not corporations.

"All right, next up is a current councilman in the city of Poughkeepsie, Evan Menist." Hoffman announced.

<https://youtu.be/4r3OHBBFuyM>

<https://youtu.be/gnJWqZ1fENc>

Others came to the mike to give their opinions on the AI data center. All had the same message. AI center bad... must put moratorium on building it good.

People there talked about protecting our democracy and saving it. Yet, there was a gentleman who was trying to record the event on his phone, and they kept blocking him from doing so with their signs. I found out later that he was a Republican and that was the reason they were blocking him. "Regardless, if you want to protect our Constitutional Republic, then the rights have to apply to everyone equally." Said a person who was there who wished to remain anonymous.