

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

April 15, 2026

Audio recording of full meeting will be available online on the city's website

Councilmember Ed Stredney and Chair President of the Community Development and Neighborhood Stabilization Committee called a committee meeting to be held on April 15, 2026 @ 5:00 prior to the regular council meeting. Paul Hanson and Robert Pena from Bitdeer, LLC presented on the proposed data center to be built in Weathersfield Township and proposed an annexation to the City of Niles for use of our water utilities system. A more detailed recount of their presentation is recorded by the Community Development and Neighborhood Stabilization Committee Report. This presentation was recorded and the committee meeting minutes are on file with the Clerk of Council.

Niles City Council held its regular meeting on April 15, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. at the Niles Senior Center in Niles, Ohio.

The meeting was called to order by Council President, Doug Sollitto.

The Clerk, Abbey Lavelle called the roll:

Weddell- P, Johnstone-P, Sheely-P, Leskovec-P, Julian-P, Lastic- P, Stredney-P, Sollitto- P

It was moved by Lastic, seconded by Weddell to accept and place on file the General Consent Agenda.

Motion carried.

PUBLIC REMARKS

(Public comments began at 1:33 into recording)

Lisa Cricks provided an update from the last meeting she spoke at. On Friday April 3, Shaw Avenue experienced heavy flooding and a stream of muddy water runoff from the Hyundai dealership due to the rainfall that day. She mentioned that an off-duty Water Department employee and council member drove up the street to see if the heavy flooding was due to a water main break. She brings this to Council's attention to highlight that the Hyundai dealership is still not in compliance with soil and erosion protocols as highlighted by David DeCristefaro at the last meeting as well. Lisa also inquired about an update regarding the mound specifications spoken about at the last meeting. President Doug Sollitto sought an update from the Mayor to which Mayor Mientkiewicz stated that the Niles building inspector has been out to the Hyundai site daily and soil, sediment, and erosion measures are being put in place and enforced. The Mayor also added that the building inspector is still working with the Hyundai developer regarding the mound to enhance the buffer previously agreed upon. President Sollitto questioned how much of the 20-foot buffer that Ms. Cricks requests will be put in place by the developer. Aaron Johnstone added that the overall amount has always been an agreed upon number, it is the

split between the mound and height of trees on top of the mound that is in discrepancy. He added that a higher mound is preferable for the residents concerns and stated that Duke Wheeler is working with the developer to move the retention pond closer to the front of the Hyundai property to allow for a larger mound. The Mayor added that per the engineering of the plans moving the retention pond is not possible, but Duke continues to work with the developer regarding the mound. President Sollitto added that it was Mr. Cricks desire to have the total buffer be 24-28 feet not just 20 feet with a preference of Evergreen trees on top of the mound to preserve as much privacy as possible. The Mayor reiterated that the building inspector continues to have those discussions with the developer and nothing is set in stone just yet. Aaron Johnstone followed up regarding the flooding concern, seeking if the developer would come clean up the mess that was a result of their poor water diversion. The Mayor said he would reach out to them. Also, Aaron added that this issue is an example of what we do not want to happen with the Bitdeer data center project (i.e. make agreements that ultimately changed without clear communication). President Sollitto agreed that these residents agreed to the developers initial intentions with the buffer and were sold an idea to which they were blindsided when the plans ultimately changed anyways.

Numerous residents from the City of Niles attended and addressed Council regarding the proposed annexation of the Bitdeer data center. Each resident listed below spoke on their concern and disagreement with the data center project, focusing on the negative health effects as well as the impact on local utilities and water quality that would result from this data center. Audio recording of the public comments can be found on the City of Niles website for a more detailed recount of each residents concerns. Many residents attended the meeting and below are those that spoke on the issue:

Daniel Babcock – raised the concern of where the water and electric supply would be for the project and who is footing the bill, adding that the burden will be on the residents. The Mayor clarified that Bitdeer would not use any of the City's electric supply as they already have an agreement in place with Ohio Edison. Jimmy Julian added that the water usage for the data center project will only stabilize the City's water rates considering the revenue that will be collected from the usage.

Drew Six – raised the concern of the impact this will have on the housing market ; adding that this will negatively impact nearby house values as no one wants to purchase a house near a data center. She also added that noise barriers don't take away from the other health impacts of this project. President Doug Sollitto stated that he has had numerous people reach out to him regarding this data center project and he stands with the residents and represents the will of the people when it comes to opposing this project.

Jessica Gardener – raised the concern that Niles is heading in a positive direction of beautifying downtown and the local parks but this data center only moves us in the opposite direction. As a cancer survivor, she reiterates the negative health and

environmental effects that will impact the local communities. She added that this project will not bring a plethora of jobs to the area and if a tax abatement is sought there will be no revenue going back into the local community. Jessica urged that this decision should not be one for Council but should be made by a vote of the people on a ballot.

Paige Neeler – raised the concern that although the City may be able to handle the water usage for one data center as more come to the area there will be a greater strain on our local water system. Frank Leskovec urged that he stands with the residents of Niles and does not appreciate the anger motivated towards the council members for Bitdeer's attendance and proposal today. The council members were there to listen and learn from Bitdeer's presentation just as much as the residents.

Katie Fallo – thanked Council for considering bringing potential job opportunities to the area but ultimately the data center is outweighed by the costs to the community, especially to young children and potential speech and learning delays as a result of the effects of data centers. She urged the City to do their due diligence because the impact is more than just them – it's the people. President Sollitto thanked Katie Fallo for being a local educator and attending this meeting, reiterating that Council works for the people.

Noah Williams – reiterated many of the concerns raised thus far. Noah addressed Bitdeer's water usage of 500,000 gallons/day and what that means for residents.

Hannah Lindell – reiterated the concerns raised thus far adding that she cares for her neighbors and the residents that stand together this night and does not want to see any of them suffer from the negative effects of this data center.

Cory Kuriatnyk – reiterated many of the concerns raised thus far adding that the Bitdeer presentation showed a video of low-level noise that was inaccurate and raised the issue of the amount of water evaporation from the closed water system they plan to implement. Cory added that there were many discrepancies between what Bitdeer presented on today and what is posted on their website, including making it a bitcoin mining center not just a data center.

Steve Linder – raised the concern of the contaminated water that will be filtered back into our local water system from this data center project and questioned who would be responsible for monitoring the toxicity of the water levels coming from the data center.

Tina Bricker – reiterated many of the concerns raised thus far highlighting the concern of the so-called 'close loop' water system that Bitdeer plans to implement and the flaws that come along with it. Tina also raised the fact that the Ohio House by a vote of 88-0 to pause and study this industry to fully understand the impact it has on local utilities.

Jessica P. – reiterated many of the concerns raised thus far urging Council to do their research on the effects and impacts of this project before proceeding with any decisions. Jessica added her concern for the financial stability of the City as Bitdeer and the data center industry could be a risky investment.

Isabelle (Washington Ave, Niles, OH) – reiterated many of the concerns raised thus far including increased electricity prices to foot the bill for the increase in data centers popping up not only around the state but the country. Isabelle also added about the forever chemicals that would result from this data center project. She added that this is a failed project and to be pro-City you must be pro-community and investing in this project is not for the benefit of the City.

Kimberly Vincent – commented on Bitdeer’s statement that they plan to go forward with the data center even without approval of an annexation. She added that this does not hold true because Bitdeer needs the annexation to proceed with their data center. Aaron Johnstone clarified that the property has already been purchased by Bitdeer and at this point it is a matter of having a say in Bitdeer’s actions – without the annexation we can just hope that Weathersfield proceeds in a way that we hope they would. Doug Sollitto reiterated that Niles and councilmembers will not make a decision on this annexation because they were bullied into it.

Keith Cramer – reiterated many of the same concerns raised thus far regarding the utilities and health affects adding that this annexation would allow the City of Niles to have some control in the decisions made at the data center.

Beverly Bressler – commented that she’s neither for this nor against it because she does not feel that she knows enough about this AI revolution that we’re experiencing to have any real say on it. We have an opportunity to do it right considering there is some communities making the mistake of rushing to a decision too soon. She adds that there is wealth to be made from this data center but there must be transparency to be successful. She stated that everyone is prospering from these companies – anyone who uses Chat GPT, anyone who has a 401K with tech stocks, etc ; but we need to approach this in a way that works for all parties involved.

Nicholas Hall – addressed the crowd to see who would like to see this issue be voted upon on the ballot this fall. Nicholas addressed the so-called economic prosperity that would come from this data center, referencing Ashburn, VA, a city with the highest density of data centers ; adding that there is no big ‘push’ to move and work at these data centers because they do not provide any real economic benefit.

Abigail Bickerstaff – questioned the potential revenue that is projected from this data center. The Mayor responded that the City has not received any projections from Bitdeer to provide a clearer outlook. Doug Sollitto added that revenue would stem from the water

usage at the site. The Mayor reiterated that Bitdeer's attendance tonight was nothing more than a fact-finding presentation and the fingers being pointed at the City is uncalled for because it is the elected officials job to provide this due diligence to their residents. The Mayor wants to make a decision based on facts and research, not opinion, and is confident that the council members feel the same. The Mayor made it clear that there is no legislation being presented tonight or in the near future regarding a vote on this issue. Regardless, no rash decisions will be made without further due diligence. Tonight's meeting was a meeting of transparency for not only Council but the residents to hear and learn from Bitdeer. The Mayor stated that MVSD has confirmed their capacity to handle the water usage requested at the site and the revenue made from this project would be put directly back into the Niles water system. The Mayor made it clear that the City has no intention to provide power to the site because the City does not even have the capacity to handle the power usage they are requesting. Aaron Johnstone wanted to assure that no rash decisions were made regarding this issue and proposed a 6-month moratorium with the potential to end it early if Council comes to a decision sooner. Doug Sollitto suggested a 2-year moratorium to ensure the relief of the thought of potential data centers coming to Niles anytime soon and uphold the will of the people.

Abigail then inquired about how long Niles knew about this proposed data center to which the Mayor responded that he read about it a year ago in the Business Journal but conversations with Bitdeer did not begin until a few months ago, limited to just initial inquiries and an example annexation that the Niles just passed for Stillwagon. Phil Zuzolo added that a proposed annexation would have to pass through Council and by no means is there a proposed annexation drafted up with Bitdeer nor Weathersfield. Abigail addressed the rumor that this is a 'done deal' and Phil clarified that under the law this project cannot be construed as a 'done deal' until it is voted on at Council, adding that the City is subject to Sunshine laws shutting down the rumor that the City has signed an NDA. Abigail then addressed the state-wide petition against data centers and inquired what that would mean for next steps. Doug added that it would be back in Council's hands to make a decision and look at other avenues to make it difficult. Phil added that with enough signatures, the residents could take this issue to the ballot to be voted on. Doug clarified that not only can the residents take this issue to the ballot, they can petition for a referendum if this annexation was voted and decided on by Council. James Sheely asked the Law Director if there was anything Council could do to stop this project from commencing in Weathersfield. Phil answered that he does not see legally how Niles could stop another legal subdivision, Weathersfield, from stopping the development of their own jurisdiction – the only way he sees this being stopped by Niles is to prevent the extension of the City's utilities from being used at the site but ultimately we cannot stop them from developing their land. The Mayor added that Bitdeer could still pull water from the local river to cool their systems.

Abigail questioned why it took 6 months from the initial conversation with Bitdeer to hold a public meeting for the residents. Phil Zuzolo stated that only recently has Bitdeer been ready to move forward with this project – 6 months ago they were just inquiring about different avenues. Abigail hopes that going forward there is clear transparency of this project.

Lena Phillips – reiterated many of the concerns raised thus far highlighting her concern of the health affects as a recent cancer survivor. Lena addressed the climate change affects of data centers and how they raise the temperature of the surrounding area.

Dee Sebben – addressed the Mayor in reference to the data center’s health affects stating “I hope your family never has to go through cancer, I battle everyday with head and neck cancer.” Dee added that if his intentions are a money grab to allow this data center come to Niles then she promises he will be voted out of office. Dee urged the Mayor to not allow this project to commence.

Dee then addressed Council about her upcoming fundraiser for veterans to see if anyone would like to donate towards it. Doug Sollitto thanked Dee for her work in the fundraiser and would be happy to get involved.

Caroline Lucarello – reiterated many of the concerns raised thus far spotlighting how this would increase utility bills to Niles residents and she does not want to see this affect those already struggling with poverty.

Iris Davis-Hall (Washington Ave, Niles, OH) – reiterated many of the concerns raised thus far weighing the benefits presented by Bitdeer against the concerns of the local community.

Jim Smith – reiterated the concerns raised thus far focusing on the health effects this would have on the community. Jim added that there is another site in Niles that is could be considered for another data center – this will only push residents out. Jim also addressed the issue he’s noticed around town where residents are not upkeeping their homes and exteriors and would like to see the City get involved to help clean up these problem areas.

Richard Strong – inquired about how this big of a proposed project got to this point without residents knowing about it. Richard stated that if Council allows this to proceed he does not see any of the council members being re-elected. Richard agrees that we don’t know enough and we should not make any quick decisions before more research is done. In closing, Richard made it clear his dissatisfaction with the Mayor stating that “Doug Sollitto should be the next Mayor.”

George Kuriatnyk – addressed the current petition out for signatures right now. George also addressed why it took so long for Council to present this to the public from when they first learned about Bitdeer. George recognized the turnout from residents at tonight's meeting who are against the data center. Doug Sollitto clarified that the 6-month moratorium would essentially miss the November ballot if the residents planned to vote on this issue. Phil Zuzolo added that in order for this issue to be on the ballot, there is a deadline to submit it. George then inquired about Niles Zoning Code regarding data centers to which Phil responded that the moratorium would be in support of changing our zoning laws around data centers. George also inquired about the tax abatement that Bitdeer would apply for to which Phil responded through our recently passed CRA any application for tax abatement needs approved through Council anyways. George then asked about our local parks and why his taxes go towards the Niles parks but he has to pay to rent the basketball and football field. Additionally, he would like to see a fence go in around the splash pad to prevent non-Niles residents from using it to which Phil responded that it would be an Equal Protection issue to do so. In closing, George criticized Doug's role as President of Council stating that he is using his position for more political leverage.

Becky Depanicis – spotlighted the City's Park Levy that is on the ballot this primary. Becky is proud of how far our parks have come and promoted the passing of this levy to ensure that we continue to put more back into our local parks.

Erica Thomas (Ward Ave) – also spotlighted our local parks focusing on where the old Garfield Heights school was and Iowa park stating that her area does not get the focus it should from the City for a safe and fun park for the local kids to enjoy. She feels that Iowa Park is being put on the back burner when compared to the improvements to Waddell. Erica then inquired about the 6-month moratorium and potentially allowing an annexation so that the City has some level of control over the site. Erica strained the duty of Niles Council and administration to investigate and mediate the proposed data center project. The Mayor noted that last summer Council appropriated close to \$50,000 for improvements to Iowa park including a new swing set, basketball hoop, tree removal, etc. Doug Sollitto added that there is also a new blacktop in Iowa Park.

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTION

(Legislation began at 2:05:31 into recording)

ORDINANCE NO. ____ (Draft No. 72-26)

AN ORDINANCE UPDATING CITY OF NILES PERMIT FEES AND NILES FIRE CODE FEE SCHEDULE AND CREATING NILES CODIFIED ORDINANCES 171 AND 172 FOR EACH FEE SCHEDULE, RESPECTIVELY; AND, DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

It was moved by Julian, seconded by Lastic to give a first reading to Draft No. 72-26.

YEAS: 7 NAYS: 0

Draft No. 72-26 has received its first reading on this 15th day of April 2026.

**ORDINANCE NO. ____ (Amended Draft No. 58-26)
AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE TRANSFER OF UNUSED LANDS OWNED BY
THE CITY OF NILES TO TRUMBULL COUNTY LAND REUTILIZATION
CORPORATION.**

**ORDINANCE NO. ____ (Draft No. 66-26)
AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF NILES TO ENTER INTO A TAX
INCREMENT FINANCING ("TIF") AGREEMENT WITH JRD HOLDINGS
PARTNERSHIP FOR PHASE II OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TIF INCENTIVE
DISTRICT; AND, DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.**

**ORDINANCE NO. ____ (Draft No. 67-26)
AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE NILES ZONING CODE; AND, DECLARING AN
EMERGENCY.**

It was moved by Stredney, seconded by Julian to give a second reading to Draft No. 58-26; Draft No. 66-26; and Draft No. 67-26.

YEAS: 7 NAYS: 0

Draft No. 58-26; Draft No. 66-26; and Draft No. 67-26 have received their second reading on this 15th day of April 2026.

The following drafts will be part of the consent agenda passed together with suspension of three readings and adopted as an emergency.

**ORDINANCE NO. ____ (Draft No. 54-26)
AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT
CORPORATION (CIC) TO ENTER INTO A LEASE AGREEMENT WITH OPTION TO
PURCHASE WITH VON ISLEY ESTATE, LLC; AND, DECLARING AN
EMERGENCY.**

**ORDINANCE NO. ____ (Draft No. 68-26)
AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING MONTHLY CASH TRANSFERS; AND,
DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.**

**ORDINANCE NO. ____ (Draft No. 69-26)
AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS FROM THE
UNAPPROPRIATED SEWER FUND TO CONTRACT WITH Z TECH BUILDERS FOR
EMERGENCY STORM CULVERT REPAIR; AND, DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.**

ORDINANCE NO. ____ (Draft No. 70-26)

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS FROM THE UNAPPROPRIATED WATER FUND FOR THE NILES LEAD SERVICE LINE POTHOLING PROJECT; AND, DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

ORDINANCE NO. ____ (Draft No. 71-26)
ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF LOAN AGREEMENT, EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF PROMISSORY NOTE; AND, DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

ORDINANCE NO. ____ (Draft No. 73-26)
A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE SERVICE DIRECTOR TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH LINDY PAVING FOR FIRST STREET PAVING; AND, DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

ORDINANCE NO. ____ (Draft No. 74-26)
A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF NILES TO PROCEED WITH THE DEMOLITION OF UNSAFE STRUCTURES IN THE CITY OF NILES, TRUMBULL COUNTY, OHIO, AND TO REQUEST THE ASSISTANCE AND COOPERATION OF THE TRUMBULL COUNTY LAND REUTILIZATION CORPORATION IN EFFECTING THE SAME ; AND, DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

ORDINANCE NO. ____ (Draft No. 75-26)
A ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE SERVICE DIRECTOR TO ENTER INTO CONTRACT WITH WIRING UNLIMITED, INC. FOR SCADA AND IT AT THE WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT THROUGH 2026; AND, DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

It was moved by Johnstone, seconded by Lastic to suspend the rule requiring three readings and adopt this consent agenda.

YEAS: 7 NAYS: 0

Rules are suspended and the consent agenda has been adopted on the 15th day of April 2026.

MISCELLANEOUS REMARKS

(Miscellaneous remarks began at 2:09:32 into recording)

Auditor Giovanne Merlo mentioned that his office will be looking to go out for bonds here in the near future so in collaboration with Aaron Johnstone, the Chair President of the Finance Committee, there will be quite a few Finance Committee meetings in reference to this. Auditor Merlo urges Council to attend these meetings.

Todd Weddell commented on the proposed annexation of the Bitdeer property, highlighting that the City will have better control over the project if it is annexed into the City whereas the

alternative would be that the project proceeds without annexation and the City has no control over it.

Aaron Johnstone thanked all the residents for coming down to speak on this issue in a public forum. Johnstone highlighted Draft 54-26, stating that this agreement has been a long time coming and he is excited to see it come to fruition and the opportunity this presents to Von Isley for growth of his business.

James Sheely also thanked all the residents who showed up and spoke on the issue. He wants to ensure he does the best job he can for his ward and the residents of Niles and wants to learn as much as possible before making any decisions on the issue.

Frank Leskovec also thank all the residents who spoke at tonight's meeting, adding that the presentation is an educational and learning experience for the council members.

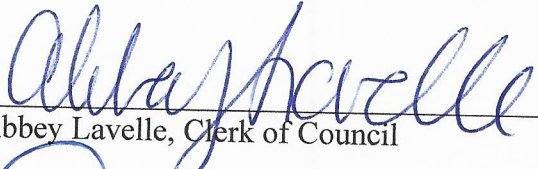
Jimmy Julian also thanked the residents who showed up to Council tonight.

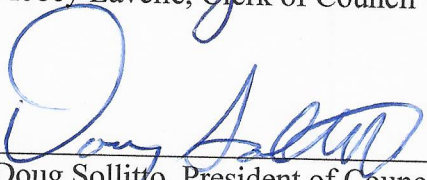
Ed Stredney also thanked those who came down and attended tonight's meeting and appreciated the civil discussions that could be had. He commends the other council members for doing their research and urges them to continue to do so in order to make an informed decision on the issue.

Doug Sollitto commended the residents for showing up and even those who have now sat for over 2.5 hours through the entire meeting. Sollitto encouraged Johnstone to explore the idea of a moratorium as a first step in resolving this issue.

ADJOURN

It was moved by Stredney, seconded by Sheely to adjourn the meeting.


Abbey Lavelle, Clerk of Council


Doug Sollitto, President of Council