Resolution No. 2026-03-364

RESOLUTION ADOPTING ZONING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION TO DENY APPLICATION ZC-2026-1 FOR A ZONING MAP AMENDMENT FOR NINE (9) PARCELS TOTALING 622.8 ACRES FROM GB-1 AND R-1 TO IP-1

WHEREAS, on January 8, 2026, upon the application of Liberty Development ("Liberty"), the New Russia Township Zoning Inspector issued and sent to the New Russia Township Zoning Commission ("Zoning Commission") for review Zoning Permit ZC-2026-1 ("Application"), for a zoning map amendment for nine (9) parcels totaling 622.8 acres fronting Leavitt, Russia and Oberlin Roads adjacent to and abutting the Lorain County Regional Airport ("Airport"), from GB-1 and R-1 to IP-1 (the "Properties"); and

WHEREAS, in 2024 zoning for the Airport was amended to IP Industrial Park and as a result, the proposed rezoning would result in approximately one-thousand acres zoned IP Industrial Park in support of a "mega site" which, according to Liberty, is intended to attract one or likely multiple end users in the business of advanced manufacturing, none of whom have been identified; and

WHEREAS, the Zoning Commission transmitted the Application to the Lorain County Planning Commission ("Planning Commission") and in correspondence dated January 23, 2026, the Planning Commission informed the Zoning Commission that it had approved the rezoning "based on the technical merits of the application with the exception of parcel no. 09-00-007-000-018," which, according to the Planning Commission, "would result in reverse spot zoning which will create two small islands of residential surrounded by industrial park..."; and

WHEREAS, on February 10, 2026, the Zoning Commission held a public hearing on the Application which included a presentation by Liberty and public comment; and

WHEREAS, at the conclusion of the public hearing the Zoning Commission voted 4-1 to recommend the denial of the Application, and the Zoning Commission transmitted its recommendation to the New Russia Township Board of Trustees ("Trustees") on February 12, 2026; and

WHEREAS, on March 11, 2026, the Trustees (not including Chairperson Justin who was absent because of a family matter) held a public hearing on the Zoning Commission's recommendation concerning the Application which included a presentation by Liberty, public comment and two question and answer sessions involving the Trustees and Liberty; and

WHEREAS, the Trustees have considered the Application, the Planning Commission and Zoning Commission recommendations, public hearing presentations, other relevant information including the New Russia Township Land Use Plan ("Land Use Plan"), and Ohio law.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the New Russia Township Board of Trustees, Lorain County, Ohio, that:

1. The recommendation of the Zoning Commission to deny the Application is accepted and the Application is denied.

2. In support of this action, the Trustees state the following:

a. Neither the Application nor Liberty have identified the end user(s) of the Properties to be rezoned. The Trustees cannot therefore determine if the intended use(s) is compatible with the rezoning or the Land Use Plan.

b. The Properties are within the Enterprise Zone and per the Land Use Plan, the Airport was rezoned to attract light industry. But the Land Use Plan also calls for the preservation of farmland and there is an apparent contradiction in the language of p. 4-5 of the Land Use Plan and Map 4-1 of the Land Use Plan as to whether the Properties are in the preservation area as set forth therein. The Trustees cannot therefore determine whether the proposed rezoning is compatible with the Land Use Plan with respect to its location.

c. The Trustees wish to encourage smart growth while maintaining the rural character of the Township. To this point, the Land Use Plan at p. 4-15 states with respect to the area adjacent to the Airport that, "The goal is to develop and enforce requirements that will restrict the type of development that occurs in this area in such a manner as to preserve and enhance the rural environment as much as possible. There are a variety of ways to accomplish this goal. It should be noted that most companies today, including industries, are very concerned about maintaining the value of their investments. A well-planned and controlled industrial park, often with strict design standards, is one way to assure companies that their interests will be investments will be protected in New Russia Township." Without knowing the identity of the end user(s) and use(s), the Trustees cannot therefore determine if the proposed rezoning will fulfill these land use goals.

d. The Land Use Plan does not call for or seemingly contemplate a light industrial development of one-thousand acres. Residents have expressed concern that a development of this scale will negatively impact their quality of life.

e. The concern of "reverse spot zoning" was raised by the Planning Commission and it is not appropriate to rezone property that would result in islands of residential use within IP Industrial Park zoning.

f. The Trustees are mindful of the economic growth, revenue and job creation potential of the proposed "mega site" that the rezoning is intended to promote. But these benefits are unclear because of the uncertainty of the end user(s) and use(s). That uncertainty inhibits planning for revenue and utilization of potential economic incentives.

g. A development of the size that is the subject of the proposed rezoning may overwhelm public and safety services.

h. While Liberty has stated publicly that it does not wish to attract a data center, it has not categorically ruled out a data center from the proposed development. The Trustees do not want a data center, AI server farm, bitcoin mining operation or other similar businesses located in New Russia Township.

i. Liberty should consider and address these concerns should it wish to pursue this development further.

Adopted: **March 17, 2026 Regular Meeting**

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
NEW RUSSIA TOWNSHIP
LORAIN COUNTY, OHIO

ATTEST:

Lisa Akers, Fiscal Officer

R. Scott Justin, Chairperson

Michelle Tyner, Trustee

Cynthia Breda, Trustee