

MAHONING VALLEY MARKET PULSE™

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FROM THE EDITOR

Downtown Youngstown's steam-heat problem moved into a new phase this week. After emergency rate increases kept the aging SOBE system operating for now, local and federal officials are now discussing whether building-level or cluster-level replacement systems could give downtown property owners a practical way off the steam network before winter.

SOBE has become a real-estate, infrastructure and downtown-confidence issue: if core buildings cannot count on affordable, reliable heat, the challenge reaches tenants, owners, lenders, employers and redevelopment prospects.

A proposed 16-building data center on the Pennsylvania side of the Valley is moving into public review, while Mahoning County's property revaluation is colliding with tax-relief efforts, Central Tower continues to assemble public support for downtown housing, and LCCTC's budget dispute is testing a Lawrence County workforce-training asset.

All items sourced June 29-July 5 unless otherwise dated. Capital Pipeline Tracker and Economic Indicators are cumulative reference tables updated weekly.

ON DECK - JULY 7-14

- **Tuesday, July 7** - Lawrence County Career and Technical Center Joint Operating Committee special meeting, 6:30 p.m., 750 Phelps Way.
- **Wednesday, July 8** - Ellwood City School Board special meeting to discuss the LCCTC budget.
- **Wednesday, July 8** - Lawrence County Planning Commission review of the North Beaver/Mahoning data-center preliminary plan.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

- **Monday, July 13** - North Beaver Township supervisors meeting; data-center preliminary-plan review expected.
- **Monday, July 13** - Girard final reading expected on one-year data-center moratorium.
- **Tuesday, July 14** - Mahoning Township supervisors meeting; data-center preliminary-plan review expected.
- **Monday, July 20** - Youngstown Innovation Hub technical-startup program applications due.
- **Wednesday, July 29** - First in-person Youngstown session for selected Innovation Hub applicants.

SOBE Heating Problem Moves From Emergency Rates to Replacement Options

Downtown Youngstown's steam-heat problem may be entering a new phase. After recent emergency rate increases for SOBE Thermal's downtown customers, local leaders and U.S. Sen. Bernie Moreno met this week to discuss options that could help property owners reduce or end dependence on the aging steam system.

The concepts now being discussed include loans for individual boiler systems, building-level replacements, and possible cluster systems that could serve groups of downtown properties. Regional Chamber CEO Guy Coviello also raised the possibility of Department of Energy-backed loans to help install more efficient systems. The key point is that the conversation is shifting from how to keep SOBE operating to how downtown buildings might transition away from it.

That distinction matters for downtown real estate. Heating costs, winter reliability and utility uncertainty affect building operations, tenant retention, redevelopment underwriting and investor confidence. For now, no permanent solution has been finalized, but the emergence of a replacement-system path makes SOBE one of the week's most important infrastructure and downtown-development signals.

Source: [WKBN](#)

STRATEGIC SIGNALS

16-building data-center proposal moves into public review on the PA side.

A preliminary land-development plan has been submitted for a data center straddling North Beaver and Mahoning townships in Lawrence County. The proposal, submitted by S.S. Penn LLC of Bethesda, Md., calls for 16 buildings on the 569-acre Powder Mill Works property, with about 85% of the site in North Beaver and the balance in Mahoning Township. The plans identify the Mahoning Township Sewer Authority, Aqua Pennsylvania and Penn Power as utility providers, with a utility-owned switchyard and privately owned substations.

The project now moves through multiple review steps, including township planning commissions, the Lawrence County Planning Commission and both boards of supervisors. Local officials emphasized that the filing is preliminary, and final approval would require zoning compliance, technical review and environmental approvals tied to wetlands, stream disturbance, earthwork, runoff and air-quality standards. Source: [New Castle News](#)

Pennsylvania adds transparency pressure to the data-center debate.

Pennsylvania's House passed HB 2359 by a 171-31 vote, advancing legislation that would prevent data-center owners and operators from using nondisclosure agreements with local governments if they want to qualify for the state's data-center sales-tax exemption. The bill would also require community-protection plans and annual reports on local water and energy usage. A Pennsylvania Senate committee also advanced a proposed 18-month municipal moratorium option to let local governments update data-center zoning and related rules. Source: [CNHI / New Castle News](#)

Property values and tax relief collide in Mahoning County.

Mahoning County commissioners approved an owner-occupancy tax exemption that would give homeowners a 2.5% property-tax decrease, while school, township and library officials warned that levy-funded public services could face revenue pressure. The decision comes as Mahoning County's latest reappraisal shows average values

rising across major property classes: residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural. This belongs in both the housing-cost and local-government-finance columns. Sources: [WKBN](#) · [Vindicator](#)

INFRASTRUCTURE & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- **Youngstown sewer bids point to another site-readiness piece.** Bids for the Exal Court sanitary sewer pump-station project came in below the engineer estimate, keeping attention on site readiness at the Salt Springs Road Business Park. The economic-development angle is not just a sewer project; it is utility capacity for future industrial buildings and payroll growth. Source: [Vindicator](#)

- **Trumbull water-tank maintenance adds another utility-capacity signal.** A proposed maintenance plan for county water tanks fits the larger infrastructure theme: as development discussions become more utility-dependent, the condition of water, sewer and power systems becomes part of the competitiveness picture.

Source: [Tribune Chronicle](#)

POWER, DATA & SITE READINESS

- **SOBE remains the lead infrastructure risk for downtown Youngstown.** The replacement-system discussion belongs here as well as in the lead story. Market Pulse will continue tracking it as a strategic infrastructure risk, but it is not a Capital Pipeline item unless a funded project or formal financing package emerges. Source: [WKBN](#)

- **The PA-side data-center governance map is widening.** North Beaver and Mahoning townships are now reviewing a specific preliminary development plan, Hermitage commissioners have approved data-center restrictions, and WFMJ framed Ohio and Pennsylvania as taking different approaches to data-center development. The result is a border-wide governance story, not a single-project story. Sources: [New Castle News](#) · [Sharon Herald](#) · [WFMJ](#)

For a closer look at the power, zoning, and economic considerations influencing data center projects in the Mahoning Valley, download our white paper: [The Data Center Dilemma](#).

DATA-CENTER GOVERNANCE TRACKER

Jurisdiction	County	Term / Status	Date / Update
Lordstown Village	Trumbull OH	180 days + extension	Original moratorium approved January; extension approved June 15, effective July 5
Hubbard City	Trumbull OH	12 months	Approved June 1; New Albany lessons discussed June 20
Hubbard Township	Trumbull OH	12 months	Approved Feb. 10
Boardman Township	Mahoning OH	1 year	Approved at April township meeting; zoning commission studying impacts
Niles City	Trumbull OH	180 days	Approved May 20
Weathersfield Township	Trumbull OH	6 months	Effective April 30
Vienna Township	Trumbull OH	180 days	Approved week of Feb. 16; reported Feb. 21
Bazetta Township	Trumbull OH	180 days	Approved May 12

Braceville Township	Trumbull OH	6 months	Approved June 2, effective immediately
Cortland City	Trumbull OH	1 year	Approved June 1
Howland Township	Trumbull OH	6 months	Approved June 10
Warren City	Trumbull OH	Permanent ban proposed	In process / watch
Girard City	Trumbull OH	1-year moratorium proposed	Second reading June 2026; final reading expected July 13
Mahoning Township	Lawrence PA	Zoning ordinance + active review	Enacted local controls; preliminary 16-building S.S. Penn / Powder Mill Works plan; supervisors July 14
North Beaver Township	Lawrence PA	Zoning ordinance + active review	Enacted local controls; preliminary 16-building S.S. Penn / Powder Mill Works plan; supervisors July 13
Lawrence County Planning Commission	Lawrence PA	Review body	July 8 review expected for North Beaver/Mahoning preliminary plan
Hermitage City	Mercer PA	Restrictions approved	Commissioners approved data-center restrictions; details to monitor
Pennsylvania statewide	PA	Legislation / moratorium option	HB 2359 passed House 171-31; Senate committee advanced 18-month municipal moratorium option
Ohio statewide ballot issue	Ohio	Ballot proposal	2026 signature threshold missed; 2027 effort possible

HOUSING & WORKFORCE

- **Home construction is showing new momentum across the Mahoning Valley.** Business Journal Daily reported renewed residential construction activity, including the return of the Parade of Homes after about 20 years, activity at Legacy Villas and Homes in Canfield, additional homes in Austintown, expansion at Kline's Farm in Vienna and lots planned in North Lima. This is a useful counterweight to the property-tax and mortgage-rate pressure in the Economic Indicators table. Source: [BJD](#)
- **Mahoning County's tax-relief move belongs here as well as in policy.** Rising values create a household-cost issue, while the tax-credit decision raises a second question: how schools, libraries, townships and other levy-funded services absorb the shift. Sources: [WKBN](#) · [Vindicator](#)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Central Tower added another layer of state support.** The planned \$21.66 million redevelopment of Youngstown's tallest building received a \$2 million Transformational Mixed-Use Development tax credit, following last week's \$4.25 million historic preservation tax credit. The project would convert the 17-story downtown building into 64 apartments on the upper floors, with office and lower-level uses below and First National Bank's ground-floor presence retained. Sources: [BJD](#) · [Vindicator](#)
- **Youngstown Innovation Hub launched a technical-startup funding initiative.** The 12-week program will help Ohio technical-innovation companies prepare NSF SBIR/STTR Phase One pitches and proposals. Applications are due July 20, with the first in-person Youngstown session scheduled July 29. Source: [WFMJ](#)

WORKFORCE & EDUCATION

- **LCCTC budget fight creates a Lawrence County workforce-training risk.** New Castle Area School District voted 8-0 to authorize legal action to compel adoption of the Lawrence County Career and Technical Center's 2026-27

budget so the school can open for the coming school year. Without a budget, the center is prohibited from operating or paying payroll after June 30 until a budget is approved. Source: [New Castle News](#)

LEGISLATIVE & POLICY WATCH

- **Pennsylvania data-center NDA bill advances.** HB 2359 passed the Pennsylvania House and would condition the state's data-center sales-tax exemption on not using NDAs with municipal officials, while also requiring community-protection planning and water/energy reporting. Source: [CNHI / New Castle News](#)
- **Mahoning County tax relief illustrates the state-local fiscal tension.** Commissioners used the expanded owner-occupancy tax-credit authority to provide homeowner relief, while local districts and agencies warned that the move could reduce revenue available for levy-funded services. Source: [WKBN](#)

RETAIL & RESTAURANT BEAT

- **Kroger's proposed Giant Eagle acquisition is a significant retail signal for the region, while JCPenney's Ross Park Mall closing highlights continuing pressure on legacy mall anchors.** The local question is whether the transaction changes the competitive grocery landscape for Mahoning Valley and Shenango Valley shoppers as the deal moves toward regulatory review and a projected 2027 close. Sources: [WFMJ - Kroger/Giant Eagle](#) · [WFMJ - JCPenney](#)

ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Indicator	Latest	Prior	Change	Signal
Mahoning County unemployment	3.8% May	4.4% Apr.	down 0.6 pts.	Improving
Trumbull County unemployment	4.1% May	4.6% Apr.	down 0.5 pts.	Improving
Columbiana County unemployment	3.1% May	3.4% Apr.	down 0.3 pts.	Improving
Ashtabula County unemployment	3.0% Apr.	4.5% Mar.	down 1.5 pts.	Latest available county data
Lawrence County unemployment	4.0% Apr.	5.1% Mar.	down 1.1 pts.	Latest available county data
Mercer County unemployment	4.0% Apr.	4.6% Mar.	down 0.6 pts.	Latest available county data
Ohio unemployment	3.7% May	3.9% Apr.	down 0.2 pts.	Stable-to-improving
Pennsylvania unemployment	4.2% May	4.2% Apr.	Flat	Stable
U.S. unemployment	4.2% June	4.3% May	down 0.1 pts.	Softer payroll growth, lower jobless rate
Valley home sales	475 May sales	484 May 2025	down 2%	Slightly softer
30-year fixed mortgage rate	6.43% July 2	6.49% June 25	down 0.06 pts.	Modest easing; still a housing-cost constraint

Sources: [BLS](#) · [FRED](#) / [Freddie Mac PMMS](#)

CAPITAL PIPELINE TRACKER

Color key: Green = construction / active; Yellow = planning; Blue = awarded / funded; Purple = renovation; Red = paused / distressed. * = materially updated this issue.

Project	Invest.	Jobs	Status	County
SoftBank/Stargate - Lordstown	\$3B+	TBD	Site work continues; online 2026-27	Trumbull
Ultium Cells - Lordstown	\$2.3B	~1,500 pk	August callback target; income-tax impact now visible	Trumbull
Graphite One - Conneaut	\$1.4B Ph1	150+	FAST-41 Sept. 29; AGM June 26	Ashtabula

Kimberly-Clark - Warren Mfg	\$800M	~500	Construction active; 1.2M SF on 560 acres	Trumbull
K-C Distribution Center	\$160M	65	Board decision pending	Trumbull
Keel Data Center - Sharon	\$5B	134	Zoning approved with conditions; Mercer Co. RPC review	Mercer PA
FirstEnergy Grid - Trumbull	\$24M	-	138-kV rebuild; Energize365 reliability work	Trumbull
Warren Steel Site	\$15M loan	-	Foreclosure; 360-acre industrial site	Trumbull
Everest Aluminum - Warren	\$19.5-33M	70	Tax abatement approved; site decision pending	Trumbull
Innovation Hub - A&D	\$62M	450 by 2029	State \$750K allocation supports first-phase renovations; summer 2026 start target	Mahoning
Mercy Health - Champion ER	\$30M ER + \$843K bridge	75 prior estimate	\$500K ODOT bridge award tied to ER access	Trumbull
Vallourec - Premium Thread	\$48M	40	Commissioning Q1 2027	Mahoning
EOG/Encino - Utica Drilling	\$6.5B	1,000s	Regional upstream priority	Regional
McDonald Steel Site	\$3.25M	-	51.8 acres cleared; sale window Jul-Oct 2026	Trumbull
Youngstown REDD Infill	\$2.5M	220 units	Awarded March 6	Mahoning
Warren Peninsula Project	\$851K	306 units	Awarded March 6	Trumbull
Mahoning National Bank Bldg	\$18.5M	71 units	Renovation active	Mahoning
Mahoning Co. Gov't Center	\$60M	400+	WRPA design / demolition path; construction 2027	Mahoning
Bristolville 25 / Lordstown	\$3.6B	120 projected	Lordstown moratorium extended 180 days effective July 5	Trumbull
Zuharis / Project Astralus	TBD	2,000-5,000	510-acre DC + power plant + water; Q3 2027 target	Columbiana
AMG Chrome - New Castle	\$15M	TBD	Opened; sole U.S. chrome-metal producer; 6,500-ton capacity	Lawrence PA
YNG Aviation Education Center	\$6.98M	-	Contract awarded; awaiting EDA / FAA notice to proceed	Trumbull
Youngstown river / sewer infrastructure*	\$10.35M sewer + dam work	-	Exal Court pump-station bids below estimate; sewer overflow / dam-access work continues	Mahoning
East Palestine Train Depot	\$889,545 contract	TBD	Renovation contract awarded; work expected early July	Columbiana
SB 450 Valley line items	Mult	-	Capital budget signed; local line items enacted	Mult
Amazon Bazetta DC	\$30M	~120	Under construction; opening date pending	Trumbull
Trumbull Energy Center	\$1.2B	-	953-MW Lordstown power plant completed / commercial operation	Trumbull
WRTA Bus Barn	\$6.5M	-	Groundbreaking; EV charging, electrical upgrades and solar	Mahoning
Central Tower - Youngstown*	\$21.66M	64 units	\$2M TMUD tax credit awarded after \$4.25M historic credit; summer start / Feb. 28, 2028 target	Mahoning
YNDC Glenwood Cleanup	\$1M	-	EPA Brownfields grant supports assessment and cleanup	Mahoning
Columbiana Stormwater	\$664,596	-	June 18 FEMA award for storm-sewer upgrades	Columbiana