



MCDUFFIE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Data Center Listening Session
Tuesday, March 10, 2026, at 6:30 PM
Government Complex Commissioner Room
MINUTES

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Chase Beggs, Chairman
~~Sammie Wilson Sr., Vice Chairman~~
Bill Jopling, Commissioner
~~Fredrick Favors, Commissioner~~
Steven Hollimon, Commissioner

COUNTY REPRESENTATION:

Brandon Burton, County Manager
Ashtyn Goodyear, County Clerk
Robert Spurlin, IT Director

MEDIA: McDuffie Progress, WTHO

WELCOME & CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Beggs called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm, acknowledged a quorum of commissioners present and welcomed everyone in attendance.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The invocation and pledge of allegiance was given by Rev. Pilgrim.

APPROVALS

1. Agenda (Current)

Chairman Beggs asked if there were any corrections to the current agenda or minutes. A motion was made by Commissioner Jopling to approve the current agenda as written and was seconded by Commissioner Hollimon and passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

2. Question and Answer with Developer – Moderated by Mike Wall

Chairman Beggs wanted to state a few points before we begin. This is not a public hearing for public input, this is a question-and-answer session with the developer, that is open to the public. The questions being asked to have been submitted by the public to county staff or elected officials through email or phone. Some of these questions may have been briefly mentioned at the planning commission, but require further discussion. After the question and answer, we will reserve a few minutes for the Board of Commissioners who may have additional questions. If time allows, questions may be submitted via note cards from the staff. We are going to try and keep this meeting at an hour or hour and half. Please remain respectful and feel free to make notes for elected officials or staff to find out additional information. Chairman Beggs thanked the developer, Cameron Grogan, for being here and giving the Commissioners the opportunity to ask questions publicly and directly. This meeting is not required by planning and zoning laws, but it is our effort to stay transparent to the public and answer questions about the proposed project. This meeting is being recorded live on YouTube and WTHO. The public hearing for the proposed data center is March 17, 2026, at 6:30 pm.

Moderator Mike Wall began asking the 74 questions that were sent in by the public.

Community Benefit & Economic Impact

1. How will this data center benefit local residents and taxpayers?

The project representatives stated the primary benefits would include property tax revenue,

construction employment, infrastructure investment, and potential technology-related economic development in the area.

- 2. Beyond the temporary construction phase, how many permanent full-time jobs will be created and what wage levels are expected?**

The developer indicated approximately 30-50 permanent full-time per shift (for a total of 90-150 FTE's), operational jobs once the facility is operational. Specific wage levels were not finalized but stated above average technical and operational wages. Operates on three shifts. Average salary \$60-70k a year.

- 3. How many of those jobs are expected to be filled by local McDuffie County residents?**

No specific percentage was confirmed. The developer indicated it would prioritize local hiring where qualified candidates are available.

- 4. When the data center is complete, will it be manned?**

Yes

- 5. Will humanoid robots do most of the work there by eliminating jobs?**

No

- 6. Will current factory, service & other jobs performed by humans be replaced by humanoid robots?**

No

- 7. What role will AI play in these data centers?**

AI is one of the reasons for the growth of data centers.

- 8. How do data centers work?**

They are connected to the internet and they function as a large server/computer warehouse for cloud storage, AI, or enterprise storage services.

- 9. How are funds generated from data centers?**

The developer could lease or sale the site to end user(s). The end user(s) make money through ads, internet transactions, data storage, etc.

- 10. What things changed to be sure the data center owners pay their own way?**

Question unclear.

- 11. Does Elon Musk own the data centers that are being built today?**

Any owner is possible.

- 12. Do local residents currently have the training and experience required for these jobs?**

Potentially, yes.

- 13. What measurable benefits will residents—not developers—receive from this project?**

An increase to the tax digest. A slight increase in jobs.

- 14. What tax abatements or incentives are being requested?**

None

- 15. What is the verified tax revenue to the county after abatements and incentives?**

There are no abatements or incentives.

- 16. What is the net revenue to the county after infrastructure costs and service demands?**

The developer is bearing the cost for infrastructure and service. Estimated revenue is \$25M after building it out.

- 17. Has a cost-benefit analysis been completed and made public?**

The developer stated this is something they can make available.

- 18. Are the tax revenue figures presented based on Phase 1 only or the full build-out?**

Assuming a \$1.5B investment, at full build out there is potential for \$25.5M of additional tax revenue. This includes county ad valorem tax, school ad valorem tax, and sales tax. This equates to \$4.6M in county ad valorem tax, \$9M in school ad valorem, and the balance would be sales tax.

- 19. What are the projected tax revenues for Phase 1 alone?**

Approximately \$8.5 million per phase.

- 20. When will the project reach the break-even point where revenue exceeds costs?**

According to the developer, they will begin making revenue once the data center has end user(s).

- 21. Does the development agreement include claw-back provisions if hiring or investment commitments are not met?**
Conditions such as these could be included in the special exception permit if approved.
- 22. What guarantees exist if the company does not build out as promised?**
There are bonds or the County does not issue future grading or building permits, in addition to zoning violations issued.
- 23. What protections are in place if the company sells or abandons the site?**
There are bonds that could be redeemed or zoning violations issued.
- 24. What is the expected lifespan of the facility?**
Approximately 30 years
- 25. What happens if the data center becomes vacant or underutilized?**
There are bonds that could be redeemed, or the buildings could be repurposed for other uses.
- 26. How will the data center affect property taxes?**
A data center would increase the tax digest for the county.
- 27. How is tax assessed on the data center?**
It is assessed as any other property. The value of the land, the improvements, and the value of the contents are all assigned a value.
- 28. Will the data center get a tax break? If so, why?**
No, not from the County but there are state incentives.
- 29. Why here? What benefits does this provide to the community at large, that isn't monetary?**
The infrastructure was ideal. The power infrastructure at this site is very rare in Georgia, making it an excellent data center site. The project would create high-salary technical jobs and a large increase in the tax revenue.
- 30. What is the county's plan for using the data center projected revenue?**
That will be decided by the Board of Commissioners and the school district.
- 31. If/when this causes harm to the community, and environment how will accountability be taken?**
There are local, state, and federal agencies/regulatory bodies that can assess fines and/or corrective measures. These agencies will also monitor for compliance.
- 32. How much net tax revenue will the data center generate for McDuffie County – will settle for estimate.**
Assuming a \$1.5B investment, at full build out there is potential for \$25.5M of additional tax revenue. This includes county ad valorem tax, school ad valorem tax, and sales tax. This equates to \$4.6M in county ad valorem tax, \$9M in school ad valorem, and the balance would be sales tax.

Project Details & Phasing

- 33. What is the exact size, electrical load, and timeline for each phase of the project?**
This will be determined when building permit applications are submitted.
- 34. Can you confirm that only the Phase 1 building is included in the current permit?**
The special exception permit is for the entire parcel. Separate land disturbance and building permits can be issued for each phase.
- 35. Would additional buildings require separate approvals?**
Yes. Each building and phase will require separate building permits.
- 36. What is the projected timeline for future phases, and are they guaranteed or dependent on demand?**
Approximately 1 year for each phase. All phases will be built; the primary determinant timing of each phase is the electrical load ramp.
- 37. Can the county provide a side-by-side comparison of Phase 1 impacts vs full build-out impacts?**
Not at this time. Specific impacts will be determined during the engineering evaluations and other permitting.
- 38. What is the distribution area for the data center? (Thomson, CSRA, Beyond?)**

Depending on the end user(s), it could be worldwide.

39. What determines the number of buildings? Why 6?

The developer stated that this site was conducive for 6 buildings.

Power Demand & Electrical Infrastructure

40. What is the total electrical load requested at full build-out?

Approximately 350-400 megawatts

41. What is the megawatt demand for Phase 1 only?

Approximately 100-150 megawatts

42. Has Georgia Power confirmed in writing the grid can support this demand?

No. Utilities do not confirm until the developer has an approval on the special exception for zoning and the 3-phase transmission and interconnect studies have been completed by the utility.

43. Will new transmission lines, substations, or easements be required?

Not outside of the parcel. A new substation will be required inside of the parcel. Any upgrades of existing lines will be paid for by the developer.

44. Who will pay for these electrical upgrades?

The developer.

45. What impact will the project have on grid reliability, outages, or voltage stability?

This will be determined after the utility provider does a power engineering study. This 6-month+ rigorous study models the effect on the grid and identifies any infrastructure constraints that would need to be upgraded/improved in order to maintain the utility's strict reliability and resiliency standards.

46. Could this project result in higher electricity rates for residents?

According to the developer, no. Any power required for this development will be new power and not on the existing grid. Additionally, the costs any and all power infrastructure upgrades required as a result of this development would be borne by the developers.

47. What contingency plans exist if actual demand exceeds projections?

The developer would have to renegotiate with the utility provider for any additional power.

48. Will the data center draw power from its own dedicated power source or the public grid?

The data center will offtake power that does not exist on the grid today. That load will come from generation produced specifically for this project. According to the developer, they will have their own power source.

49. How will the electric consumption affect residential bills?

The data center will offtake power that does not exist on the grid today. That load will come from generation produced specifically for this project. Additionally, the costs of any and all power infrastructure upgrades required as a result of this development would be borne by the developers. According to the developer, no. Any power required for this development will be new power and not on the existing grid.

Water Usage & Cooling Systems

50. What cooling technology will be used?

Closed-loop

51. What is the maximum daily water consumption at full build-out?

30,000 gallons

52. What is the daily water demand for Phase 1 alone?

Approximately 10,000 gallons

53. What is the source of this water?

City of Thomson utilities

54. Can McDuffie County sustain the water demand of this facility long-term?

According to the City of Thomson, yes.

55. How will water use affect residents on well water and local aquifers?

There are no wells being drilled for this project.

56. During drought or restrictions, will residential and agricultural water needs take priority?

Restrictions or priorities will be determined by the City of Thomson.

57. If a closed-loop system is used, what is the blowdown volume, chemical treatment, and disposal plan?

There is no release of coolant water.

58. Will any water be discharged into streams, groundwater, or county sewer systems?

Storm water will be held on site and discharged as permitted through a storm water management plan.

Wastewater will be discharged into the sewer system.

59. Has the county evaluated impacts during drought conditions?

Given the low volume of water requested, there has been none at this time.

60. What water treatment chemicals will be used and how will they be managed?

To our knowledge, there is no water treatment chemicals being used. The only treated water will be that of the server-side closed loop which is never discharged into or interfaced with the municipal water system.

61. How will the city/county supply the water so desperately needed to cool the equipment?

The developer will tie into the existing water system.

62. In the closed loop system, if it's closed why does it take 30,000 gallon per day. Where does the excess go?

The 30,000 gallons will be used for everyday employee uses, such as, hand-washing, flushing toilets, etc. This will be discharged into the sewer system.

Environmental Impact

63. What environmental studies have been completed and are they publicly available?

The CSRA-RC has completed a DRI, however, if the special exception is granted, the environmental studies will be completed prior to permits.

64. How will the project affect local watersheds including Black Branch, Dry Branch, and Kiokee Creek?

This development must comply with all EPD and GSWCC permit guidelines.

65. What safeguards will prevent runoff contamination?

The site will be permitted for erosion and sediment control through EPD and GSWCC permitting process.

66. How will wastewater or cooling water discharge affect wildlife, aquatic life, and soil quality?

The site will be permitted for erosion and sediment control through EPD and GSWCC permitting process. The cooling water will not be discharged.

67. What is the impact on vegetation, farmland, and pollinators like bees?

This development will follow guidelines like any other industrial development.

68. How will airborne emissions affect local livestock or agriculture?

Emissions from generators will be regulated by EPD and EPA.

69. What environmental monitoring will occur after construction?

The developer will monitor the run-off water for two years after construction.

70. Will the county require an environmental impact study?

Necessary environmental studies will take place during the permitting phase of the project.

71. How will the heat generated by data center affect the environment?

Using the closed-loop system, there will be minimal heat dispersed into the air using the same process that all large building HVAC systems use to reject heat.

72. Do these data centers use fossil fuels?

Diesel generators will be used as emergency backup power.

73. Do data centers cause health concerns such as respiratory and cardiovascular disease?

The developer stated that no clear evidence shows that a normal, code-compliant data center causes cancer in nearby communities.

74. Do data centers increase cancer risk?

The developer stated that no clear evidence shows that a normal, code-compliant data center causes cancer in nearby communities.

75. The developer stated there will be no radiation, but research states there will be radiation. Please explain.

The developer stated that any known radiation associated with the development will be limited to that of the existing high-voltage transmission lines – of which the associated potential risks are well-studied and documented.

Air Quality, Generators & Emissions

76. How many diesel generators will be installed?

The number of generators shall be determined during the design phase of this project.

77. How many hours per year will generators operate for testing or maintenance?

The generators on the site will be tested once a month for around 20 minutes.

78. What are the permitted emissions levels?

Emission levels are determined by the EPD.

79. Has the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) approved the emissions plan?

Any emissions-related plan would be under review during the design phase of the project.

80. What plans exist to monitor air quality and noise during generator testing?

The end user(s) will be bound by the air and noise regulations of the EPD.

Noise, Lighting & Quality of Life

81. What noise levels will cooling equipment produce at the property line?

The noise levels shall not exceed the 70 decibel permitting condition.

82. What decibel limits will protect nearby residents?

A limit of 70 decibels will be maintained for this facility.

83. What mitigation measures will reduce constant low-frequency noise?

Any low-frequency noise will be mitigated by buffer requirements, and the developer can provide further mitigation of noise by berms and walls if necessary.

84. Will the facility operate with 24-hour lighting, and how will light spill be controlled?

There will be lighting on the site at all times. A condition for the special exception approval is to have all exterior lighting be downward-facing and shielded to prevent light pollution.

85. Could noise or lighting affect wildlife behavior or migration?

The noise and light effects from the site are being greatly mitigated.

86. How will the project affect nearby property values?

This project may increase nearby property values given the infrastructure improvements being made as well as the high assessed value of the data center facilities.

Roads, Traffic & Infrastructure

87. What is the projected construction traffic volume and duration?

No traffic studies have been completed at this time.

88. Are Boneville Road, Randall Hunt Road, and Hampton Davis Road capable of supporting heavy construction traffic?

The developer is paying into an account that will fund any necessary repairs to roads used for construction.

89. Will roads require paving, widening, or upgrades?

Randall Hunt Road will be paved and widened to serve the facility. The extent of the upgrade is not known at this time.

90. Who will pay for these improvements?

The developer will cover all costs associated to roadway improvement.

91. What will be the long-term cost to the county to maintain these roads?

This cannot be answered at this time.

92. Will the developer pay 100% of infrastructure costs, including utilities and fiber lines?

The developer will pay 100% for all infrastructure improvements that will take place due to the project.

93. If the need for water infrastructure upgrade is necessary, will you all pay?

The developer will pay 100% for all infrastructure improvements that will take place due to the project.

Emergency Response & Safety

94. What additional demands will this facility place on fire, EMS, and law enforcement?

The demand will be the same as for any other new development type. There will be on-site fire-suppression systems.

95. What hazardous materials or fuels will be stored on site?

Diesel fuel for the generators will be the only hazardous material on site.

96. Will fuel storage be above-ground or underground tanks?

Fuel storage will be in underground tanks.

97. What fire-suppression systems will be used?

The design of the system has not been completed at this time. All buildings on the site will meet all applicable International Fire Code (IFC), International Building Code (IBC) and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards.

98. What is the response plan for battery or generator fires?

The Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) rooms (battery / energy storage rooms) are one of the most heavily regulated fire-protection areas in the entire facility. There will be an approved fire suppression plan for all features found on the site as determined by all applicable International Fire Code (IFC), International Building Code (IBC) and/or National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards.

99. Will the operator fund additional emergency response capacity if needed?

This cannot be answered at this time.

100. Regarding hazmat, what if the chips burn? Hazmat byproducts produced from an electrical fire: what safety measures for the clean-up procedure?

There will be a fire suppression plan outlined for the facility as required by all applicable International Fire Code (IFC), International Building Code (IBC) and/or National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards.

Governance, Transparency & Public Process

101. When will residents have a public meeting to voice concerns to elected officials?

A public forum is being held on March 17th before the Commission Meeting.

102. Will residents who submit questions receive responses via email or public forums?

All questions are being compiled and answered in this document.

103. What independent studies have been conducted versus developer-provided studies?

The CSRA-RC has performed a DRI study for this development. No further studies have been performed.

104. Will the county delay decisions until all studies and reports are publicly available?

The studies and reports will not be generated until the design phase of the project, which is pending the Special Exception Determination.

105. What annual public reporting will the operator provide regarding:

water use

power consumption

jobs created

tax contributions

All bulleted items will be reported once the development has been completed.

106. Will the county require a decommissioning bond for the site?

There are bonds that could be redeemed, or the buildings could be repurposed for other uses. The Board of Commissioners has the authority to require one.

107. Will there be a community advisory panel for ongoing oversight?

No other development project has a community advisory panel, therefore it is unlikely one would be established.

There was no action taken during this meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Jopling to adjourn the regular meeting at 7:52 pm. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hollimon and passed unanimously.

MCDUFFIE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS


Chase N. Beggs, Chairman

ATTEST: 
Ashtyn L. Goodyear, County Clerk