

Dodge County Board of Commissioners
Monday, August 17, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.
Public Hearing/Board Meeting Minutes



Commissioners Present: Chairman Dan McCranie, Sharon Cobb Flanagan – District 1, Leigh Ann Greene – District 2, Vice-Chair Brian Watkins – District 3, Jeffrey Jones – District 4

Also Present: Attorney Ron Daniels, Manager Conner Bearden, Clerk Kimberly Smith-Parkerson

Call to Order

The Dodge County Board of Commissioners held a public hearing and regular meeting at the Dodge County Pearl Bates Courthouse Annex on Monday, August 17, 2026, with Chairman McCranie presiding. He opened at 6:00 p.m. by leading the Pledge of Allegiance and giving a devotion from Proverbs 17:22. Afterward, he led a prayer.

Open Public Hearing

Public hearing opened to discuss the following items, as detailed below.

A. Community Development Block Grant

Rich Bennett with the Heart of Georgia Regional Commission explained that Dodge County is seeking a federal Community Development Block Grant, which requires a public hearing. The grant provides funding for housing improvements, public facilities, and economic development. He further explained that projects must primarily benefit low- and moderate-income persons. The public inquired as to what project is being considered. The county manager stated Shady Acres off Jim Pruitt Road, which has drainage issues.

B. Dodge County Boat Landing

Chairman McCranie noted the board's desire for public input on the Dodge County Boat Landing. Manager Bearden also noted there's a well, which services private properties. Community members expressed various concerns, with some opposing the sale or closure of the land, noting its utility even when water levels fluctuate. One attendee suggested a 99-year lease to the residents using the well, ensuring they take responsibility for maintenance.

Close Public Hearing

With no more comments forthcoming, Commissioner Watkins made a motion to close the public hearing at 6:17 p.m. Commissioner Jones seconded. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Regular Meeting

Elected Officials/Department Heads

A. Fire Chief Malcolm Tyson

Fire Chief Tyson gave a fire department update, noting that he anticipates approximately 1200 calls for the year. Also, the department has been awarded a couple of small grants. A fire training class has about a dozen participants.

B. EMS Director Michael Johnson

EMS Director Johnson reported a July call volume of 362 with revenues of \$121,675.51 for July. Also, there are seven enrolled in a paramedic class.

Approval of Minutes

A. Minutes – August 03, 2026 Regular Meeting

Commissioner Greene made a motion to approve the minutes with no additions, corrections, or deletions. Commissioner Watkins seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

B. Minutes – August 05, 2026 Work Session

Commissioner Watkins made a motion to approve the minutes with no additions, corrections, or deletions. Commissioner Jones seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Old Business

A. Data Center Ordinance

Manager Bearden presented the data center ordinance, with highlighted revisions and strikethroughs, as detailed below. Commissioner Jones made a motion to approve the revised ordinance. Commissioner Watkins seconded.

Commissioner Greene requested the setbacks be set at 500 feet, noting that she'd originally requested 1000 feet but would settle at 500 feet. However, no changes were made to the original motion.

Members of the public requested more time to review the ordinance before approval. Chairman McCranie responded that without an ordinance in place, no application process or notification requirements exist to protect the county. He also clarified that the county does not offer tax abatements for data centers or solar farms.

Commissioners Jones, Watkins, and Flanagan voted in favor of approving the ordinance. Commissioner Greene voted against. Majority vote passed.

AN ORDINANCE TO CREATE THE DODGE COUNTY, GA CODE TO PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE GUIDELINES FOR THE SAFE AND ORDERLY DEVELOPMENT OF DATA CENTERS IN DODGE COUNTY.

WHEREAS it is in the best interest of Dodge County to facilitate the siting and construction in Dodge County in a manner that encourages local economic development and protects the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Dodge County, and at the same time mitigates any adverse impacts to wildlife, agricultural lands, forests, and other natural landscapes; and

WHEREAS the intent of Dodge County is to bolster local economic development and employment prospects; and

WHEREAS the intent of Dodge County is not to compromise or contradict the health, safety, or environmental requirements contained in other federal, state, and local laws, nor is it to create heightened standards for the construction that would discriminate relative to other similar commercial or industrial within Dodge County;

BE IT ORDAINED by the Board of Commissioners of Dodge County as follows:

Definitions

- **Data Center:** A use of land and centralized physical facility whose primary service is data processing or data storage that involves one or more buildings and associated IT infrastructure used for the housing, operation, and maintenance of computer servers, routing, transmission, or dissemination of electronic data through computer servers, storage devices, networking equipment, cooling systems, emergency power systems, and other equipment necessary to support digital computing, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, enterprise information technology operations, and related computing functions.
- **Data Center Building:** A principal building and/or specialized physical facility within a Data Center Development, whose primary service is data processing or data storage, used for the housing of computer servers, networking equipment, data storage devices, cooling systems, and security controls located within the building, electrical distribution equipment, and other equipment directly supporting Data Center operations.
- **Data Center Campus:** A unified Data Center development consisting of two or more principal Data Center buildings and associated infrastructure located on one or more contiguous parcels under common ownership or control.

Requirements

a. *Permit required:*

1. Business License Required. Applicants are required to purchase and maintain a valid business license as a condition of submitting and processing an application.
2. Application Fee Assessed. Application fee must be paid at the time of submission. This fee is in addition to and does not include any expenses which shall be incurred by the applicant in posting signage, advertising community meetings, procuring environmental impact analyses, or any other costs incurred in the permitting process.
 - i. Base fee of \$10,000.00
3. Special Use Permit Application:
 - i. Basic Information.

The applicant shall submit a document that lists the following:

- (a) the address of the property on which the facility will be located;
- (b) the applicant's name, address, telephone number, and email address;
- (c) the facility operator's name, address, telephone number, and email address;
- (d) The names and addresses of any individual or entity having any ownership interest in the applicant or the names of any business or businesses which the applicant is employed, associated with, or a member of;
- (e) A statement under oath the applicant, its members, subsidiaries, and affiliates are not owned in whole or in part and are not managed, or controlled, in whole or in part by a foreign country or countries;

- (f) A statement under oath the applicant, its successors and assigns, will not seek tax abatement for the Data Center.
- ii. Planning.
- (a) a Site Plan of the property that depicts the locations of all existing and proposed structures.
- (b) a topographic map that depicts watersheds, or wetlands on the property;
- b. *Community meetings.* The applicant must schedule one (1) community meeting to describe the project, including site plans, water management, and a viewshed analysis from public right-of-way. The meeting must:
1. Must be conducted within the boundary of Dodge County, Georgia between the hours of 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. EST.
 2. Advertise in a newspaper of general circulation serving the residents of Dodge County. The advertisement shall appear at least one (1) week prior to the community meeting.
 3. Signage. Signage shall be placed around the proposed parcel in a conspicuous place informing the public of a potential data center. Signage shall be updated with the date, time, and location of the required community meeting when established. Signage shall remain until the conclusion of the community meeting.
- c. *Building design.* The proposed data center buildings must be designed to minimize adverse visual impacts on surrounding development as demonstrated by the submission of architectural sketches or sight line studies.
1. Exterior building materials shall include at least one of the following for any elevations viewable from public roads and right-of-way:
 - Brick, stone, or architectural precast concrete panels
 - Architectural metal panels with non-reflective finish
 - High-quality fiber cement panels
- d. *Buffers.*
1. Distance Setback.
 - i. the facility shall be located at a minimum of 200 feet from any property line.
 - ii. the facility shall be located at a minimum of 200 feet from any public right-of-way.
 - iii. the facility shall be located at a minimum of 200 feet from any property line directly across from a structure for a linear distance (along the property line) equivalent to the length of the structure facing the property line plus an additional 250 feet from both ends of the structure.
 2. Vegetation. The first 100 feet along any property line shall remain in an undisturbed, natural state, except for approved fencing, access and utility improvements; however, if the first 100 feet along the property line is sparsely vegetated it shall be planted with dense growth. The minimum height of the vegetative buffer shall be twenty (20) feet.
- e. *Fencing.* Fencing of the property is required to enclose the data center facility. If the fencing is located along the property line, it shall be decorative metal and a minimum of eight (8) feet in height. Anti-climb features including but not limited

to barbed, concertina, razor, or similar uses shall be prohibited. If the fencing is located within the buffer and not visible from adjacent properties or roadways, it may be constructed of vinyl-coated chain-link and may include anti-climb features.

- f. *Noise.* Systems and facilities must adhere to the noise standards to avoid contribution to excessive noise pollution. The following noise limits shall apply:

1. Applicant shall provide Dodge County with a pre and post construction noise study, to include DbA and DbC readings, conducted by a professional and accredited **qualified acoustic consultant at the expense of the applicant. The pre noise study shall be used to establish baseline noise level.**
2. The study shall:
 - i. Measure and document existing ambient noise and projected noise levels generated by the proposed Data Center Development, including but not limited to generators, cooling systems, and other mechanical equipment associated with the Data Center Development;
 - ii. Demonstrate compliance with applicable noise standards established by this Ordinance at all property lines;
 - iii. Identify and recommend mitigation measures, including walls, berms, enclosures, or other sound attenuation methods; and
 - iv. All acoustical analyses and measurements shall be conducted using the current edition of ANSI/ASA S12.9, ISO 9613-2, or an equivalent industry-recognized methodology.
 - v. If post-construction testing demonstrates non-compliance, the applicant shall implement additional mitigation measures as recommended by a **qualified acoustic consultant**
3. The sound level generated by the data center or it's systems shall not exceed 10 decibels above the established baseline levels
4. Testing of backup generators is limited to weekdays during the hours between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. and shall not occur on holidays. **A generator testing log, to ensure compliance, shall be submitted to the governing authority annually.**
5. Use of backup generators that exceed the maximum sound levels is permitted during emergency power outages.
6. Violations. If it is found that the noise regulation contained herein are being violated, the county authority shall notify the property owner in writing indicating the violation and order the action to correct it. Such notice shall not be necessary to enforce the ordinance. If the violation constitutes a continuing nuisance, the county authority shall take other action necessary to ensure compliance with or to prevent violation of this ordinance.

- g. *Construction Traffic.* Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the applicant shall provide a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) for review and approval by the County Manager in coordination with the Dodge County Fire Chief, Dodge County EMS Director, Dodge County

Sheriff, and the Dodge County Road Superintendent. A surety bond may be required to cover costs related to potential damage to public roads and right-of-way.

- h. *Site lighting.* All exterior site and building lighting shall utilize full cutoff, fully shielded (zero up light) fixtures designed to maintain the existing night sky darkness and to prevent light trespass onto adjacent properties and streets. Light fixtures shall be located at least four (4) times the mounting height of the fixture away from adjacent property lines. The mounting height of all site lighting shall not exceed twenty (20) feet above finished grade.
- i. *Equipment, generator, and substation enclosures and screening.* All mechanical equipment, emergency generators, substations, and appurtenances shall be screened from view from any public right-of-way or adjoining property. The screening shall be a minimum of 8-feet-high consisting of fence, wall, and/or a vegetative berm.
- j. *Cooling and ventilation.* The Applicant shall specify the proposed cooling and ventilation equipment as part of the permit application process. Open-loop systems are prohibited for all liquid cooling and ventilation equipment.
- k. *Water Usage Requirements.*
 - 1. Prior to approval of a Site Plan, the applicant shall submit a Water Supply Capacity Analysis, prepared and sealed by a licensed professional engineer, demonstrating that the proposed development will not adversely affect adequate water service for neighbors, future growth, fire protection, or emergency services.
 - 2. The Data Center owner and/or operator shall submit an annual Water Use Effectiveness (WUE) Compliance Report, prepared and certified by an independent licensed professional engineer, demonstrating that the rolling twelve-month Water Use Effectiveness (WUE) does not exceed 1.8 liters per kilowatt-hour (1.8 L/kWh). If nationally recognized industry standards for Water Use Effectiveness are revised or superseded, the Board of Commissioners may, by resolution to adopt an alternative WUE performance standard that provides an equivalent or greater level of water conservation.
 - 3. The extraction, diversion, or utilization of all unmetered water is prohibited.
 - 4. The applicant shall identify the anticipated volume of cooling tower blowdown, wastewater, reverse osmosis concentrate, and any other process water discharge. All wastewater and process water shall be collected, treated, and disposed of in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. No untreated process water shall be discharged to the ground surface, storm water management facilities, or waters of the State.
- l. *Environmental impact analysis.* The applicant shall provide an environmental impact assessment as part of the permit application for the proposed project to determine and quantify the potential impacts of the proposed project. The environmental impact assessment shall be based upon research, site visits, and accepted environmental sampling and investigative practices for water resources, air quality, ecology, archaeology, and cultural/historical resources conducted by a professional and accredited third party contractor.

- m. *Water Consumption and Sustainability Plan.* A Water Consumption and Sustainability Plan shall address conservation and scarcity, outlining the total water requirement of the Data Center, including cooling needs, and any strategies to reduce or mitigate excessive water usage.
- n. *Storm water Plan.* A Storm Water Management Plan shall address how the Data Center Development and operation shall manage storm water runoff, as well as any mitigation measures to prevent negative impacts on local water systems.
- o. *Wastewater Plan.* All Data Center Developments not served by public sewer shall submit a water and wastewater management plan. The plan shall identify all water uses and wastewater sources, including domestic and process water, as well as chemicals utilized. On-site septic systems shall be limited to domestic wastewater. The applicant shall provide documentation of approval from the local Environmental Health Department for any proposed septic system.
 - 1. Where a closed-loop cooling system is utilized, the applicant shall explicitly identify and map all expected discharge points in the submitted engineering plans, including:
 - i. Slowdown or Purge Water: Outlets for the periodic or automated bleeding of highly concentrated mineralized water from cooling tower loops.
 - ii. Maintenance or System Drainage: Outlets utilized during complete system flushes, physical cleanouts, or mechanical maintenance events.
 - iii. Emergency Overflow: Outlets designed to redirect unexpected surges, line breaks, or catastrophic fluid retention failures away from critical electrical equipment.
- p. *Utilities.* At the time of the land disturbance permit, the Applicant shall provide a letter of intent to serve the proposed project from the applicable utility provider(s), confirming that preliminary coordination has occurred and that service to the proposed project is feasible subject to final engineering. ~~Notwithstanding utility grid failure, no primary onsite power generation shall be permitted.~~
- q. *Air quality and emissions.* Generators should be classified as stationary sources and shall meet EPA regulations.
- r. *Substations.* Substations are considered accessory uses to data centers and shall not be located within 200 feet of an adjacent property line.
- s. *Emergency response.*
 - 1. The data center operator shall coordinate with the Dodge County EMA Director or designee to perform specialized training at least once annually to include applicable public safety agencies. The data center will reimburse the County for all costs to perform specialized training and necessary equipment related to the data center facility.
 - 2. The data center operator shall submit a fire suppression system plan that includes onsite water storage to the EMA Director for approval.
- t. *Prohibition.* The County may deny or revoke a permit upon any of the following occurrences:
 - 1. The applicant seeks or receives tax abatement from any political subdivision of the County for either real or personal property taxes;
 - 2. The failure of the applicant to file a tangible personal property tax return with the Dodge County Tax Assessor;
 - 3. Failure to comply with subsection (o);

New Business

A. Approval of Accounts Payable

Commissioner Watkins made a motion to approve the accounts payable report totaling \$191,450.54. Commissioner Greene seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

B. Workforce Development Board

The county manager noted that Commissioner Flanagan requested to step down from the Workforce Development Board due to scheduling conflicts with the airport board meeting. The board agreed to advertise the vacancy to find a business owner to fill the position.

C. Trees Act Resolution

Upon motion by Commissioner Watkins and second by Commissioner Flanagan, the board unanimously voted to approve a resolution for the Trees Act, which provides disaster relief for those who suffered timber damage during Hurricane Helen, including tax relief for the fourth quarter of 2024 and all four quarters of 2025, as detailed below.

A RESOLUTION OF THE DODGE COUNTY, GEORGIA BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS RELATED TO TEMPORARY PROPERTY TAX RELIEF FOR ELIGIBLE STANDING TIMBER LOCATED IN A DISASTER AREA IN DODGE COUNTY

WHEREAS, Article VII, Section I, Paragraph III(h) of the Constitution of Georgia and Code Section 48-5-33.1 authorize counties, consolidated governments, cities, and county or independent boards of education, which are located in whole or in part within a certain disaster area, to grant temporary property tax relief for certain eligible timber property;

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners of Dodge County is an eligible governing authority under Code Section 48-5-33.1(a) because Dodge County is located in whole or in part within an area designated for public assistance or individual and public assistance pursuant to the Federal Emergency Management Agency FEMA-4830-DR Georgia disaster declaration as of November 4, 2024;

WHEREAS, Dodge County contains eligible timber property as such term is defined in Code Section 48-5-33.1(a)(4);

WHEREAS, pursuant to Code Section 48-5-33.1(c), the granting of such temporary tax relief by Dodge County for county ad valorem taxes is contingent upon the adoption of a resolution by the Board of Commissioners of Dodge County;

WHEREAS, Code Section 48-5-33.1(f)(1) requires the State Forestry Commission to establish a certification form to be used by taxpayers and Dodge County shall not process any request for such temporary tax relief without having received a valid certification from the taxpayer seeking such relief; and

WHEREAS, Dodge County desires to provide such temporary tax relief in conformity with the requirements of state law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of Dodge County that:

1. Dodge County is declared a jurisdiction that contains eligible timber property;
2. The Dodge County Board of Commissioners of Dodge County consents to the grant of the temporary tax relief authorized under Code Section 45-5-33.1;
3. Taxpayers seeking such tax relief shall complete and submit the certification form established by the State Forestry Commission pursuant to Code Section 48-5-33.1(f) to the Dodge County Board of Commissioners and Tax Commissioner of Dodge County, and only those certification forms which are complete, including all required information shall be deemed valid and accepted by the eligible governing authority;
4. The levy and collection of Dodge County ad valorem taxes which would otherwise be imposed pursuant to Code Section 48-5-7.5 during the final quarter of 2024 or any quarter during 2025 is waived for validly certified eligible timber property;
5. Pursuant to Code Section 48-5-33.1(e), the Dodge County Tax Commissioner or their designee is hereby directed to facilitate the refund of any taxes paid pursuant to Code Section 48-5-7.5 for eligible standing timber on validly certified eligible standing timber property during the final quarter of 2024 or during any quarter of 2025, in the same manner as otherwise provided under Code Section 48-5-380;
6. If taxes have been levied, but not collected, pursuant to Code Section 48-5-7.5 on validly certified eligible standing timber property during the final quarter of 2024 or during any quarter of 2025, the Board of Commissioners hereby waives the payment and collection of such taxes. The Dodge County Tax Commissioner is hereby requested to provide each such taxpayer with an updated tax bill reflecting that such amount is no longer due, as required by Code Section 48-5-33.1(e);
7. No temporary tax relief shall be provided to a taxpayer unless and until the applicable requirements of Code Section 48-5-33.1 have been met and the taxpayer has submitted a valid certification form for eligible timber property.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Clerk of the Dodge County Board of Commissioners is hereby directed to provide a copy of this approved and executed Resolution to 1) the Dodge County Tax Commissioner; 2) the Dodge County Board of Tax Assessors; 3) the Chief Appraiser; 4) the State Forestry Commission; and 5) the Georgia Department of Revenue.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Clerk of the Dodge County Board of Commissioners is hereby directed to promulgate such forms as is necessary to effectuate the provisions of this Resolution.

D. Robert Bellflower – Tax Issue

Mr. Bellflower stated that the tax assessor's office incorrectly identified ponds on his property, which were never present, leading to over-taxation. The board acknowledged the unique situation, noting that they could potentially look back seven years to rectify the error, and agreed to research the issue to determine what is owed.

E. J.C. Hilliard – Community Concerns

J.C. Hilliard requested that the county place crush and run on Fair Haven Church Road to improve access. The county manager reported that the road committee assessed the road, noting that while the condition of the existing gravel is good, the road is narrower and longer than alternative routes like Rocky Springs Road. Emergency services indicated that Rocky Springs Road is the preferred route for responses, and the board noted that they would need to investigate the costs and feasibility of the request further.

F. Michael Catoe – Log Cabin Road Speed Limit

Michael Catoe requested Log Cabin Road speed limit be lowered from 35 mph to 25 mph. Commissioner Greene made a motion to approve the request. Commissioner Flanagan seconded. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

G. RISEUP Eastman – Recovery Month Proclamation

Ashley Black, the addiction recovery support center coordinator for RISEUP for Community Service, requested that the board proclaim September as National Recovery Month in Dodge County. Commissioner Flanagan made a motion to approve the proclamation, as detailed below. Commissioner Greene seconded the motion. All voted in favor, and the motion passed.

Recovery Month Proclamation

WHEREAS, behavioral health is an essential part of one's overall health and well-being; and

WHEREAS, recovery from addiction occurs every day through a variety of recovery support services and treatment programs; and

WHEREAS, prevention of substance use disorders works, treatment is effective, and people recover across Georgia and around the nation; and

WHEREAS, millions of people across the United States are living happy, joyous, and free in long-term recovery; and

WHEREAS, the 2026 Georgia Recovers in Communities bus tour celebrates that "Recovery is Real" and recognizes that we are never alone on this journey through recovery; and

WHEREAS, the Georgia Recovers in Communities bus tour will deliver 100 Overdose Aid Kits to communities across Georgia to be accessible in local government buildings; and WHEREAS, education

throughout our communities about recovery and addiction is essential to combating the stigma and discrimination faced by many people in recovery; and

WHEREAS, to help more people experience and sustain long-term recovery, the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, the Georgia Council for Recovery and the Georgia General Assembly Working Group on Addiction and Recovery, invite all residents of the State of Georgia to participate in National Recovery Month.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Dodge County Board of Commissioners do hereby proclaim the month of September 2026 as National Recovery Month in Dodge County.

Commissioner Reports

- Commissioner Flanagan reported that the state has significant tax abatements for solar farms and data centers, and the county shouldn't feel obligated to offer more.
- Commissioner Flanagan also reported a grant opportunity for the airport authority from GDOT of \$1.1 million with a \$70,000 match for the construction or improvement of a hanger campus. She stated she was not sure if the airport board has made a final decision in the matter.
- Commissioner Greene proposed a motion to adopt a temporary moratorium on data center applications and permits for a period of 90 days. Motion died for lack of a second.

County Manager Report: Conner Bearden

- Manager Bearden reported that an official appeal letter was filed on August 14th regarding the sales ratio study.
- Manager Bearden also announced that Mike Grenade resigned from the Dodge County Board of Health effective August 1st. The board granted permission to advertise for a replacement to fill the county-appointed consumer advocate seat.
- Manager Bearden gave an update from the recreation department meeting and stated a clean-up day has been scheduled for September 12.
- Manager Bearden asked for volunteers from the board to attend the CDBG summit scheduled at the end of September. With none forthcoming, the county clerk volunteered.
- Lastly, Manager Bearden reported that the Sawmill Junction solar farm public hearing had to be canceled due to the lack of signage posted at the property, as per ordinance.

Adjourn

With no other business to come before the board, Commissioner Green made a motion to adjourn at 7:29 p.m. Commissioner Jones seconded. All voted in favor, and the meeting adjourned.

Attested:

Approved:

Kimberly Smith-Parkerson, County Clerk

Dan McCranie, Chairman