

Citizen Comments
Public Hearing Agenda Item #24
for the meeting of
October 13, 2026

PUBLIC HEARING

24. Second and Final Public Hearing to Adopt an Ordinance to Establish an 18-Month Moratorium on Large-Load Customer Facilities, including Large-Scale Data Centers
(County Administrator / Development Support & Environmental Management)

This update provides citizen comments received after the agenda was published on October 5, 2026.

Public Comment: Responsible Data Center Development in Leon County

To: Leon County Board of County Commissioners

Public Hearing: October 13, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

Re: Agenda Item #24 — Proposed 18-Month Moratorium on Large-Load Customer Facilities, Including Large-Scale Data Centers

Chairman and Members of the Board:

My name is Vikki Godfrey. I am a Leon County resident and a student at Florida A&M University. I previously submitted a public comment opposing the proposed 18-month moratorium on large-scale data centers. After conducting additional research and attending a university panel on artificial intelligence, I would like to offer further information for your consideration.

This is not the future. This is now.

On September 29, I attended FAMU's *Beyond the Prompt* AI panel, where university administrators, faculty, students, and an industry representative discussed how artificial intelligence is changing education and employment.

Provost Allyson Watson explained that FAMU has already provided faculty, staff, and students with access to Google AI tools. Faculty training is underway, university AI policies are being developed, and students are already using AI to support learning and research.

Dr. Chiquita Brown described teaching students to use AI ethically in research and preparing them to discuss workplace AI applications with prospective employers. Industry panelist David Clark emphasized that employers expect graduates to understand these tools.

As a student, I am witnessing these changes firsthand. I believe Leon County should consider how our local economy can participate in this technological transformation.

An independent study by Virginia's Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission found that data centers generate substantial economic activity, particularly during construction. The study estimated that a typical 250,000-square-foot facility could involve approximately 1,500 workers at peak construction and about 50 full-time workers during ongoing operations.

These are Virginia estimates, not guaranteed outcomes for Leon County. Nevertheless, they demonstrate opportunities involving construction trades, electrical work, equipment installation, maintenance, and technical employment.

For unincorporated Leon County, responsible development could also expand the property-tax base and create opportunities for local contractors and small businesses. I would particularly like to see partnerships with FAMU, Tallahassee State College, and Florida State University to prepare students for related careers.

I recognize the concerns about electricity, water consumption, noise, environmental protection, and compatibility with rural neighborhoods. These concerns deserve enforceable safeguards.

Florida's 2026 data-center legislation, Senate Bill 484, already establishes additional protections addressing electricity costs, local land-use authority, and water-resource permitting. It also provides a framework for considering reclaimed water requirements.

Leon County should evaluate how these state protections can work alongside appropriate local standards.

I am also concerned about how economic decisions affect African American communities. Black residents and historically underserved neighborhoods should have meaningful access to training, employment, contracting opportunities, and economic benefits. At the same time, they should not be asked to absorb disproportionate utility costs or environmental burdens.

I respectfully ask the Board not to adopt the blanket 18-month moratorium. Instead, I ask you to direct County staff to develop a responsible data-center review framework that includes water conservation, appropriate siting, noise protections, utility-cost safeguards, transparent reporting, and opportunities for community input.

I also encourage the County to explore workforce partnerships and local-business participation, so the potential economic benefits reach Leon County residents.

We should protect our communities while remaining open to responsible economic development. The question is not simply whether data centers should come to Leon County, but under what conditions they could benefit our residents.

AI is already here. I believe Leon County should help shape how this opportunity develops rather than placing it on hold for 18 months.

Thank you for your consideration.

Vikki Godfrey
Florida A&M University Student