



Planning & Zoning Commission

Meeting Minutes Tuesday, January 20, 2026

The Linn County Planning and Zoning Commission meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair, Tina DuBois. The meeting was held in the Jean Oxley Public Service Center Formal Board Room, 935 2nd Street SW, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

QUORUM DETERMINED:

PRESENT:

Tina DuBois, Chair	2030
Diane Brecht (via Teams)	2030
Griffin Kuntz, Vice Chair	2026
Mike Sadler II	2029
Samuel Kratz	2029

ABSENT:

Brock Grenis	2028
--------------	------

STAFF:

- Charlie Nichols, Planning & Development Director
- Stephanie Lientz, Planning & Zoning Division Manager
- Mike Tertinger, Senior Planner
- Brad Wylam, Planner II
- Sue Bennett, Recording Secretary

See attendance sheet for community sign in

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

Motion for Tina DuBois as Chair: Kuntz. Second for Tina DuBois as Chair: Sadler

Grenis	Absent
Brecht	Aye
DuBois	Abstain
Kuntz	Aye
Kratz	Aye
Sadler	Aye

Motion for Mike Sadler as Vice Chair : Kratz. Second for Mike Sadler as Vice Chair: Kuntz

Grenis	Absent
Brecht	Aye
DuBois	Aye
Kuntz	Aye
Kratz	Aye
Sadler	Abstain

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The minutes of December 15, 2025, Planning & Zoning Commission meeting were approved as submitted.

REGULAR AGENDA:**PR26-0001****REZONING RR3 TO USR-MF**

Brad Wylam presented the staff report.

The applicant is proposing to rezone approximately 11.68 acres from the RR3 (Rural Residential Three-Acre) zoning district to the USR-MF (Urban Services Residential, Multi-Family) zoning district. The property is located within the MUSA (Metro Urban Services Area) area on the Linn County Rural Land Use Map.

A Conditional Use Permit case (PC26-0001) is running concurrently with the rezoning case. The Conditional Use Permit case would allow for conversion of the existing single-family home into a memory care residential care facility for 14 residents. The facility is to be licensed by the State of Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals, & Licensing.

This proposal meets the standards for approval per Article IV, Section 107-69 and Section 107-70 of the Linn County Unified Development Code (UDC). The proposal meets Minimum Levels of Service (MLS) and Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) requirements in the UDC and earned a LESA score of 208.65 (the minimum threshold score needed to pass in areas designated as MUSA is 105).

The proposed development would connect to public water and sewer system from the City of Hiawatha.

Staff recommends approval subject to the conditions of the staff report.

DuBois asked if there was a timeline for the Hiawatha annexation. Wylam stated that there is no timeline, that the applicants would annex when Hiawatha requests.

DuBois asked if the facility is going to be licensed? Wylam stated yes, through the state.

Brecht asked if it is going to be a secure building. Wylam stated he would refer that question to the applicant.

Jerry Horak, applicant, and Natalie Ramirez, architect, came to the podium. Ramirez stated the facility will be licensed by DIAL. Applicants would need a doctor's order for admission. DIAL has standards for rooms, security (including magnetic door locks), etc. This facility would be part of a nationwide franchise, and that the interior would have the most renovations, including reconfiguring the building and ensuring it is ADA compliant. The external renovations would be mostly for ADA purposes and some curb appeal.

Horak also stated he would like to maximize use of the lot for patient enjoyment.

DuBois asked if, by granting this facility, the Commission would be opening the door for a second facility.

Brecht stated her concerns about safety and security. Dubois asked if the magnetic lock is for both entering and exiting the building. Horak stated yes.

Public Comment Open.

Charlene Larson, Cedar Rapids, spoke against the project.

Greg Epping, Cedar Rapids, spoke against the project.

Mike Crilley, Cedar Rapids, spoke against the project.

Craig Wenger, Cedar Rapids, spoke against the project.

Todd Miller, Cedar Rapids, spoke against the project.

Cheri Monahan, Hiawatha, spoke against the project.

Kelly Kellen, Cedar Rapids, spoke against the project.

Public Comment Closed.

Wylam came to the podium and reminded the Commission that they needed to view the rezoning case separately from the conditional use case.

Kuntz asked Wylam what would happen with this parcel post-annexation? Wylam answered that we have no jurisdiction to speak to that.

DuBois asked why this case didn't need Hiawatha review, as it is within 2 miles of the city. Wylam stated that we do not have a 28E agreement with Hiawatha, so their review is not required.

DuBois confirmed that, were there 8 people or fewer, this would not require a rezoning or a conditional use case. Wylam confirmed that information, and that 14 beds require a conditional use.

Lientz clarified that a conditional Use is required for this type of use in the Urban Services Residential Multi-Family district. She stated that other uses (such as apartment buildings) might be permitted uses and would not require a conditional use.

DuBois asked the location of the water and sewer line. Ramirez said it was along Todd Hills Road.

Brecht asked for clarification. If Hiawatha has said they intend to annex the property, why are these cases being heard by the County, and not in Hiawatha. Lientz responded that the property is currently in the county zoning, and annexation can take anywhere from 6 months to a year and is on the city's timeline.

DuBois stated that the facility would be very quiet neighbors, but she understands the worries.

Kuntz requested Planning & Development show the slide of the standards for review.

Motion by Sadler to recommend denial of case PR26-0001. Second by Kratz.

DuBois	Nay
Kuntz	Aye
Grenis	Absent
Sadler	Aye
Brecht	Nay
Kratz	Aye

Reasons for Denial : Kuntz feels that it is spot zoning. Kratz felt that this case should be decided by Hiawatha, after annexation. Sadler feels that it is spot zoning.

**PC26-0001
MEMORY CARE UNIT**

Brad Wylam presented the staff report.

The applicant is requesting a Conditional Use Permit for a 14-bed memory care residential care facility on the 11.68-acre subject property. Rezoning case PR26-0001 is proposed to rezone the subject property from the RR3 (Rural Residential Three-Acre) zoning district to the USR-MF (Urban Services Residential, Multi-Family) zoning district. The proposed use is allowed in the USR-MF zoning district with approval of a conditional use permit.

The subject property currently contains one single-family dwelling and one accessory structure. The applicant is proposing to convert the existing single-family dwelling into the facility. The facility is to be licensed by the State of Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals, & Licensing. Five new parking spaces are proposed on the site, but no additional buildings are proposed to be constructed as part of the facility. The facility would employ eight full-time and four part-time staff and estimated to produce approximately 15 additional vehicle trips per day. Two to three employees will typically be on site at all times. If approved, the property would connect to the City of Hiawatha water and sewer system.

The memory care residential care facility use is allowed with a Conditional Use Permit in the USR-MF zoning district. Pending approval and subsequent recording of Rezoning Case PR26-0001, the proposal appears to meet all of the standards for approval for Conditional Use Permits in Article IV, Section 107-73, § (4) and Article VI, Section 107-113, § (j) regarding group living, group home, congregate living, assisted living, and nursing homes in the Linn County Unified Development Code (UDC).

Staff recommends approval subject to the conditions of the staff report.

See Comments on PR26-0001.

Motion by Kratz to recommend denial of case PC26-0001. Second by Kuntz.

Kratz	Aye
Grenis	Absent
DuBois	Nay
Sadler	Aye
Kuntz	Aye
Brecht	Nay

See Reasons for Denial on PR26-0001.

PA26-0001

ORDINANCE – DATA CENTER

Charlie Nichols presented the staff report.

A key component of the proposed amendments is the introduction of water supply and sustainability review requirements for large-scale data centers. Nationally, water use by data centers has become an increasingly prominent planning and policy issue, particularly in regions experiencing seasonal or long-term water constraints. The proposed planning-level water study and operational coordination requirements are intended to provide decision-makers and the public with sufficient information to evaluate potential impacts, while establishing a framework for ongoing coordination over the operational life of a facility.

The ordinance also incorporates requirements related to setbacks, noise, emergency response planning, road use, and economic development agreements. Collectively, these standards are designed to address the long-term obligations the County assumes when hosting large-scale infrastructure uses and to ensure that such facilities are compatible with surrounding land uses and the Comprehensive Plan.

Staff recommends approval subject to the conditions of the staff report.

Nichols stated that there are 2 proposed changes he would like to recommend for the staff report. The first is to remove the accessory building restrictions. The second is that Planning & Development would require a back up battery plan before issuing the building permit.

DuBois asked if there are regulations for battery storage. Nichols stated yes.

Public Comment Open.

Michael Schmidt, Cedar Rapids, spoke against the project.

Pam Taylor, Marion, spoke against the project.

Joe Conlan, Palm Beach Florida, stated that if any regulations are adopted, they need to be flexible.

Stacey Bakker spoke against the project.

John Zakrasek, Cedar Rapids, stated he appreciated the time and effort that had gone into the ordinance, especially regarding water usage.

Public Comment Closed

DuBois called Nichols back to the podium. DuBois asked about the financial benefits of a data center to the county. Nichols replied that that decision is up to the Board of Supervisors. He stated some counties are giving tax breaks to data centers, but nationally that policy is not recommended.

Kuntz asked what the financial benefit to the county would be. Nichols stated that a data center would potentially be one of the largest taxpayers in the county.

DuBois asked if there would be additions in the future. Nichols says typically they are, but the compounds are built in phases. Zoning approval would happen once, but building permits would be required for each additional building.

DuBois asked about additional uses in EU-3, Nichols stated that they are things that are typically found in a data center campus.

DuBois asked how complaints could be made prior to the 5 year recheck. Nichols stated that these complaints would be reviewed by the Zoning Department, and they could require additional testing or review.

Brecht asked what the size of the footprint would be. Nichols stated that data centers range in size – Google’s buildings each range from 250,000 to 350,000 square feet, QTS are more like a million square feet.

Brecht asked how many buildings they put on a campus. Nichols answered between 4 and 7.

Brecht asked why they can’t build vertically instead of horizontally. Nichols believes it has to do with cost.

Sadler (Kratz) asked if the city had any decommissioning requirements, and Nichols stated no, and the county isn’t requiring decommissioning plans either. There isn’t a concern that the buildings, when they are no longer used a data center, won’t be repurposed.

Motion by Sadler to recommend approval with changes presented at the meeting, of case PA26-0001, subject to the conditions of the staff report. Second by Kuntz.

Kratz	Aye
Grenis	Absent
DuBois	Aye
Sadler	Aye
Kuntz	Aye
Brecht	Aye

PA26-0002 ORDINANCE - GAS GENERATING FACILITIES

Charlie Nichols presented the staff report.

The 2.25-mile setback from residential zoning within population centers reflects a conservative, planning-level buffer intended to provide additional separation between gas-fired electric generating facilities and areas of concentrated residential use. The setback is not intended to regulate emissions or substitute for air permitting requirements, but rather to reduce land use conflicts, account for uncertainty in site-specific conditions, and provide a consistent and predictable standard at the zoning stage of review. By limiting the setback to residential zoning within defined population centers, the ordinance focuses on protecting areas of higher population density while maintaining flexibility in rural areas.

In addition to setback requirements, the proposed amendments include standards related to noise, infrastructure impacts, airport compatibility, emergency coordination, and host community agreements. Collectively, these provisions are intended to ensure that gas-fired electric generating facilities are sited in a manner that is compatible with surrounding land uses and the Comprehensive Plan acknowledges the long-term service and infrastructure responsibilities assumed by the County, and provides a clear and transparent framework for applicants, decision-makers, and the public.

Staff recommends approval subject to the conditions of the staff report.

DuBois asked if there was a map available to view that shows where a gas fired power plant could be built. Nichols stated yes and showed the Commission the map.

Kratz asked if a gas fired plant could be built in the Eastern Iowa Airport Hazard Area with the 2.25 mile setback. Nichols stated probably not within the Eastern Iowa Airport Hazard Area.

Sadler asked if we have asked for or received any feedback from any other counties? Nichols said no, because we wouldn't reach out to another county until we had a precise location.

Sadler asked if the facility is built, and afterwards, a developer encroaches on the setbacks, what would happen? Nichols said that would not be a violation of the zoning code, because it met the specifications at the time of construction.

DuBois asked where the 2.25 mile number came from. Nichols said it came from public feedback, and the 2.25 mile number was brought up by a supervisor at a meeting.

Public Comment Open.

Jim Conlan, Cedar Rapids, stated the 2.25 mile setback is too high, and appears to be capricious.

Matt Cole, Cedar Rapids, stated he felt the setback was too restrictive.

John Zakrasek, Cedar Rapids, spoke against the project. Adding data centers that then require gas fired plants will increase the emissions we have resolves to reduce by 2030.

Close Public Comment.

Kuntz stated that he felt the 2.25 mile setback was arrived at arbitrarily.

DuBois agreed.

Nichols stated that research has shown that the radius of impacts of pollutants for gas fired plants is 2 or 2.2 miles. And that helped to decide the setback.

Sadler (Kratz?) asked if Planning & Development had any input from Linn County Public Health on this. Nichols stated that the impacts of pollutants is more in the purview of the Public Health.

Wanda Ryder Kintz, Air Quality Supervisor, which is part of Public Health. Air Quality data cannot technically be used for setback information because local regulations cannot be more strict than the state of Iowa. Until the application is received, Air Quality can't make a determination on the pollutants.

DuBois would like to see what the range of setbacks is in other areas and counties.

Motion by Kuntz to table PA26-0002 in order for staff to compile additional data regarding setback requirements for other gas-fired electric generating facilities. Second by Brecht.

Kratz	Aye
Grenis	Absent
DuBois	Aye
Sadler	Aye
Kuntz	Aye
Brecht	Aye

OTHER BUSINESS:

COMMISSION COMMENTS:

STAFF COMMENTS:

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 9 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tina DuBois, Chair

Sue Bennett, Recording Secretary