

LINN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
CEDAR RAPIDS, LINN COUNTY, IOWA
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2026 10:00 A.M.

The Board met in session at the Linn County Jean Oxley Public Service Center. Present: Chairperson Running-Marquardt, Vice Chairperson Scheetz and Supervisor Meisheid. Board members voting "AYE" unless otherwise noted.

Chairperson Running-Marquardt called the meeting to order.

Public Comment: Laura Krouse, 825 Abbe Hills Rd., Mt Vernon, offered comments from the Linn Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) about the sections of the proposed data center ordinance that relate to water. SWCD feels Iowa is abundant with resources and virtually no environmental regulations or accountability at the state level, making it attractive to corporations who would like to mine the resources and maximize their profits. Krouse urges the Supervisors to encourage partner governments to develop stronger regulations. Water quantity used to run the data center is one of the primary concerns to SWCD Commissioners. They feel the water study requirement is weak and is not designed to protect the resources and citizens of Linn County forever. Krouse presented many questions for the Board to consider regarding water. SWCD is also concerned about the effects of the buildings and concrete on rain runoff, proposing alternatives and questioning possible recourse for effects on surrounding citizens.

Natalie Houkal, 316 19th St. NW, Cedar Rapids, discussed the effects of data centers on nearby residents including rising electrical bills and water taps running dry. Houkal shared data center zoning standards from St. Louis as a suggestion for Linn County to emulate, including requiring the applicant to hold a meeting with the community.

Andrew Houkal, 316 19th St. NW, Cedar Rapids, discussed more conditions the data centers should adhere to including size and noise limitations, energy and water benchmarking, data verification by a third party, quarterly reports on energy efficiencies and emissions data, division of noise levels, annual third party reports to the health department, landscaping requirements, and operate with a closed loop cooling system or similar. Houkal requested the data centers achieve a 100% renewable energy requirement with suggestions of how to satisfy.

Joe Aossey, 2245 Birchwood Dr. NE, Cedar Rapids, wanted to express support of Krouse's comments. He shared that Iowa used to be 20% wetlands. In the last 5 years, there have only been 22 inches of rain annually, compared to 33 inches previously. There needs to be recognition that the wetlands have been destroyed or removed mostly due to tiling for agricultural production. Aossey suggested reading The Swine Republic.

Leland Freie, 2052 Linn Blvd. SE, Cedar Rapids, echoed comments and questions of the previous speakers. He discussed the moratorium in Oklahoma that was put in place so studies could be performed. Freie questioned differential rates between a data center and citizens, pointing out that of the 2 data centers currently being built locally, one could use up to 1.72 billion gallons of water. He requested whoever does the study puts forth their ideas and take the heat at a public hearing to justify their decision, provide their metrics, and answer questions.

Susan Biederman, 1509 Matterhorn Dr. NE, Cedar Rapids, has attended almost all of the meetings and doesn't think this decision should be rushed. There are at least 16 moratoriums in other states on this issue. More information on the effects on the environment and people is needed before making a decision. Biederman feels it is a civic duty to understand what is going on and not to rely on government officials to have all of the answers.

John Zakrasek, 531 Lawndale Dr. SE, Cedar Rapids, has researched data centers and sees the most likely way they will evolve is that the devices within them are going to continue to collapse in size and increase the amount of power that they need. Regarding the ordinance, there should be an understanding in place that the power requirements and cooling could go up significantly over time. Zakrasek feels the Community Benefit Agreements need to be aggressive in bringing benefits to the community suggesting utilizing local labor and payments towards improvement to water and grid infrastructure. He attended the Iowa House Commerce Committee meeting with Meta, Microsoft and Google where it was clear that data center developers understand that they are asking for a great deal from the communities, and they recognize they need to be doing more such as extensive grant programs, supporting STEM education in schools, and more.

Matt Resor, 423 Truman St., Lisbon, attended the first reading of the ordinance and believes the Board has taken good steps of learning things from other entities, and he appreciates their transparency and due diligence. The ordinance is thorough and good – it shows they listened to people from the last meeting. He requests that they approve this ordinance.

Motion by Running-Marquardt, seconded by Scheetz to approve minutes of February 9, 2026 as printed.

Motion by Scheetz, seconded by Meisheid to approve claims dated 02/13/26 for payroll deduction Check Nos. 71020474 to 71020476 in the amount of \$500.00, ACH in the amount of \$24,423.51, an EFT wire in the amount of \$82,817.22 and a Ceridian ER Funds Trust Wire in the amount of \$2,348,099.64, for a total of \$2,455,840.37.

Charlie Nichols, Planning & Dev. Dir., discussed Second Consideration of an ordinance amending the Code of Ordinances, Linn County, Iowa, by amending provisions in Chapter 107, pertaining to Data Center usage and associated requirements. From the first reading, staff researched lighting requirements, decommissioning requirements, well interference protections and effects of noise on livestock. Additional information on waste management plan requirements also came forward. The Solid Waste Agency (SWA) noted that waste is not being segregated and recommends Linn County adopt code to address the waste produced by the production of data centers.

The Supervisors all agreed the suggested code should be included in the ordinance being written.

Nichols then shared that staff proposes adding a lighting plan requirement into the ordinance and what that would entail. This would be a requirement before a building permit is issued and would not apply during construction, only operation. He then spoke on decommissioning requirements, discussing multiple questions and answers around data centers being treated differently than other industrial facilities on the end-of-life obligations. Nichols presented information for the Board to review should they choose to consider potential decommissioning requirements. Staff does not recommend decommissioning language.

Discussion ensued amongst the Board on whether or not to include decommissioning language in the ordinance. Supervisors Running-Marquardt and Scheetz don't feel the need to include it, while Supervisor Meisheid advocated to add it in.

Nichols continued on with well interference protections noting the authority of the Iowa Dept. of Natural Resources (IDNR) compared to that of the County's. IDNR staff recommends adding in language to the water use agreement including requiring the applicant to coordinate with the IDNR regarding applicable water use permits, interference mitigation procedures, monitoring obligations, and compliance procedures. This increases the County's coordination with the IDNR, who has the ultimate authority if the data centers are getting water from a non-municipal source, to enforce well interference protections.

Nichols then discussed the effects of noise on livestock. There is no research on effects from data centers specifically, but in general, continuous industrial noise studies show little to no long-term adverse effects to livestock at a certain dBA, of which the County has a lower threshold. Wildlife responses are species specific and overall they habituate to consistent noise levels over time.

Supervisor Meisheid added that while this is a countywide ordinance the Board still has to approve each application.

Nichols stated that staff recommends approving the proposed amendments with additional language on Waste Management Plan requirements, lighting requirements, and Water Use Agreement IDNR coordination requirements. He also addressed an earlier public comment requesting the requirement that applicants hold their own public meeting noting that Linn County does require it of utility scale solar projects. Nichols offered that it may be something for the Board to consider for data center applicants.

Supervisors Scheetz and Running-Marquardt are comfortable with all staff recommendations presented today, as well as adding the public meeting requirement.

Motion by Meisheid, seconded by Scheetz to add a section to the ordinance for decommissioning that includes restoration standards, financial assurance levels, trigger for decommissioning, and cost estimate methodology.

Discussion: subsequent discourse took place amongst the Supervisors regarding decommissioning policy.

VOTE: Meisheid – Aye Running-Marquardt & Scheetz – Nay

Supervisor Meisheid then requested Nichols expound on the lighting requirements, questioning if it can be more specific. Nichols answered that it does not currently have prescriptive standards or the requirement of additional checks done in the future. Those can be explored if the Board would like.

Supervisors Scheetz and Running-Marquardt feel the drafted language is sufficient as-is.

Motion by Running-Marquardt, seconded by Scheetz to amend Second Consideration to include a pre-application meeting requirement, well interference protections, suggested lighting requirements in the form of a plan, and Waste Management Plan requirements.

As Amended, Supervisor Meisheid believes Linn County is stronger by having this ordinance and there are a lot of great pieces in it that protect the taxpayers, so she is ultimately supportive even though she feels there are pieces that could still make it stronger.

Supervisor Scheetz thanked Nichols and his staff for the research they put in following the questions of residents at the first consideration. He is very supportive of the ordinance, noting that it is one of the most

comprehensive ones in the state protecting its residents but also recognizes that the County is pro-growth.

Supervisor Running-Marquardt discussed all the work that staff has put in trying to create a comprehensive ordinance such as this while maintaining transparency. She discussed the 13 data centers going in around Cedar Rapids, noting that Linn County chose a route to have an ordinance specific to data centers. She is proud that the County listened to people, as shown in today's amendments. She supports the Second Consideration as amended.

Motion by Running-Marquardt, seconded by Scheetz to approve upon Second Consideration, as amended, an ordinance amending the Code of Ordinances, Linn County, Iowa, by amending provisions in Chapter 107, pertaining to Data Center usage and associated requirements.

Supervisor Meisheid read the Proclamation for National Engineers Week, February 22 through 28, 2026.

Motion by Meisheid, seconded by Scheetz to adopt said Proclamation.

Brad Ketels, Co. Engineer, discussed emergency water repairs at 1888 County Home Road. A more permanent solution is needed at this point. Rathje Construction provided five options addressing temporary, short-term or long-term solutions. Ketels feels option 3, in the amount of \$70,406.40, addresses the current needs and provides a long-term solution for the future sale of the property by connecting to the City of Marion for water.

Supervisor Meisheid views the third option as fixing what is wrong and discussed the issues that staff have been dealing with. She feels the long-term solution is ensuring the property has water which makes for a better sale value.

Darrin Gage, Dir. of Policy & Admin., shared that the Finance Director is recommending the funding for these repairs come from Capital Projects. Since this is considered emergency work, the County is not required to do competitive bidding under Iowa Code Chapter 26.

Supervisor Running-Marquardt postponed further discussion to allow for the Facilities Dir. to be in attendance.

Ketels then discussed a Resolution Establishing a 5 Ton Embargo Weight Limit on the Secondary Road System rock surface roads, except for paved roads, local deliveries for residential and agricultural purposes, and that the County Engineer be directed to post signs as needed and as prescribed in Chapter 321.472, Code of Iowa and a Resolution Establishing a 10 Ton Embargo Weight Limit on the Secondary Road System hard surfaced roads (paved, seal coats, blacktop), except for local deliveries for residential and agricultural purposes and that the County Engineer be directed to post signs as needed. These resolutions establish seasonal weight limits and allow the County Engineer to place embargos on the roads in a timely manner without separate Board approval. Other parts of the resolution include exclusions and allowing for the embargo permit process. Ketels is willing to provide the Board with email updates on roads that have embargos.

The Board will approve both resolutions on Wednesday.

Discussion resumed on emergency repairs at 1888 County Home Rd.

Luke Fischer, Facilities Dir., agreed that option 3 is the best choice after reviewing the five scenarios. He believes it will provide good opportunities for the future of the property.

Motion by Running-Marquardt, seconded by Scheetz to approve emergency water repairs at 1888 County Home Road by utilizing option 3 provided by Rathje Construction.

Brad Wylam, Planning & Dev., discussed the 2025 Certified Local Government Annual Report for the Linn County Historic Preservation Commission. This is a state requirement to maintain certification, and he requests the Chair to sign on Wednesday.

Todd McNall, Historic Preservation Commission, thanked the Board for their continued support. He highlighted work that was done in the last year including the completion of the Lincoln Highway kiosk at Wanatee Park, conferences that were attended by members, and grants offered to Linn County applicants.

Supervisor Running-Marquardt thanked McNall and the Commission for all of the work that they do to keep Linn County's history alive. It's important to know where they come from. She requested that Wylam run this past one of the Civil Attorneys and he agreed.

The Board will sign on Wednesday.

Supervisor Meisheid discussed the submission of a letter of support to the U.S. Department of Transportation for the Corridor Metropolitan Planning Organization's BUILD grant application to complete

the remaining segments of the Tower Terrace Road Corridor Improvements Project. Meisheid appeared in Washington D.C. last week in support of this, as well as other city and county leaders showing unified support across the jurisdictions and regions. It would be transformational for the northern metro.

Motion by Running-Marquardt, seconded by Scheetz to authorize the Chairperson to sign the submission of a letter of support to the U.S. Department of Transportation for the Corridor Metropolitan Planning Organization's BUILD grant application to complete the remaining segments of the Tower Terrace Road Corridor Improvements Project.

Motion by Running-Marquardt, seconded by Scheetz to appoint Camron Tolley to the Linn County Food Systems Council to complete the vacated term of Kelly Ridenour, ending December 31, 2027.

Adjournment at 11:28 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

TODD E. TAYLOR, Linn County Auditor
By: Ana Brunscheen, Executive Assistant

APPROVED BY:

KIRSTEN RUNNING-MARQUARDT, Chairperson
Board of Supervisors