

LINN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
CEDAR RAPIDS, LINN COUNTY, IOWA
MONDAY, MARCH 9, 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.

Motion by Running-Marquardt, seconded by Scheetz to approve minutes of March 2 and 3, 2026 as printed.

Motion by Scheetz, seconded by Meisheid to approve accounts payable check dated 03/09/26 #71020712 in the amount of \$85.00.

Supervisor Meisheid read the Proclamation for International Women's Day, March 8, 2026.

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

Will Wright, Juv. Detention & Diversion Services Dir., discussed the Independent United States Department of Justice (USDOJ) Certified PREA Auditor Agreement between KDM Consults, S-Corporation, and Linn County Juvenile Detention Center. This audit is done every three years and there are available funds in the budget to cover the associated costs.

The Board will approve Wednesday.

Dave Thielen, LCCS Exec. Dir., discussed an amendment to the Agreement to Provide Juvenile Detention Service between Johnson County and Linn County. This would increase the number of Johnson County beds that can be reserved for juveniles from 3 to 4. It would span from April 1st to the end of the fiscal year.

The Board will approve Wednesday.

Thielen then discussed the Mental Health Access Center Provider Agreement between Abbe Community Mental Health and Linn County. This is a cleanup of the current contract, specifically laying out what the County will pay for in regards to withdrawal management services for Abbe Health.

The Board will approve Wednesday.

Motion by Running-Marquardt, seconded by Scheetz to open a public hearing on an ordinance amending the Code of Ordinances, Linn County, Iowa, by amending provisions in Chapter 107, pertaining to gas-fired electric generating facilities, and to provide for their siting within the EU-2 Exclusive Use-Two zoning district.

Charlie Nichols, Planning & Dev. Dir., shared that the County currently has very minimal regulations for these facilities – they are permitted with a Conditional Use permit issued by the Board of Adjustment, but there are no specific standards set in the current County code. Alliant Energy is now looking at construction of a new gas-fired electric generating facility in unincorporated Linn County. Public comment that has been received has ranged from support for the proposed Alliant project and the energy investment in the community, to concern over setbacks from population centers, potential impact on local ratepayers, and impacts on air quality, health, noise, and quality of life. The Planning & Zoning Commission voted unanimously to recommend approval of the ordinance and suggested changing the setback from population centers from 2.25 miles to 1 mile. Staff is proposing to put this use as an allowed use of the Exclusive Use Two (EU-2) zoning district, specifically as a principle permitted use and expanding the number of accessory uses allowed to include water intake, outfall structures, onsite water treatment, cooling towers and air-cooled condensers. Staff also recommends a proposed setback to population centers of 2.25 miles, with Board approved reduction on a case-by-case basis. Nichols then presented different ways the Board could consider the setback suggestion from the Planning & Zoning Commission.

The Supervisors agreed that it would be appropriate to review on a case-by-case basis.

Nichols continued by discussing Airport Hazard Area Approval and application requirements including a Host Community Agreement and Economic Development Plan. Noise standards are established in the ordinance with this amendment and language on avoidance and mitigation of damages to public infrastructure are included. Staff believes the ordinance aligns with the County's Comprehensive Plan, as explained by Nichols, and recommends approval of the proposed amendments with the one discussed change.

Public Comment: Fairfax Mayor Jo Ann Beer, 300 80th St. Ct., Fairfax, thanked the Board for their continuing proactive efforts in creating County ordinances to try to stay ahead of the ever-changing environment. She also wanted to make sure the Supervisors were aware that at the Tuesday Fairfax City Council meeting there will be a discussion and possible resolution topic regarding the currently proposed county ordinance.

Dennis Jordan, Alliant Energy Dir. of Customer, Community & Economic Dev., discussed Alliant's local involvement and contributions, including assisting during the Flood of 2008 and the 2020 Derecho, noting that their crews immediately mobilized and began the massive effort to restore faster than any community that has experienced a comparable hurricane level disaster. Alliant expects the demand for energy to increase significantly, projecting growth for their customers' energy needs by up to 50% over the next 5 years. Linn County is uniquely positioned with leadership in smart energy investments and transmission access making it highly attractive. This ordinance and rezoning process will directly influence whether the County remains competitive in an evolving environment. Alliant believes they have identified a compromise with local concern by relocating to unincorporated Linn County, while complying with the proposed 2.25 mile restriction zoning. Alliant respectfully asks the Board to not permanently codify the restriction zone into the ordinance, allowing for flexibility to enable future investment.

Discussion took place between Jordan and Supervisor Running-Marquardt regarding previous conversations surrounding potential facility sites. Jordan shared that established radiuses of impact demonstrated that if a facility were located within certain distances to a population area, it did require further study on potential impacts but did not indicate any sort of danger. Running-Marquardt asked him directly if residents will need to pay for the proposed infrastructure and Jordan responded that they will not, outside of what would normally be spread across their systems. He does not expect an increase in either rates or fees to be associated.

Jay Hopkins, rural Linn County resident, discussed Alliant's regulated and unregulated sides. The regulated side is bound by law as to how they can raise the rates. The unregulated side is the one that goes out and purchases land at prices that farmers and homeowners can't match. They do that because the law allows them to later put that as part of their infrastructure costs which they can then use for their rate increases on the regulated side. Citizens might not pay directly but do pay by paying for the land that is overpaid for and a lot of other things. Rates have always climbed and will continue to climb. Hopkins feels staff has done a decent job which is unusual in his experience. He feels the 2.25 mile setback isn't enough because there's a community of people that don't live in communities. The only special consideration they get is 1,000 feet, which isn't even a city block, and means they breathe the pollutants that are considered under further study. Hopkins feels Alliant doesn't want the setback codified because they want it to be easier in the future if they need an exception. He feels it should be difficult to put a power plant in the middle of a farm field next to existing residents and shouldn't be simple just because somebody wants to make money. The top decision makers with Alliant are not Linn County or even Iowa residents. They shouldn't be given the same consideration as the people that have lived in Linn County for decades.

John Zakrasek, 531 Lawndale Dr. SE, Cedar Rapids, questioned data centers driving up the need for additional production. Solar costs 4-4.8 cents per kilowatt hour over the life of the system, wind is 4-5.5 cents, and natural gas is twice that at 10.2-11.5 cents. Why would a company build something that would cost taxpayers, or the data centers, twice as much? He is also concerned about capacity factors – what percent of the total capacity of a plant is produced over a year? Gas is 50-60%, solar is 23%, wind is 35%. If wind, solar, and battery are combined its 80-85% so why not do that. Their capacity factor is much higher. Zakrasek then discussed Alliant's net-zero heat emissions goal by 2050. Google and Microsoft have a goal to use 100% clean energy. The 850-megawatt plant would annually produce 2.25 million metric tons of heat trapping emissions. That would increase Linn County emissions by 30% – even with an ordinance to try to keep those down and get them to net-zero by 2050 as well. The EPA says social costs of increased emissions is \$190/metric tons. That means the 850-megawatt plant would have an annual social cost of heat trapping emissions amounting to \$400 million dollars. There are three bills that could impact how this all goes forward. Statewide siting for wind and solar, making it easier for companies to build. Integrated use resource planning for utilities which forces companies to come forward and show all the options for building new energy and allowing the public to give input on how things proceed. And lastly, a separate rate structure for data centers that forces them to absorb all costs, in writing, that they're going to be incurring. Zakrasek also appreciates Linn County's work on the data center ordinance saying it was phenomenal. He suggested that since Palo may now control the data center via annexation, Linn County now has an opportunity to use a lever by putting a moratorium in place on gas-fired plants which would bring Google back to the table. Then they could require they either get the full ordinance in place or a gas-fired power plant would not be allowed.

Doug Schrader, 2839 76th St., Watkins, feels that the proposed 2.25 mile distance is an arbitrary number that's not backed up by regulatory information. Power is being created that the community is paying for, but there are only so many opportunities with gas pipelines to place the plants where they need to be. By declining this opportunity, the County would be turning away a behind-the-meter project—something recently prioritized by President Trump through new legislation encouraging companies to build on-site power plants to support their operations. With that, their excess power can be sold on the grid which will reduce the cost of transmitting it locally. Schrader feels that the Board needs to look at what happened with Palo when their rules and regulations changed the dynamics, forcing a company to go into the city, thereby passing up a huge property tax benefit for the county. He feels they need to table this and rethink the 2.25 mile radius. It will not only affect other projects, but the future of Alliant being able to provide power because the rules of where the pipelines are to get power to this and the development that is happening.

Dennis Jordan, Alliant Energy Dir. of Customer, Community & Economic Dev., addressed the comments related to the data center growth. He wants it clear that this power plant is not only for the data centers, but all the customers. Alliant routinely works with industry here in Linn County and all across the state looking to expand their operations. They're talking to a number of other companies that are looking to come here and they're asking the very same question about power availability. Alliant has to be able to demonstrate that they can support their needs by providing cost effective power. He also clarified that they need to be close to where the power need is, which is close to the SW side of Cedar Rapids where the data centers are being built and a lot of other industry is growing.

Jay Hopkins, rural Linn County resident, shared that Alliant is on record multiple times recently saying that this power plant is not a necessity. They are trying to build for the future. It's not about serving Linn County as a community. Sure, they might direct the current electricity to the data centers, but data centers are going to build their own power plants and sell it back into the grid. But they have been on record numerous times saying this plant is not a requirement. If it was, there are legal, lawful ways according to the State of Iowa that they can come to the State and eventually the County and site a necessary plant.

Motion by Running-Marquardt, seconded by Scheetz to close public hearing.

Charlie Nichols, Planning & Dev. Dir., then discussed the First Consideration of an ordinance amending the Code of Ordinances, Linn County, Iowa, by amending provisions in Chapter 107, pertaining to gas-fired electric generating facilities, and to provide for their siting within the EU-2 Exclusive Use-Two zoning district. Proof of publication was presented. He is looking for recommendation from the Board on how to move forward for second reading.

Discussion occurred on whether the solid waste agency language used in the data center ordinance could be applicable to the gas-fired ordinance. Nichols confirmed it could and will incorporate it into the draft.

Supervisor Meisheid appreciates everyone here today sharing their comments and concerns. This gives the Board the opportunity to look at what growth looks like for Linn County. She is supportive of adding in Board approved reduction on a case-by-case basis. It allows the Board to look at future opportunities and consider their constituents first.

Supervisor Scheetz also supports both amendments. This is the Board being pro-growth and pro-community. He feels this does a good job of balancing community interest and growth needs that the community is seeing and will see over the next 5 years.

Supervisor Running-Marquardt thanked everyone who has had communications with herself and others while they worked trying to find the balance of putting Linn County residents first while maintaining a pro-growth attitude. Alliant is on record publicly saying today that ratepayers will not have to pay for the natural gas power plant infrastructure. This ordinance takes residential areas into consideration with the setback, and the amendment helps the Board to be fair and have flexibility. She feels it is very important to codify the 2.25 mile setback.

Motion by Running-Marquardt, seconded by Scheetz to amend First Consideration of an ordinance amending the Code of Ordinances, Linn County, Iowa, by amending provisions in Chapter 107, pertaining to gas-fired electric generating facilities, and to provide for their siting within the EU-2 Exclusive Use-Two zoning district by adding the ability for Board-approved reduction to the population center setback with a 25% reduction for possibility of later approval of something that's exceptional by Board.

Motion by Running-Marquardt, seconded by Scheetz to amend First Consideration of an ordinance amending the Code of Ordinances, Linn County, Iowa, by amending provisions in Chapter 107, pertaining to gas-fired electric generating facilities, and to provide for their siting within the EU-2 Exclusive Use-Two zoning district by adding a requirement for a waste management plan similar to what is required for data center projects.

Motion by Running-Marquardt, seconded by Scheetz to approve upon First Consideration an ordinance, as amended, amending the Code of Ordinances, Linn County, Iowa, by amending provisions in Chapter 107, pertaining to gas-fired electric generating facilities, and to provide for their siting within the EU-2 Exclusive Use-Two zoning district.

Motion by Running-Marquardt, seconded by Scheetz to approve Class C Retail Alcohol License for Stiles of Celebration, 5977 Mt. Vernon Road SE, noting all conditions have been met.

Motion by Running-Marquardt, seconded by Scheetz to approve payroll authorizations (detail is available upon request).

Motion by Scheetz, seconded by Meisheid to appoint Supervisor Running-Marquardt to serve as the Board liaison for the Linn County Sustainability Department for calendar year 2026.

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Adjournment at 11:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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

APPROVED BY:

KIRSTEN RUNNING-MARQUARDT, Chairperson
Board of Supervisors