



# CHAMPAIGN COUNTY BOARD

## ENVIRONMENT AND LAND USE COMMITTEE MINUTES

County of Champaign, Urbana, Illinois

Thursday, April 9, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.

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Shields-Carter Meeting Room

Bennett Administrative Center

102 E. Main St., Urbana, IL 61801

**MINUTES** – Approved as Distributed May 7, 2026

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### Committee Members

**Present:** Aaron Esry, John Farney, Jennifer Locke, Emily Rodriguez and Eric Thorsland

**Absent:** Jilmala Rogers and Monique Settles

**County Staff:** John Hall (Zoning Administrator), Michelle Jett (Acting Facilities Director) and Mary Ward (Recording Secretary)

**Others Present:** None

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### I. Call to Order

Committee Chair Thorsland called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

### II. Roll Call

Roll Call was taken, and a quorum was declared present.

### III. Approval of Agenda/Addendum

**MOTION** by Mr. Esry to approve the agenda; seconded by Ms. Locke. **MOTION** by Mr. Esry to amend the agenda by removing item 7. C. as there was no ZBA meeting; seconded by Ms. Locke. Upon vote, the **MOTION to AMEND** passed unanimously. Upon vote, the **MOTION CARRIED** to approve the amended agenda.

### IV. Approval of Minutes

A. February 5, 2026 – Regular Meeting

**MOTION** by Mr. Farney to approve the minutes of February 5, 2026; seconded by Ms. Locke. Upon vote, the **MOTION CARRIED** unanimously.

### V. Public Input

Trevor Wiles, Attorney for Benjamin Franklin regarding Zoning Case 191-AM-26. He is available if there are any questions.

Kevin Sage, East Central Illinois Building & Construction Trades Council, spoke against the moratorium and about the advantages of having a Data Center and the ripple effect on the area and the economy. He understands our issues and water is a critical resource. The closed loop cooling systems use much less water. There is also a misconception that power bills go up when a Data Center goes in. One-year is too long for a moratorium and would like to see it changed to a 6-month moratorium. We need to protect our resources while being open to business.

Maggie Bruns, Executive Director at Prairie Rivers Network, spoke against Data Centers. We need to keep moving on the one-year moratorium. We need protections in place for both water and energy. Urgency by big tech should not drive our agenda.

Tachel Brown is in favor of the moratorium. We can see what has happened in other communities where Data Centers have moved in. She cited a University of Michigan study that shows utility rates increase, there is high resource use and tax incentives were ineffective. The tech companies did not deliver on the promises they made. It takes time to do things right.

## VI. **Communications**

There were no communications.

## VII. **New Business: Items to be recommended to the County Board**

A. **Zoning Case 191-AM-26.** A request by owner Benjamin Franklin to change the zoning district designation from the I-1 Light Industry Zoning District to the B-4 General Business Zoning District on a .26-acre parcel that is Lot 26 in the Beverly Hills Subdivision in the Southwest Quarter of the Southwest Quarter of Section 5, Township 19 North, Range 9 East of the Third Principal Meridian in Urbana Township, with an address of 1601 North Coler Avenue, Urbana.

**MOTION** by Mr. Farney to recommend County Board approval of a resolution approving Zoning Case 191-AM-26 for Benjamin Franklin; seconded by Ms. Locke.

Ms. Rodriguez asked to hear from the petitioner. Mr. Wiles spoke as the attorney for the petitioner. This will be a low-impact use. There is some internal reno to be done and some minor ADA compliant parking issues to address. Mr. Esry said it's nice when buildings can be re-purposed for a new use. Ms. Lokshin added that she thought this was a great use for this parcel.

Upon vote, the **MOTION CARRIED** unanimously.

B. **Zoning Case 196-AT-26.** Amend the Champaign County Zoning Ordinance to impose a temporary 12-month moratorium on DATA CENTERS with at least 10,000 square feet of processing area.

**MOTION** by Mr. Esry to recommend County Board approval of a resolution approving Zoning Case 196-AT-26, amending the Champaign County Zoning Ordinance to impose a temporary 12-month

moratorium on DATA CENTERS with at least 10,000 square feet of processing area; seconded by Mr. Farney.

Mr. Hall said that they received a lot of input, both for and against, the moratorium at the Zoning hearing. The ZBA recommended approving the moratorium.

**MOTION** by Ms. Rodriguez to amend the resolution from 12-months to 6-months. There was no second. Discussion followed on changing the length of the moratorium.

Mr. Esry said he supports the 12-month moratorium mostly because of timing/scheduling of ZBA meetings and being able to get it on the agenda. Plus, the ordinance has to pass ZBA and come to ELUC before it goes to the County Board. Six months is just not enough time. He would prefer to keep it 12 months, and we could possibly end the moratorium early.

Ms. Locke asked Mr. Hall for a realistic timeline for the ordinance. If it gets to ZBA in August, it wouldn't get to the County Board until November or December. Mr. Hall reminded the committee that it would have to set at ELUC for a month. If we leave the moratorium at 12 months, and get everything done before that time, it would be written into the resolution that the moratorium is over.

Mr. Farney does not like the idea of pushing the can down the road. Do we compromise or amend the resolution so that it can't go beyond 12-months. Mr. Farney wants to see the tax revenue and a data center could really help with our expenses.

Ms. Rodriguez said that any data center plan that relies on the Mahomet aquifer would be DOA. She was thinking a 6-month check-in via a 6-month moratorium.

Ms. Jett added that the Task Force is meeting every three weeks and meetings are already scheduled. She likes the idea of a firm timeline. She would like to find a medium between six and 12 months.

Mr. Esry asked how many meetings/months it would take at ZBA. Mr. Hall said you cannot get this done in six months following our normal protocol. If you rush municipalities on this major text amendment, you might end up with protests. It would be a minimum of eight months.

The motion to amend the resolution from 12-months to 6-months died for lack of a second.

**MOTION** by Mr. Farney to amend section 5.5.2 Duration of the Moratorium, to expire in nine months or 270 days, after the effective date. Ms. Locke seconded the motion. She added that it is possible to get it done in nine months; it is not possible in six months.

Mr. Thorsland said he could be convinced to support changing it to nine months. Six months is just not enough time and would put a huge burden on John and the Zoning staff.

The **MOTION to AMEND** the original **MOTION** from 12 months to nine months passed by a four to one vote. For: Farney, Locke, Rodriguez and Thorsland. Against: Esry.

Mr. Farney stated we've heard from Prairie Rivers, Trades/Jobs but we haven't heard from the tech side. We need to be sure we hear from all sides. We also need to be mindful of what other counties are doing as it will impact us. Ms. Rodriguez said that we do not want to be pressured by what other counties are doing.

Ms. Jett said that the U of I Extension did a very balanced three-part webinar on this. They have asked them to present to the Task Force. She also feels we need to be engaging with ZBA sooner rather than later, so they are already informed when they receive this.

Mr. Esry reminded the committee that ZBA cannot do anything without a final product. We need to get copies of the proposed ordinance to them as soon as it comes out of ELUC.

Ms. Rodriguez said she would like to keep this item off the Consent Agenda.

Mr. Thorsland said there is a lot of pressure coming from a lot of different areas on this issue. It can bring a lot of jobs for a little bit and then a smaller core group of jobs. Ameren does not appear to be in a hurry on the electrical usage study. He feels we will all pay more in electric costs. Closed loop cooling systems still use a lot of water. Data Centers are subtractive on the grid. We need a good ordinance that will help protect consumers.

The **AMENDED MOTION** passed unanimously.

- C. **Zoning Case 202-AT-96.** *(DEPENDENT UPON FINAL ACTION AT THE 04/02/2026 ZBA MEETING)*  
Amend the Champaign County Zoning Ordinance to extend a temporary Safety moratorium on Carbon Sequestration Activity for six months.

This item was removed from the agenda as there was no ZBA meeting on April 2, 2026.

## **VIII. Other Business**

- A. Monthly Reports - None

There were no monthly reports.

## **IX. Chair's Report**

There was no chair's report.

## **X. Designation of Items to be Placed on the Consent Agenda**

Item VII. A. is to be placed on the Consent Agenda.

## **XI. Adjournment**

Chair Thorsland adjourned the meeting at 7:22 p.m.