



Dane County

Minutes - Draft

Advisory Committee on Data Centers

Consider:

Who benefits? Who is burdened?

Who does not have a voice at the table?

How can policymakers mitigate unintended consequences?

Tuesday, April 14, 2026

12:00 PM Hybrid Meeting, at Room 351 City County Building, 210
Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd

See below for additional instructions on how to attend the meeting and provide public testimony.

A. Call To Order

Others Present: Majid Allan, Jaron McCallum, Ben Kollenbriech, Josh Schroeder, Laura Hicklin, Cecely Castillo, Kathy Kuntz, Tara Geiman (WI Farmers Union), Michelle Ramirez-White (WI Farmers Union)

Chair Miles called the meeting to order at 12:05 PM.

Present: 12 - CYNTHIA RICHSON, DOUG YELK, BOB WIPPERFURTH, CINDI KELM-NELSON, CIARAN GALLAGHER, CAITLIN SHANAHAN, DON POSTLER, KERRY MARREN, PATRICK MILES, TERRY BRADSHAW, TONY ABATE and LAURA SCANDURRA

Excused: 1 - COREY SINGLETARY

B. Consideration of Minutes

1. [2025 MIN-689](#) MINUTES OF THE MARCH 10, 2026 ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON DATA CENTERS MEETING

Attachments: [2025 MIN-689.pdf](#)

A motion was made by POSTLER, seconded by RICHSON, that the Minutes be approved. The motion carried by a voice vote.

C. Action Items

None

D. Status on prior follow-up items and requests

Chair Miles noted that he'd like committee meetings to be structured in a way that contributes to the eventual development of findings and recommendations, and indicated that "status on prior follow up items and requests" will be a standard agenda item going forward. This will provide an opportunity for members to reflect on previous discussions and for staff report out on follow up items. Chair Miles also expressed interest in framing the committee's investigations to further provide a consistent structure, and offered several general questions to help prompt committee discussion and identify key themes or findings.

1. Legislative Update (status of data center - related legislation)

Staff noted that there was no action taken on any of the pending data center related bills prior to the close of the legislative session. The pending bill document was updated with a key indicating that companion senate and assembly bills are the same color. Staff noted other website updates have been delayed due to a major accessibility project taking precedence for IM staff. Members were encouraged to send staff any announcements or resources they'd like to be shared with the full committee.

Laura Scandurra noted that World Resources Institute hosted a webinar recently that may be of interest to committee members.

E. Presentations and Discussion

[2026
PRES-003](#)

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON DATA CENTERS - APRIL 14, 2026 -
PRESENTATION

Attachments: [2026 PRES-003.pdf](#)

1. Wisconsin Farmers Union Policy on Data Centers

Michelle Ramirez-White and Tara Greiman from the Wisconsin Farmers Union (WFU) reviewed the group's policy position on data centers and what led to its development and adoption. Ramirez-White noted that WFU is comprised of chapters that represent various parts of the state, with chapters contributing policy proposals for the entire organization to consider at its annual conference. The data center policy proposal was first recommended by the Columbia/Sauk county chapter. Ramirez-White reviewed the WFU adopted policy positions. Members asked a range of questions regarding WFU's policy opposing siting data centers on "prime farmland" and how WFU envisioned the use of community benefits agreements ("CBAs") to mitigate the impact of large infrastructure projects, benefit farmers, the local community, and environment. Discussion ensued. Greiman noted that WFU is conducting research to identify particularly good CBAs, including those done as part of renewable energy projects and compiled by UC-Berkeley. WFU hopes these might be adapted and prove useful to achieve their data center policy objectives. Greiman noted that CBAs present a number of issues since they can suggest "support" for projects before approvals have been granted. Other issues include transparency concerns and communities' ability to enforce CBAs given the power imbalance between developers and the small rural communities where facilities are being proposed and built. Additional discussion ensued about how CBAs might finance community priorities, but may also represent a fleeting source of "windfall" financing that can leave municipalities on the hook to continue funding over time. Other questions were raised about WFU's position on water quality and if the group had concerns over water quantity / stormwater and related offsite impacts that can result from large scale data center projects.

2. Dane County Land Use Context and Considerations

- a. Agricultural Indicators and Trends
- b. Environmental and Natural Resource Considerations

c. Maps and Spatial Analysis (land use, infrastructure, preservation areas)

Staff provided a brief overview of agricultural trends and farmland preservation planning in Dane County, noting that the county is a top agricultural producer in Wisconsin and that county and local plans have prioritized agricultural preservation since the late 1970s. Tony Abate shared that the average producer is 57.5 years old and that many are in the process of transitioning out of farming. Some cannot afford to sell their farms to their kids, while others have no heirs interested in taking over a farm operation. With so much wealth tied up in the land, the prospect of a developer offering to purchase land at a high per/acre value may be a welcome opportunity to enjoy a decent retirement.

The county context for environmental and natural resource protection and efficient use of infrastructure was reviewed, with staff noting that state, regional, and local plans and regulations are broadly intended to preserve ground and surface water resources and other environmentally sensitive areas, while also providing ample recreational opportunities for the county's growing population. The Capital Area Regional Planning Commission's *Regional Development Framework*, informed by local plans, calls for compact development that conserves farmland, water resources, natural areas, and fiscal resources.

3. Tools and mechanisms to promote land use compatibility and mitigate consequences/risks - or take advantage of opportunities - to promote farmland/natural resource preservation, and efficient use of infrastructure

a. Quick review of local govt tools/authorities

The Committee identified land use compatibility risks and opportunities that extend beyond those associated with farmland loss, resource strain, and other well-known issues. Concerns were expressed over data center development becoming a primary focus of economic development strategy, biodiversity not being included as major consideration, and what unintended or additional consequences could result from large rural areas that may be annexed to accommodate a hyperscale data center. Discussion ensued.

The committee further discussed the merits of local governments working together to retool their plans and codes to address data center development, conducting further geo-spatial analysis to identify where infrastructure exists that might attract data center development, and providing recommendations on how CBAs might be used in concert with other existing authorities.

Several requests were made to help members prepare and make the most of upcoming meetings, including the following: meeting materials be provided in advance of meetings, summary of pros/cons, key questions, or other issues to consider, and a schedule of topics to be considered at the regularly scheduled meetings.

F. Reports to Committee

G. New follow-up items, requests, and staff direction

H. Future Meeting Items and Dates

I. Public Comment on Items not on the Agenda

J. Such other Business as Allowed by Law

K. Other Business

I. Adjourn

A motion was made by WIPPERFURTH, seconded by RICHSON, that the be adjourned. The motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 1:34 PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Majid Allan, pending committee approval