

AI/DATA CENTER – MORATORIUM REQUEST

Commission Board Room
Dixie County Courthouse
214 NE Hwy 351, Cross City, FL 32628
August 06, 2026 – 4:00 PM

The Board meetings are audio recorded. The public can hear and participate in the meeting via conference call by dialing 1 469-551-3616 and enter code 908825494#

COMMISSIONERS

Mark Hatch, District 3, Chairman
Jody Stephenson, District 1
Daniel Wood, District 2
Jamie Storey, District 4, Vice Chairman
David Osteen, District 5

STAFF

John Jenkins, County Manager
Roy Bass, Assistant County Manager
Martha McCaskill, Administrative Asst/Grant Coordinator – Not present
Chana Watson, County Attorney
Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk of Court
Brenda Royal, Chief Financial Officer
Christie Zander, Deputy Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Hatch called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

Chairman Hatch led the Invocation and Commissioner Wood led the Pledge to the American Flag.

OPENING REMARKS

Chairman Mark Hatch welcomed everyone to the Data Center Workshop, noting that the purpose of the meeting was to receive informational input for the Board regarding data centers. He referenced a one-page handout prepared for attendees and apologized that it had not yet been distributed. Chairman Hatch informed the audience that the county attorney, Chana Watson (who had attended the Board meeting that morning), was in court in Alachua County and would join the workshop if she was able to return in time. He reiterated that the meeting had been called to order and the Pledge of Allegiance had been given, then recognized Mr. Andrew Quincosis to begin his presentation.

ANDREW QUINCOSIS - SPEAKER

Mr. Andrew Quincosis (also known as “King Cobra”) delivered an informational presentation regarding data centers and artificial intelligence (AI) and their potential impacts on Dixie County. He thanked the Board and attendees for holding the workshop and framed the discussion as involving not only technology and resources, but also broader social and spiritual concerns.

Mr. Quincosis provided an overview of data centers, explaining that they house servers for websites, email, social media, and, increasingly, AI applications. He stated that traditional data centers have expanded in size and intensity in recent years due to the growth of AI, which he described as moving from “base models” to specialized “agents” that can perform many white-collar tasks. He discussed industry efforts to reach Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) and Artificial Superintelligence (ASI) and suggested that major U.S.-based corporations and hardware manufacturers (including NVIDIA) are driving a global race for these capabilities.

He asserted that, as urban areas have become saturated, large “hyperscale” data centers are increasingly being directed toward rural communities with available land and water. He pointed to recent buildout of fiber networks, telecommunication towers, and power infrastructure in North Florida as indicators that rural areas, including Dixie County, could be targeted for such facilities in the near future.

Mr. Quincosis highlighted multiple categories of concern:

- **Energy and Grid Impacts:**
He cited studies indicating that a substantial portion of new electricity demand from data centers is met by fossil fuels and stated that federal plans include expanded nuclear generation (including small modular reactors) to support AI and data centers. He warned that large new loads could push rural electric grids from roughly 40% to 80% or more of capacity, increasing maintenance requirements, outage risks, and utility rates, even where developers fund initial infrastructure.
- **Air Pollution and Health:**
Referring to research by institutions such as Caltech and UC Riverside, he stated that emissions associated with data center electricity generation could contribute to additional premature deaths, particularly affecting low-income and rural residents.
- **Water Use and Wastewater / PFAS:**
Relying on data from the International Energy Agency (IEA), he described the water footprint of AI and data centers, distinguishing between direct cooling water and indirect water used to generate electricity. He emphasized that reported figures often omit the upstream water component. He also discussed the use of PFAS (“forever chemicals”) and other additives in cooling systems, asserted that these substances can enter wastewater streams, and cited litigation and enforcement actions involving PFAS and wastewater discharges in other states.
- **Noise, Infrasound, and EMF:**

Mr. Quincosis described continuous noise and low-frequency infrasound from data

centers and associated auxiliary generators, stating that such emissions may travel significant distances and be difficult to shield. He referenced studies indicating potential cardiovascular, neurological, and stress-related health effects. He further addressed electromagnetic fields (EMF) and “dirty power” from high-voltage transmission lines and harmonic distortion, associating these with increased health risks and electrical reliability issues.

- **Thermal Pollution and Fire Risk:**

He reported that data centers can create localized heat islands, raising ambient temperatures in surrounding areas, and noted the presence of large battery systems that may pose fire risks (e.g., lithium-ion thermal runaway). He expressed concern that Dixie County’s current fire and EMS capacity would require significant expansion and specialized training to address such incidents.

- **Supply Chain, E-Waste, and Nuclear Fuel:**

Mr. Quincosis discussed upstream environmental and human-rights impacts of mining critical minerals and producing components for servers, batteries, and cooling systems, as well as projected growth in electronic waste. He also addressed uranium mining and nuclear waste issues associated with potential nuclear expansion to power data centers.

- **Economic and Employment Impacts:**

Citing research by an economics professor at the University of Florida, he stated that data centers generate relatively few permanent local jobs (approximately one job per 12,000 sq. ft. of facility space, with the majority of employment limited to the construction phase), and that only a portion of construction spending remains in the local economy. He noted that the primary fiscal benefit is often tangible personal property tax on equipment, which depends on how local regulations are written, and cautioned against overstating job-creation benefits.

- **Telecommunications, 6G, and Privacy:**

Mr. Quincosis warned that AI and data center expansion are being used to justify broad buildout of telecommunications infrastructure and potential preemption of local permitting authorities. He referred to proposed federal legislation (identified as H.R. 2289) and discussed the future deployment of 6G technology, expressing concerns about enhanced sensing capabilities, digital identification, and surveillance.

- **Local Character, Property Rights, and Governance:**

He emphasized Dixie County’s identity as part of the Nature Coast, dependent on its rivers, springs, coastline, and agricultural lands. He expressed strong opposition to siting data centers in Dixie County, asserting that even a relatively small facility could “open the door” to larger developments and associated environmental, health, and social impacts. He urged the Board to use authority under Florida Senate Bill 484 to adopt strict local rules governing or prohibiting data centers and framed the issue as a matter of protecting community health, environmental resources, civil liberties, and traditional ways of life.

Mr. Quincosis closed by encouraging the Board and residents to remain vigilant, to prioritize long-term environmental and social considerations over short-term economic

incentives, and to exercise local control to prevent unwanted data center development in Dixie County.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Krista Campbell, resident of Old Town (approx. 30 years)

Ms. Campbell expressed strong concern and emotional distress about the issues raised. Her main points included:

- Cybersecurity and hacking: She referenced recent incidents involving hacking of water systems and noted some utilities are reverting to manual controls. She questioned whether similar manual “fallback” options would exist for data centers or whether their failure would be on such a large scale that communities would be “stuck.”
- Toxic waste and end-of-life issues: She compared data center hardware to solar panels and wind turbines, asking where obsolete and broken materials from large data centers would ultimately be disposed of and whether they would create toxic waste problems.
- Alternative siting concepts: She asked whether it would be less harmful to build such facilities in remote locations (e.g., undersea structures or in space) rather than in places like Dixie County.
- Use of AI by individuals: She described her own use of AI (e.g., interacting with Meta, using online tools and DIY videos to repair items) and questioned whether that behavior contributes to the problem, particularly with respect to replacing traditional blue-collar services. She wondered whether, as a user, she is part of a “minimal” group or part of the larger trend fueling AI expansion.

Jerry Spire, resident (approx. 5–6 years)

Mr. Spire offered a cautionary perspective based on his experience in a business that handled heavy chemicals:

- He stated that even after selling his business, he remains personally responsible for contamination at the former site for many years, and his children may also share some responsibility due to having worked there.
- He described a situation where a small, family-run operation he had maintained was purchased by a corporation. After changes in management and procedures, a failure to properly shut down equipment resulted in approximately 600 gallons of glycol and water being discharged into a neighboring pond, killing aquatic life.
- He cited this as an example of how corporate ownership and operational changes can lead to serious environmental incidents, even where systems were previously well maintained.

Speaker: Chris McKenzie, Rural Fiber Broadband Strategies (speaking in an individual capacity)

Mr. McKenzie addressed two main topics:

Fiber Network and Data Center Misconceptions

- He clarified that he was not representing CFEC/CFEC Fiber in an official capacity.

- He stated that public claims suggesting CFEC’s fiber buildout was designed to support data centers are incorrect, explaining that:
 - Data centers require extremely high reliability and low latency (around 3 milliseconds).
 - Approximately 90% of CFEC’s fiber is aerial, which is prone to outages from utility pole impacts several times per week.
 - Due to these reliability issues, such a network is not suitable as primary connectivity for hyperscale data centers.

Position on AI and Data Centers / Planning Approach

- Mr. McKenzie asked whether Mr. Quincosis was against AI, data centers, or both, and noted that AI is already present and “not going away.”
- He cautioned that AI and data centers will continue to be built somewhere, generating revenue, and observed that Dixie County has limited financial resources.
- He suggested that an absolute “no data centers” stance could harm the county’s tax base and economic prospects.
- As an alternative to outright prohibition, he recommended:
 - Creating a defined “opportunity zone” in an isolated area of the county (e.g., northern portions or areas between Cross City and Horseshoe Beach) where data centers could be more appropriately sited.
 - Updating Land Development Regulations (LDRs) to specify where such facilities are permitted and under what conditions.
- Chairman Hatch interjected to clarify:
 - The current LDRs are fixed until October 27 of the following year, except for limited amendment processes.
 - As of the workshop date, no data center proposals had been formally submitted to Dixie County and no NDAs with commissioners were known.
 - He emphasized the desire to keep data centers as a “front burner” issue rather than passing a moratorium that might cause it to be set aside.

Mr. McKenzie further cautioned that if the county attempts to broadly ban data centers, it might inadvertently prohibit smaller facilities or network huts already in use (e.g., for fiber connectivity). He urged a comprehensive and balanced regulatory approach.

4. Board Discussion – Economic and Regulatory Considerations

Participants: Chairman Mark Hatch; Commissioner Jody Stephenson; other commissioners

Key points from the Board discussion included:

- Chairman Hatch reiterated:
 - The Board’s commitment to transparency and due diligence on all economic proposals, including data centers.
 - The need to evaluate every potential project for both benefits and harms, rather than dismissing categories out of hand.
 - Concern that moratoria can effectively place an issue “on the back burner,” potentially leading to inattention until deadlines or external pressure arise.
- Commissioners acknowledged:

- The county's need for additional revenue to support services (e.g., fire trucks, law enforcement, recreational facilities) without repeatedly raising property taxes.
- The importance of avoiding projects that are ultimately harmful to residents or the environment.
- The tension between protecting residents from negative impacts and respecting private property rights, particularly when a landowner seeks to sell land for industrial use.
- It was noted that:
 - The Board has previously opposed other environmentally concerning proposals (e.g., specific water transfers involving the Suwannee River) and successfully fought them.
 - Any large data center proposal would have to go through the established planning and public hearing process, making it difficult to "sneak" such a facility into the county.

5. Next Steps – LPA Workshop Concept

During this period, it was generally agreed that:

- The Local Planning Agency (LPA) should be asked to hold a dedicated workshop regarding data centers, so that:
 - Relevant technical and regulatory issues can be studied in detail.
 - Possible LDR amendments and siting criteria (including opportunity zones) can be developed in advance of any applications.

Action (reiterated): Chairman Hatch to speak with Building and Zoning Official Leon Wright who is also the LPA director, regarding scheduling an LPA workshop focused on data center policy.

Krista Campbell, Old Town (Second comment)

Ms. Campbell returned to the podium to ask why data center development tends to be on such a large scale, given local concerns about:

- Water scarcity, including declining well levels and drought conditions.
- Potential for large facilities to further deplete local water resources, including the Suwannee River and the aquifer.

She questioned why, if technology is advancing rapidly, projects must be so "grandiose" instead of smaller or more distributed and reiterated that she does not intend to leave Dixie County even if large-scale facilities threaten local resources.

Brenda Rodriquez, Horseshoe Beach

Ms. Rodriquez raised concerns specific to coastal and flood-prone areas:

- She asked how far inland the water came during the last hurricane and noted that a storm of similar or greater strength could inundate any coastal-area industrial facilities.
- She warned that, if a data center were located in or near areas subject to storm surge, a hurricane could spread contaminants, creating a "soup" of pollution.
- She also emphasized Dixie County's branding as part of the Nature Coast, stating that the county should prioritize:

- Parks
- Public access (e.g., marina/boat ramps)
- Protection of natural resources
rather than large industrial uses such as data centers.

Ms. Rodriguez asked for the views of commission candidates but was advised not to turn the discussion into an election forum.

Holly Anderson

Ms. Anderson, noting that her family has longstanding roots in Dixie County, asked several questions:

- Number of data/AI centers in Florida:
She referenced information indicating there are already more than 120 such centers statewide, with many in Miami-Dade County, and asked:
 - How many additional centers are planned or under construction in Florida.
- Cumulative impact on water and geology:
She warned that widespread data center development across Florida could:
 - Further deplete the aquifer.
 - Increase the risk of sinkholes, based on her knowledge of wells and sinkhole formation.
- Long-term viability of data centers:
Ms. Anderson stated she had seen reports suggesting that large data centers may be technologically obsolete in a few years as new storage approaches emerge. She questioned:
 - What will happen to large buildings and “gazillions” of computers once they are no longer needed.
 - Where this obsolete equipment will be disposed of or stored.

Mr. Quincosis responded briefly that, even if technology changes, existing sites could be gutted and reconfigured, but many materials cannot be recycled and will remain a waste problem.

Todd Louchins, Cross City

Mr. Louchins referenced a recent report testing 16 AI models, stating that:

- Each of the models allegedly “went rogue” in some respect.
- He shared concern about what may occur in “a year or two” if systems more intelligent than humans are widely deployed and misbehave.
- He characterized AI as a serious emerging risk, stating “the devil’s here.”

Phyllis Anderson Enoch

Ms. Enoch, who has lived both in Dixie County and California, addressed tax incentives and fiscal impacts:

- She cited the 2017 Florida legislation that created a sales and use tax exemption for qualified data centers, noting that:
 - These exemptions can apply to construction materials, computer equipment, servers, software, and electricity.

- The purpose is to attract data center investment, but it also reduces state sales tax revenues.
- She noted that while tangible personal property taxes on data center equipment can generate revenue for local governments, other tax streams may be diminished or negotiated through incentives.
- Chairman Hatch responded that:
 - Such incentives at the local level (e.g., property tax abatements) would still require a vote of the Board and are not automatic.
 - Any local tax concessions would need to be carefully evaluated.

Ms. Enoch reiterated that, beyond fiscal considerations, she shares concerns about environmental impacts, especially on the river and local water resources.

Cat Cheever, Old Town

Ms. Cheever, a Florida native who has relocated progressively toward more rural areas, expressed:

- Appreciation for Dixie County's quiet, natural character and concern about losing it.
- Strong worry about eminent domain, citing experiences near The Villages and other developments where small property owners faced condemnation pressures.
- She asked whether, even if the county voted against data centers, the federal government could still force a project and take private property.

Chairman Hatch responded:

- He acknowledged federal eminent domain powers exist in some contexts but stated that:
 - The Board would vigorously oppose any attempt to condemn local homes or properties for such a project.
 - Property rights are a major concern, and the Board has historically been cautious about actions that could diminish neighboring property values or rights.
- He emphasized that any significant project must go through public processes (applications, advertising, LPA review, and Board hearings), and there is no way to "sneak" a major facility into the county.

Ms. Cheever also asked about how far the impacts of a data center (water draw, EMF, pollutants) could extend and whether they might affect the entire state or region through the shared aquifer and coast.

Karen VanAernam (Economic Development; long-time resident)

Mrs. VanAernam spoke both as a life-long resident and in her role working with economic development efforts for the county. Her main points:

- Trust and local leadership:
 - She emphasized that the current Board includes commissioners who have spent most or all of their lives in Dixie County and care deeply about:
 - The Suwannee River
 - The Gulf, springs, and natural resources
 - The long-term wellbeing of residents.

- She stated that they are not “money-hungry” or seeking a data center at any cost and that they have resisted underpricing local amenities (e.g., county camping fees) to protect public access while still generating necessary revenue.
- Economic reality:
 - She stressed that Dixie County is “open for business” and needs industry and commercial activity to:
 - Support public services
 - Provide employment
 - Reduce pressure for repeated property tax increases.
 - She cautioned that much of the current debate is based on “what ifs” and speculation, and that real proposals would need to be evaluated on their concrete terms.
- Process and vigilance:
 - She agreed that the county must be careful and informed about any data center proposal but urged residents to:
 - Trust the combination of local authority, public process, and community engagement.
 - Avoid being governed purely by fear, citing scripture that “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind.”
 - She stated that no one is “coming to take our property” without a fight and that the Board and staff intend to remain vigilant while also seeking responsible economic opportunities.

Commissioner Stephenson:

- Reiterated his opposition to pollution and his personal experience with septic and wastewater operations, including installing monitoring wells to track nitrogen and contaminants moving toward the Suwannee River.
- Suggested that other sources, such as agricultural chemicals (e.g., Roundup) and industrial discharges (e.g., from mills using long outfall pipes into the Gulf), are already contributing significantly to:
 - Algae blooms
 - Seagrass die-offs
 - Water quality issues.
- Emphasized that any new industrial use, including data centers, must be evaluated in the context of all existing cumulative impacts and strictly regulated to avoid further harm.

Commissioner Storey:

- Briefly commented on water as a well driller with decades of experience, noting that:
- The county’s water resources are under stress and need careful management.
- Informed attendees that a recycling facility is in development and should be operational within approximately a year, which:
 - Is intended to improve solid waste management.

- May help reduce certain environmental pressures and costs for the county.

Closing Remarks and Adjournment

Chairman Hatch concluded by:

- Thanking Mr. Quincoces, Mrs. VanAernam, and all speakers for their input and respectful dialogue.
- Reiterating the Board's commitment to:
 - Transparency
 - Public engagement
 - Protecting Dixie County's natural resources while also addressing economic needs.
- Expressing willingness to hold additional workshops in the future as more information becomes available.
- A motion to adjourn was made and seconded, and the workshop was adjourned following a voice vote in favor.

ADJOURN

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved, meeting adjourned.

PLEASE BE ADVISED *that if a person decides to appeal any decision made by the Board with respect to any matter considered at such meeting or hearings, he/ she will need a record of the proceedings, and for such purpose, he/ she will need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.*

"Persons with disabilities requesting reasonable accommodations to participate in this proceeding should contact (352) 486-4931 (Voice & TDD) or via Florida Relay Service at (800) 955-8771."

The Board meets the first Thursday of each month at 10:00 AM and the third Thursday of each month at 6:00 PM. Individuals that would like to be placed on the agenda should call Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk of Court, by 4:00 PM on the Friday Preceding the Board meeting, at (352) 498-1200.