
Planning and Zoning Commission

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December 22, 2025, Planning and Zoning Commission Minutes

Voting Board Members Present: Steve Coleman (Chair), James Freeman, Noah Harbuck, Martin Pennington, Kathy Rowland, and Hal Clarke

Voting Board Members Not Present: Michael Brewster

Staff Present: Dean Nelson, Will Campbell, Rachel Floyd, and Brian Causey.

- I. **Call to Order:** Steve Coleman called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.
- II. **Approval of Agenda:** Hal Clarke motioned to approve the agenda, seconded by Noah Harbuck. The motion carried unanimously (6-0).
- III. **Approval of Minutes:**
 - a) James Freeman motioned to approve the November 24, 2025, meeting minutes. Noah Harbuck seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved (6-0).
- IV. **Tabled Business:**
 - a) **Tabled agenda item from August 25, September 22, and October 27, and November 24, 2025, meetings – Preliminary Plat Review for Edgar Hughston Builders, LLC.**

Mr. Harbuck motioned to table the item until the next meeting, seconded by Martin Pennington. The motion carried unanimously. (6-0)

V. **Planning and Zoning:**

Community Development Director Dean Nelson presented the procedures for a public hearing. Mr. Coleman stated that the public hearings will be held concurrently.

- a) Public Hearing to consider a petition by H&H Timberlands, LLC, for the rezoning of parcels 026 020 and 015 005 from Residential (R-1) to

Agricultural/Rural (AGR), parcel 015 005A from Planned Unit Development (PUD) to Agricultural/Rural (AGR), and parcel 015 005B from Highway Business (HB) to Agricultural/Rural (AGR).

- b) Public Hearing to consider a petition by H&H Timberlands, LLC, for the conditional use of parcels 015 005E, 015 005D, 015 005C, 015 005H, 015 005G, 015 005F, 015 005K, 015 005J, 027 018B, 027 018, 028 006A, 028 010, 027 025, 027 014A, 028 012, and parcels 026 020, 015 005, 015 005A, and 015 005B contingent upon rezoning, totaling approximately 1,632 acres for the purpose of Data Center/Utility Substation.

Chairman Steve Coleman opened the public hearing at 5:08 p.m. Mr. Nelson provided background on both the rezoning and the conditional use requests, stating that the conditional use is contingent upon the recommendation and final approval of the rezoning. Mr. Nelson also explained the Planning and Zoning Commission is a review and recommendation board with City Council having the final approval. Mr. Nelson presented materials, including the site plan, parcel surveys, and zoning maps, then discussed the analysis requirements for the standards for review for rezoning and conditional use applications.

Mr. Coleman inquired who was present to speak in favor of and in opposition to the application, and informed both sides that they would be allowed 15 minutes.

Tye Hanna of H&H Timberlands, LLC. (applicant) came forward to present the proposed project. He began with the history of the property and project, stating that H&H Timberlands began purchasing the subject property in 2004, the property was annexed into the City of Forsyth in 2020, and in December of 2021, H&H began negotiations to run a sewer line to the property at the expense of H&H, which has spent around \$500,000 so far as part of the sewer agreement. He also stated that H&H has been transparent about their intention to develop the property.

Next, Mr. Hanna addressed the reasons the subject property is a good candidate for a technology campus. He stated three main criteria: (1) Proximity to an Interstate, (2) Access to sewer and a power infrastructure, (3) Access to municipal water. Mr. Hanna then stated that the data center project would not be like Henry County's projects, would not significantly increase traffic, and would not burden Monroe County's school system. Next, Mr. Hanna stated that when Trammell Crow Company visited the site, they proposed purchasing all 1,632 acres to build a data center campus.

Mr. Hanna then addressed the expected economic impact of the proposed project. He stated that the project is expected to provide around \$6 million in city, county, and school taxes (property and sales) after the first center is built. Mr. Hanna also stated projections of around \$20 million in taxes a year for the City of Forsyth at buildout, not including utility profits, and around \$180 million in County and school taxes. Mr. Hanna then addressed utilities. He stated that the City of Forsyth is the planned provider for water and sewer, and MEAG for electrical.

Mr. Drew Fredrick, an engineer for Trammell Crow, continued the applicant presentation. He provided additional details about the development company, site plan, natural buffers, and buildings. He also stated that no water and electric commitments had been solidified, and the actual project size will be based on the utility commitments that can be offered, which will likely be smaller than the subject proposal. He also stated that they want to work with what the city and MEAG are able to provide.

Chairman Coleman offered 5 minutes of additional time to the applicant and the opposition.

Mr. Hanna resumed the presentation by addressing the feedback he has received from nearby property owners. He stated the developer's intention to create a community advisory board, potentially to include representatives selected by the County Commissioners, City Council, and local HOA's, encompassing 12-14 members that would meet monthly during preconstruction. He suggested the community advisory board be a condition of project approval. Mr. Hanna stated that should the project move forward, he would expect sewer, water, and electrical conversations to take 6 – 9 months, and that it would likely take 60 – 90 days to establish the community advisory board. The board would serve to review the final site plan and construction plans and make recommendations, as well as to monitor the end user. Mr. Hanna ended his presentation.

Mr. Coleman stated that the applicant finished with 2 and a half minutes remaining of the allowed 20 minutes and called on the first speaker in opposition to the applications.

Fletcher Sams, 127 F Street, Brunswick, Georgia, the Executive Director at Altamaha Riverkeeper, came forward to voice concerns that the board does not have the appropriate information to make an informed decision. He cited Sec. 1.3 b, c, j, and k of the Forsyth Zoning Ordinances to relay the purposes and responsibilities of the Planning and Zoning Commission. Mr. Sams then stated that fish consumption advisories will continue to be issued for all surrounding bodies of water and there will be reductions in air qualities and pollution controls with data centers extending the life of Plant Scherer. He also stated that unknown air pollution will be generated by the data center's backup generators, the City

does not have enough information regarding water consumption to create a planned approach for infrastructure, and that another 25 data centers are being planned in the upper Ocmulgee all competing for the same resources. Mr. Sams applauded the city for implementing a data center ordinance and stated that it was copied from the Urban Land Institutes Local Guidelines for Data Center Development, and suggested the city incorporate the other suggested protections found within the report. Mr. Sams asked that the decision be postponed until the board is properly informed.

Josh Pruitt, 516 Brushy Creek Circle, referenced the 2022 Comprehensive Plan, stating he would like to remind all the officials that signed the plan that the technology campus contradicts the plan's objectives to support growth for all but the largest industrial projects, cultivate a small-town feel, and reserve the county's land use for low impact and residential developments. In closing, Mr. Pruitt asked the Planning and Zoning Board to honor the plan signed by Mayor Wilson and Mayor Pro Tem Dodd and vote against the technology campus.

Mr. Coleman stated that the opposition has 13 minutes remaining.

Linda Bell, 390 Preakness Way, a realtor and resident of Riata, stated she has done research on the effects of data centers on homeowners. Ms. Bell stated that real estate values differ greatly from area to area with or without data centers, and due to the data center's close proximity to several higher price point communities she is concerned with potential external obsolescence of the use. She also stated that based on her research, residents close to data centers experience higher power bills, issues with wells, and in some cases, these residents cannot meet basic appraisal requirements in order to sell their homes. Ms. Bell stated that the property is located outside of city limits and would affect Monroe County residents.

Gary Bell, 273 Orchard Ridge Drive, stated he has 11 acres with the back of his property bordering Smith Road, that he spoke to both the county and the city at the time the subject property was annexed. He voiced support for the idea of a community advisory board for any project on the property and stated that he felt his voice and the voices of others in his area were not heard when the property was annexed. He asked that the process be slowed down to ensure things are done correctly, mentioning the buffers and sound barriers. He also asked that the board look at areas that have data centers to see what they might have done differently. In closing, Mr. Bell reiterated that a community advisory panel is crucial.

Mr. Coleman stated that those in opposition to the applications have approximately 7 minutes remaining.

Jannifer Campbell, 890 Smith Road, stated that her home is about 1,000 feet from some of the subject parcels. She offered her appreciation to Mr. Hanna for being accessible and answering her questions. Ms. Campbell stated that 25 percent of 1,600 acres makes it seem like the building coverage will be minimal, but it's comparable to about 7 Lennox Square Malls spread across the property. She stated that as a nurse practitioner, she has seen clusters of environmentally induced cancers in pediatric patients from Juliette and South Georgia, and that part of Planning and Zoning's role is to protect public health and safety and keep hazardous industrial activities away from homes and schools. She stated other responsibilities of the Planning and Zoning Board, and cautioned that those responsibilities are at risk aside from economic development. Ms. Campbell described the radon issue she and her neighbors experience with their wells, and how excavating and blasting will disturb the granite and release more radon into the soil which could eventually overload the radon filtration system in her home. Ms. Campbell provided information about radon and its risks, including cancers, thyroid issues, and dementia. She asked that everyone work together to minimize the risks involved with the proposed project.

Bo Drinkard, 431 Preakness Way, commended Mr. Hanna's idea for a community advisory board, but stated he thinks it's too late, and that the people that live around the property have had no input. He asked that the Planning and Zoning Commission pause this project and go ahead and create the community council, referencing section 31.9.

Kristen Griffin, 882 Smith Road, stated she lives directly across the street from the proposed site, and this project would fundamentally change the character of Smith Road. Ms. Griffin's main concerns include constant noise and light pollution, the environment and Smith Road's infrastructure, and the well issues that could arise from the disruption of the water table.

Mr. Coleman requested the applicant use no more than 10 minutes for his rebuttal.

Mr. Hanna first addressed the comprehensive plan, stating the plan recommends a mixture of uses, primarily residential and commercial, but the comprehensive plan later states industrial and high intensity commercial uses are suitable along I-75. Mr. Hanna also stated that Data Centers fall into a category of their own, making it a hybrid approach to industrial and heavy commercial. He also stated they filed a DRI and are waiting to receive the results.

Mr. Hanna then addressed utilities. He stated they will ask the city what it is comfortable providing, and then if more is required, the project may look to outside sources. He stated that municipalities are responsible for policing their own resources.

Next, Mr. Hanna discussed pre-blasting surveys. He also stated that after the highly-regulated blasting is completed, a post blasting survey will be conducted to discover any issues, and any issues that arise from the blasting will be mitigated and taken care of.

Mr. Hanna continued, explaining the project will pay for all the necessary upgrades, and this will help improve services for more than just the subject property.

Mr. Coleman closed the public hearing at 6:32 p.m.

Mr. Coleman asked the Planning and Zoning Board if they had any more questions for the applicants.

Mr. Clarke asked whether a noise study had been completed and how the results compared to I-75. Mr. Cooksey answered they are in the process of completing one and they will adhere to the noise ordinances in place. The cooling/water treatment will likely be a closed loop system with glycol used to remove residue. The most water will be consumed from the system at initial stages of filling the system and it will go through a water softening process at that time.

Mr. Clarke asked for clarification on taxes and funding. The applicant was unsure about a sales tax on data, but stated they expected the end users or tenants to be Fortune 50 companies, like Google or Microsoft. They clarified that no tax breaks are requested for the project.

Mr. Coleman inquired what the minimum build would be. Mr. Fredrick responded that an analysis has not been completed to determine what minimum build would justify purchasing the 1,600 acres, and the requirements would be end-user related. He also stated that some of this information would be acquired after the approval of rezoning, but if the utilities necessary could not be acquired, then the project would not move forward. Mr. Hanna added that in this case, what would remain is 1,630 acres of agricultural land, and this would limit what can be placed on the property.

Mr. Harbuck asked about the study that was conducted on power. Mr. Cooksey stated that MEAG has completed a system impact study and facility study with findings that around half of the site could be supported by the current infrastructure.

Mr. Clarke asked if they would use a different electric provider. Mr. Cooksey responded that they plan to go through the City of Forsyth and MEAG, and this would only change if MEAG couldn't support the project. Mr. Cooksey also stated that MEAG would protect participant cities residential customer rates.

Mr. Clarke asked if the project would use Georgia Power if MEAG could not support the site. Mr. Cooksey responded that the site does fall within Georgia Power's electrical service territory. Mr. Clarke inquired if they would consider other sources like natural gas. Mr. Cooksey answered that it is an option, but they would like to stay connected to the grid. Mr. Harbuck inquired about the water supply. Mr. Fredrick stated that in the DRI they estimated as much as 1.5 million gallons a day being used, and the city has not perceived that as a problem with the proper upgrades. He continued, stating more studies need to be completed, but the project would pay for the necessary improvements and expansions.

Mr. Clarke asked how long the centers would last. Mr. Fredrick stated he has never seen one be closed, and that the centers could be repurposed. Mr. Cooksey stated 50 or more years, and that servers are refreshed, but the shell of the building will be relevant for a long time.

Ms. Rowland asked if a 500-foot buffer would be feasible on the Smith Road side of the project. Mr. Fredrick responded that a 500-foot buffer would have economic impacts. Mr. Hanna stated that most residents would be at least 700 feet from the property lines.

Ms. Rowland asked if road improvements have been discussed with the county. Mr. Hanna replied that road improvement conversations have not been had with the county yet, but that the project would cover the costs. Mr. Fredrick stated they are waiting to receive the DRI results before initiating those conversations.

Mr. Harbuck motioned to recommend approval of the petitioner's request to rezone parcels 026 020, 015 005, 015 005A, and 015 005B to Agricultural/Rural (AGR). Ms. Rowland seconded the motion. The motion carried. (5-0-1, with Mr. Coleman abstaining)

Ms. Rowland motioned to table the Planning and Zoning Commissions decision regarding the conditional use application until the Final DRI Report is received and reviewed by the Board. Mr. Clarke seconded the motion. Following discussion of when the Planning and Zoning Board must provide their report to City Council, Ms. Rowland amended her motion to include a special called meeting on January 14, 2026, at 5:00 p.m., during which the Board will discuss the DRI and vote on their recommendation. Mr. Clarke seconded Ms. Rowland's amendment. The motion passed. (4-1-1, with Mr. Coleman abstaining)

VI. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 6:47 p.m.