

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of August 05, 2025

Regular Meeting

6:00 p.m.

Location change: Monroe County Fine Arts Center

Meeting was delayed 15 minutes to allow for the citizens to come in.

Present:

Alan Gibbs, Chairman

John Ambrose, Vice-Chairman

Lamarcus Davis, District 1

Eddie Rowland, District 2

Al Turner, District 4

Staff:

Jim Hedges, County Manager

Amy Cowan, County Attorney

Janet Abbott, County Clerk

Richard Dumas, Public Information Officer

Kelsey Fortner, Community Development Manager

Welcome

Chairman Gibbs welcomed everyone in attendance.

Prayer

Commissioner Davis gave the invocation.

Pledge

Chairman Gibbs led the Pledge.

Roll Call

County Clerk Janet Abbott called roll.

Call to Order

Chairman Gibbs called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

New Business

Approve Agenda

Chairman Gibbs presented the agenda for approval with the removal of item C Strickland Woods Subdivision Curb-Cut Amendment.

Commissioner Davis motioned to approve the agenda with said changes.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Approve Minutes-July 15, 2025

Chairman Gibbs presented the minutes of the July 15, 2025, Regular meeting for approval.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve with the normal 30 days for changes.

Commissioner Turner seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

P & Z Hearing-Highway 41 South-Rezoning

Public Hearing – Rezoning Request for Data Center (Hwy 41 South)

At 6:18 p.m., Commissioner Ambrose motioned to enter a public hearing for a rezoning request on Hwy 41 South; seconded by Commissioner Davis, motion carried 5-0.

Rezoning Application

- **From:** R-1 Residential
- **To:** C-1 Commercial
- **Parcels:** 9 total (Map/Parcels: 092 006A, 093 002A, 093 002B, 093 011D, 093 011C, 093 040, 093 002, 092 007A, 093 002C)
- **Acreage:** 970 acres total (906 acres to C-1; 70 acres to remain R-1)
- **Applicants/Owners:** Otis Ingram & Henry Davis Properties

Project Overview

- **Name:** Bolingbroke Technology Center
- **Location:** West of I-475 & US Hwy 41 interchange, south side of US Hwy 41
- **Completion Target:** 2034
- **Access:** One primary access on US-41; gated emergency access on Estes Road
- **Traffic Study:** All intersections projected to operate at acceptable service levels; turn lanes recommended at US-41 & Site Access (westbound left-turn lane: 310 ft storage, 100 ft taper)

- **Environmental:** U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to be contacted for wetlands; species potentially affected include tricolored bat, whooping crane, monarch butterfly, fringed campion, Ocmulgee skullcap, relict trillium
- **Site Design:** 300' buffer (exceeds 100' requirement); 1,900' set back from road; downward-facing lighting
- **Noise Levels (dB):** 55 (east), 42 (southeast), 42–40 (south), 40–35–42 (southwest/west), 50–80 (Hwy 41)

Opposition Concerns

- Significant increase in water and electricity demand
- Noise impacts
- Strong opposition from nearby residents

Public Feedback

- Letters, emails, and presentations received both in support and opposition; all forwarded to Planning & Zoning Board and Board of Commissioners
- **P&Z Board Recommendation:** Denial

Applicant Statement (Otis Ingram)

- Not the developer; property would be sold for data center use
- Believes this is the only Monroe County site large enough for such a facility
- County's industrial park lacks adequate acreage
- States this proposal is similar to the recently approved Rumble Road data center.
- Commissioner Ambrose motioned to enter a public hearing at 6:18 p.m. for a rezoning request located on Hwy 41 South for a Data Center.

Applicant's Presentation:

- **Otis Ingram**, Applicant spoke on behalf of the application stating he is not the one developing the data center. Mr. Ingram stated the property would be sold for the purpose of a data center. Mr. Ingram stated the 900-acre site is the only one in Monroe County appropriate for a data center, stating the county's industrial park does not have a sufficient tract in size to

accommodate a data center. Mr. Ingram stated the recently approved data center on Rumble Road is no different than this proposal.

Mr. Ingram stated the following:

- Data center would create about 200-250 high paying jobs.
 - He would not be seeking any tax abatements.
 - The 903 acres meets the 900-acre requirement.
 - The data center includes a closed loop cooling system therefore it has low impact on the county's water system,
 - designed to be discreet.
 - This is smart growth due to its being low impact and high revenue.
- **Andy Camp**, T & H Civil Engineering – Stated that sound levels from the project would be quieter than nearby quarries, the interstate, and surrounding uses. Described a closed-loop cooling system that is more efficient than older systems; water supply to be paid for by the developer. Noted that EMC will provide power via a new substation built for the data center. Projected traffic would be less than that of an office complex. Lighting will comply with UDO requirements, with downward fixtures preventing light from reaching nearby properties. Stormwater will be retained on-site in compliance with state law and UDO requirements.
 - **Attorney Bill Larson** with Martin Snow, LLP, spoke on behalf of the applicant – Noted that only UDO provisions apply; property could be rezoned conditionally to allow one permitted use. Applicant consents to conditions limiting use to a data center. No buildings housing servers would be within one-third mile of Hwy 41. A 300-foot buffer will be placed along the western and southern property lines beginning at Wadley Road. Stated that denial would be arbitrary, capricious, unreasonable, and unconstitutional, violating applicant's due process rights; requested recognition of applicant's property rights.
 - **John Ricketson**, Riverside Plantation resident-spoke in favor.

Public Opposition:

- Greg Phillips – Representative for the group; requested denial stating he has been vocal and unapologetic of the project since he first learned about it. Mr. Phillips stated the data center will bring unwanted traffic and noise to Bolingbroke. Mr. Phillips stated the citizens in attendance

represent every corner of Monroe County and the Board has a countywide responsibility to the will of the county's citizens even if they don't represent Bolingbroke.

- Attorney Michael Hill – Representative for a large group of the opposition; stated the applicant's presentation was inaccurate, project would require high electricity use and transmission lines and would set zoning precedent; cited case law supporting Board's right to deny.
- Mark Beauch (Jenkins Road) – Requested denial.
- Jeff Ruggieri – Opposed.
- Fletcher Sams, Executive Director, Altamaha Riverkeeper – Opposed.
- Jonathan Waters – Representing Smith family; stated project is hypothetical; noted Macon Water had issued a press release stating nothing had been presented; refuted applicant attorney's statements.
- Margo Kenirey (379 Wadley Road) – Opposed due to potential low-frequency noise.
- Laurie Bloodworth (Estes Road) – Opposed.
- Garrett Bloodworth (10312 Estes Road) – Opposed.

Commissioner Ambrose asked Chairman Gibbs to allow more time for the opposition to speak due to the amount of people in attendance.

Chairman Gibbs stated there are 900 people in the room and there is no chance that everyone in the room could be heard and both sides had been given equal amounts of time to speak.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to close the public hearing at 7:25 p.m.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Board Action

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to go along with the Planning and Zonings recommendation to deny the application, seconded by Chairman Gibbs.

Commissioner Davis addressed the public regarding accusations being made against him. Commissioner Davis stated it is hurtful that his name and family's name was defamed on social media by claims that he had insider trading, putting money in his pocket and having contact with potential data center owners after it was reported in the Monroe County Reporter that he visited several data centers in Virginia.

Commissioner Davis stated the trip was for research purposes due to recent request for data centers in the county. Commissioner Davis stated his phone is always on for citizens to speak with him.

Commissioner Ambrose stated Commissioner Davis works hard for the community stating he assisted in securing funds for Old Brent Road bridge repairs, works continuously for improvements at the recreation department and helped secure a \$5 million grant from the State of Georgia for the resurfacing of Rumble Road. Commissioner Ambrose thanked everyone for coming out, stating this is the biggest crowd he has ever seen.

Commissioner Rowland appealed to the public to maintain respect for each other even when you disagree. Commissioner Rowland stated the Board of Commissioners have worked really hard to make sure this county stays on top.

Commissioner Turner thanked participants and acknowledged this has been a difficult issue.

Chairman Gibbs stated seeing so many citizens engaging in the political process is what makes Monroe County great.

Vote: Motion to deny carried 5–0.

P & Z Hearing-Brownlee Road-Variance

Commissioner Davis motioned to enter a public hearing at 7:42 p.m. for a variance located on Brownlee Road.

Commissioner Ambrose seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Community Development Manager Kelsey Fortner presented a variance application located at 3663 Brownlee Road, map/parcel 036 023B for a road frontage shortage and a private road to divide property after the death of the original property owner. The property owner/applicant is Lavenia Parr. The new property owner has been asked to divide property amongst family members. 11.5-acres is requested to be divided as the following: 4.5-acres, 4-acres and 3-acres with an easement of 60' leading to the 3 and 4-acre tracts. The road frontage is lacking for three tracts which will require a variance.

Mrs. Fortner stated the tracts are all withing the minimum requirements for A-R except for the road frontage.

Mrs. Fortner stated the Community Development Department has received no opposition to the request. The Planning and Zoning Board recommended approval with the condition the plat would state that this road will not be a county-maintained road and will remain private and the property owners involved will always have access and rights to the road.

Levenia Parr spoke on behalf of the application.

There was no opposition present.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to come out of the public hearing at 7:47 p.m.

Commissioner Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Commissioner Gibbs motioned to approve with a 60 ft right of way easement with the Planning and Zoning recommended condition that the plat would state this road will not be a county-maintained road and will remain private and the property owners involved will always have access and rights to the road.

Commissioner Ambrose seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

P & Z Hearing-Popes Ferry Lane-Rezoning/Variance

Commissioner Davis motioned to enter a public hearing at 7:48 p.m. for a rezoning/variance application located at 43 Popes Ferry Lane.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Community Development Manager Kelsey Fortner presented a rezoning/variance application located at 43 Popes Ferry Lane, map/parcel 111 038. The property owner/applicant is Don Dupree. Mrs. Fortner stated the property owner would like to place a second home and considering the size of the lot the rezoning will be more of a conforming request. The lot is 2.94-acres to be rezoned to R-2 for a 1-acre minimum for each house.

Mrs. Fortner stated this lot has one home. The family is currently living there and taking care of an elderly friend. The property owners are requesting to build a second home on the lot to live in and stay near the existing dwelling to continue to care for their elderly friend.

Ms. Fortner stated after further reviewing the application the applicant would only have two houses on the property therefore a variance is not needed, and the re-zoning would be the only request.

Mrs. Fortner stated the Community Development Department has not received any opposition to this request.

The Planning and Zoning Board recommended approval for the rezoning.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to come out of the public hearing at 7:52 p.m.

Commissioner Rowland seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to approve.

Commissioner Turner seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Public Comments

Edge Road resident, Carol Edge addressed the Board thanking them for listening to the citizens and encouraged the board to set up the meeting to go over the UDO.

Paul Pruden, resident of 911 Lassiter Road, addressed the board stating it has been three months since the moratorium on major subdivisions has been put in place and nothing has been done to move forward. Mr. Pruden encouraged the board to prioritize the moratorium.

Matthew Quilliams, resident of Hester Road, addressed the board stating this is his first meeting and stated data center applications are going to keep coming and the board needs to get an idea of what is wanted.

Commissioners' Comments

District 1 Lamarcus Davis

Commissioner Davis stated he would like to propose some conditions for data centers:

The following standards shall apply to all new construction of major redevelopment of data centers regardless of underlying zoning issues. It shall be applied as conditions for zoning, conditional use approval, and site plan approval.

A. Power supply

1. All operational power for data center facilities shall be regulated by a public utility.
2. The use of permanent or semi-permanent diesel or gas power generators as a permanent source of power is strictly prohibited.
3. Backup generators are permitted only for emergency and system testing purposes.

B. Generator standards.

1. Only tier 4 final emission compliant generators shall be permitted on site.
2. All generators must be fully enclosed within the principal structure or within the purpose-built enclosure structurally integrated into the building footprint.
3. Routine testing of generators shall be restricted to normal business hours. We can adjust them. We got between 8 and 6, Monday through Friday. We can put it, if we want it, 1 o'clock or whatever. That's just the conditions.
4. A third-party noise test shall be submitted to the Monroe County Planning Department prior to assurance of a certificate of occupancy.
5. Generated operations, including testing, shall not exceed 65 decibels as measured at the property line.

C. Cooling system

1. All data centers must utilize a closed-loop cooling system to reduce water usage and mitigate environmental impacts.

2. Open-loop water cooling and wash-through systems are especially prohibited.

D. Building height- This is something else we can adjust.

1. The maximum building height for data center facilities shall not exceed 60 feet, including rooftop equipment and parapets, unless a greater height is approved via a special use permit under Article 12, Special Use Procedures.

E. Architectural design and aesthetic standards.

1. Exterior walls of all buildings must include high-quality, durable materials, such as brick, stone, glass, architectural metal panels, or a combination of.
2. Rooftop mechanical equipment must be fully screened from public view using parapet walls or screening panels integrated with the building's design.
3. Data center sites shall comply with the landscape and screening requirements, Section 23-5. Perimeter buffers and screening, including the use of evergreen vegetation to buffer adjacent residential properties.
 - i. Parking lot and lighting. The parking lot should be a paved parking lot, and lighting should be facing down.

F. Educational and community partnership.

1. The developer or operator shall enter into a community benefit agreement or equivalent with at least one local nonprofit or educational institution to include programs such as:
 - i. workforce development and training,
 - ii. internships and job shadowing programs,
 - iii. STEM outreach to local schools.
2. Evidence of such partnerships shall be submitted annually to the Monroe County Development Authority.

G. Utility infrastructure.

1. Electric service to the facility should be provided at a transmission level greater than 115 kV., 115 kV, that's 115,000 volts, so most of them were 230 or 500. Unless an exemption is granted by the County Utility Director due to the system limitation and redundancy requirement.

H. Fenestration

1. specifications which mandate the breakup of buildings' exteriors. In other words, windows, doors, and other improvements for the building to not look like a concrete wall or a warehouse.

Commissioner Davis stated those are some of the conditions I would like to propose to this board that we take to our attorneys. Like I said, we can add to it, take away from it, if y'all like it. Commissioner Davis finished by stating I'd just like to thank everybody for coming out tonight and thanked his family for coming out to support him.

District 2 Eddie Rowland

Commissioner Rowland stated he would like to give kudos to Chairman Gibbs for doing an excellent job tonight with the meeting. Commissioner Rowland stated he would also like to give kudos to Commissioner Davis, stating he studies, he works and goes out and gets it and is Commissioner of the year.

District 3 John Ambrose

Commissioner Ambrose stated he likes what Commissioner Davis is proposing but they can't be put into place until the UDO has been reviewed and would like to propose a moratorium on data centers. Commissioner Ambrose encouraged the board to schedule a workshop called. Commissioner Ambrose stated he would like additional business to be added to the agendas in the future. Commissioner Ambrose thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.

Commissioner Al Turner

Commissioner Turner stated a commissioner's job is part time but is a full-time occupation. Commissioner Turner stated he has been bombarded with phone calls and emails for the last month. Commissioner Turner stated he would like to give kudos to all the commissioners as well as Mr. Hedges, Mrs. Abbott and Mrs. Fortner.

Chairman Alan Gibbs

Chairman Gibbs stated the school board were fantastic and would like to recognize them for letting the Board use the Fine Arts center for the meeting. Chairman Gibbs stated he would also like to thank the Forsyth Fire Department and the Monroe County Sheriff's Office. Chairman Gibbs stated he was extremely impressed with how the staff handled moving the meeting in such a short time period.

Chairman Gibbs recognized Amy Cowan as attorney for the meeting. Ms. Cowan is with the law firm Hall Booth & Smith.

Executive Session

There was no executive session.

Action from Executive Session

There was no executive session, therefore no action.

Adjourn

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to adjourn at 8:08 p.m.

Commissioner Turner seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0.

Respectively Submitted by:

Janet Abbott, County Clerk