

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of September 16, 2025

Called Meeting/UDO Workshop

9:00 a.m.

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

Janet Abbott, County Clerk

Richard Dumas, Public Information Officer

Kelsey Fortner, Community Development Manager

Lorri Robinson

Matt Jackson

P & Z Board Members

Mitchell Bunce-Chairman

Shamika Morgan

Chuck Benson

Jim Peters

Chris Patterson

Board of Education

Jim Finch-Superintendent

Lance Rackley-Assistant Superintendent for Personnel & Finance

Jason Flanders-Assistant Superintendent for Operations & Student Services

Community Team Members

Carol Edge

Rob Law

Bronwen Morgan

Betty Eskew

Kerri Swearingin

Ansley Hunt

Mark D'Agastino

Candy Mountain

Don Crumbley

Chris Soule

Welcome

Chairman Gibbs welcomed everyone in attendance.

Prayer

Chairman Gibbs led the prayer.

Pledge

Chairman Gibbs led the Pledge.

Roll Call

County Clerk Janet Abbott called roll.

Call to Order

Chairman Gibbs called the workshop to order at 9:00 a.m.

New Business

Approve Agenda

Chairman Gibbs presented the agenda for approval.

Commissioner Davis motioned to approve the agenda

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

1. Discussion: Agricultural Lot Sizes

- The current minimum agricultural lot size is three acres.

- Some participants argued that the issue is not the lot size in agricultural areas, but rather the growth in subdivisions.
- There was debate over increasing the minimum lot size to 10 or even 20 acres to better preserve agricultural land and rural character.
- Concerns were raised about affordability for families and the ability to subdivide land for family members.
- The group discussed the need for a balance between preserving rural character and allowing for family housing.
- Examples from other counties were shared, with minimum lot sizes ranging from 1.5 to 25 acres.
- **Consensus:** Most participants favored increasing the minimum agricultural lot size, with 10 acres being a commonly supported figure, but with allowances for family exceptions.

There was a 15-minute break at 10:56 a.m.

3. Discussion: Data Centers

- The group discussed the impact of data centers on local infrastructure, especially power and water.
- There was support for a temporary moratorium on new data center applications until the impact of the first approved center can be evaluated.
- Proposed restrictions included buffer zones, noise limits, closed-loop cooling systems, architectural standards, and community benefit agreements.
- The need for studies on water, power, noise, and environmental impact was emphasized.
- Suggestions included creating a specific zoning category for data centers and requiring community involvement in the approval process.
- Commissioner Davis to research zoning and subdivision regulations in other counties (e.g., Loudoun County) and develop specific standards for data centers.

4. Discussion: Subdivisions

- The group discussed conservation subdivisions as a way to preserve green space and manage growth.

- There was support for requiring site analysis, preservation of natural features, and clustering of homes.
- The need for clear definitions of major and minor subdivisions was raised, as well as the importance of road standards and developer responsibility for infrastructure.
- The group debated the feasibility and legality of limiting the number of subdivisions or homes approved per year.
- Concerns were raised about affordable housing and the ability of local workers to live in the county.
- Suggestions included increasing minimum lot sizes for subdivisions, requiring mixed housing types, and using impact fees to offset infrastructure costs.
- Chairman Gibbs to explore creating different agricultural zoning categories based on lot size and review the comprehensive plan for alignment with recent development.

Next Steps The group agreed that further meetings are needed to continue the discussion and develop concrete proposals.

- Participants were encouraged to provide additional input after the meeting.
- **Chairman Gibbs:** Schedule a follow-up meeting to continue the discussion on managing growth and updating the county's development regulations.
- **Commissioner Davis:** Research zoning and subdivision regulations in other counties; develop specific standards and requirements for data centers.
- **Chairman Gibbs:** Explore the possibility of creating different agricultural zoning categories based on lot size; review the comprehensive plan for alignment with recent development.
- **County Attorney:** Investigate the legal feasibility of restricting the number of subdivisions or homes approved per year, as well as limiting rental properties in new subdivisions.

Public Comments

- Citizens expressed concerns about growth, preservation of rural character, affordable housing, and the impact of subdivisions on infrastructure and the environment.
- Suggestions included regular review of the comprehensive plan, structured community input for major zoning changes, and maintaining the UDO as a living document.

Commissioners' Comments

District 1 Lamarcus Davis

Commissioner Davis thanked everyone in attendance.

District 2 Eddie Rowland

Commissioner Rowland stated community is difficult and he relates it to his family; we challenge each other and argue but we love each other. Commissioner Rowland stated that us five commissioners have difficult jobs trying to satisfy all citizens and we struggle trying to make decisions without leaving anyone out.

District 3 John Ambrose

Commissioner Ambrose thanked everyone for attending stating there is a lot we can do and a lot we can't. Commissioner Ambrose stated subdivision growth needs to be controlled. Commissioner Ambrose stated he does not agree with impact fees because of the way the state restricts the fees and thinks the cost of permits should be increased.

Commissioner Al Turner

Commissioner Turner asked what affordable housing is, stating affordable housing could mean a lot of things and is not for section 8 housing in our county. Commissioner Turner stated everyone is complaining about the taxes being too high and the county doesn't need that kind of stain on it. Commissioner Turner stated five acres is plenty of room for subdivisions and would like to see 20 acres minimum in AR.

Chairman Alan Gibbs

Chairman Gibbs stated he has a lot of notes to go through and decipher and thanked everyone for coming and for their input.

P & Z Comments

Mitchell Bunce stated he appreciates everyone for coming out and being civil. Mr. Bunce stated this is a work in progress, there are ways and processes to change things.

Chuck Benson apologized for coming in late and stated he would like to look into separating AR into residential and agricultural. Mr. Benson thanked everyone for coming.

Adjourn

Commissioner Davis motioned to adjourn at 12:07 p.m.

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

Respectively Submitted by:

Janet Abbott, County Clerk