

Monroe County Board of Commissioners

Minutes of December 17, 2025

Joint County-City Called Meeting

6:00 P.M.

Commissioners' Present:

Alan Gibbs, Chairman

John Ambrose, Vice-Chairman

Lamarcus Davis, District 1

Eddie Rowland, District 2

Al Turner, District 4

City Council Present-No Quorum

Mike Dodd, Mayor Pro Tem

Josh Hill, Councilman

Charles Wilder, Jr. Councilman

City of Forsyth Staff

Brian Causey, City Attorney

Craig Mimbs, City Manager

Shayla Furlow, City Clerk

Regina Ivie, City Administrator

Eric Wilson, Former Mayor

County Staff:

Lorri Robinson, Finance Director/Deputy County Manager

Janet Abbott, County Clerk

Richard Dumas, Public Information Officer

Welcome

Chairman Gibbs welcomed everyone in attendance.

Prayer

Commissioner Turner 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 6:00 P.M.

City Attorney Brian Causey addressed the following:

- Explains city's lack of quorum:
- Former mayor resigned to run for office.
- Another councilmember resigned to run for office.
- One member sick; one had a prior engagement.
- States that without a quorum, city members cannot legally engage in policy or decision discussions.
- Indicates preference to re-engage in the first quarter of 2026 for a proper joint meeting.
- Advises city council not to participate in substantive discussion to avoid legal issues.

Chairman Alan Gibbs: Purpose & "Elephant in the Room"

- Officially begins "new business", starting with introductions:
- Introduces himself as Alan Gibbs, Chairman, Monroe County Commissioners.
- Names Commissioners: John Ambrose, Al Turner, Lamarcus Davis, Eddie Rowland.
- Recognizes City Council: Mike Dodd, Josh Hill, Charles Wilder, city attorney Brian Causey, and former Mayor Eric Wilson.
- States purpose of the meeting:
 - Born from conversations with Eric Wilson at a South Georgia conference.
 - Goal: improve city-county cooperation, avoid "fighting against each other," and work with unity.
- Addresses "elephant in the room":

- Acknowledges many in attendance came to hear about a data center, which is not on the agenda.
- Promises a public comment period at the end where data center issues can be raised.
- Sets three-minute time limit per speaker and a hard stop at 7:30 PM.

Former Mayor Eric Wilson:

- Thanks Chairman Gibbs and attendees.
- Clarifies Mike Dodd is now acting mayor as of yesterday morning.
- Explains origin of the meeting:
- Conceived with Gibbs in early November at a conference.
- Intended to bring city and county together, state the purpose, then schedule future meetings.
- Deliberately light agenda for this first gathering.
- Notes personal change (no longer mayor) but:
 - Agreed to attend and extend a welcome from the city.
 - Expresses hope this is first of many joint meetings.
- Emphasizes shared identity: “We’re all Monroe Countians.”

Chairman Gibbs

- Reiterates:
 - Similar collaboration conversations were also held with Josh Hill and Mike Dodd.
- Explains initial plan:
 - Open conversation between city and county.
 - Now constrained by city’s lack of quorum.
- States intent to cut the meeting relatively short and hold another in the first quarter of next year.
- Concludes that due to the situation, they will:
 - Postpone joint substantive discussions to a later date.
 - Still allow public comment so people can speak tonight.

Commissioner Davis

- States disagreement with ending too quickly:
- Wants to “throw some ideas out there” so everyone knows what to address at the next meeting.
- Argues they can’t vote but can still have open dialogue and take notes.
- Warns that otherwise they’ll return “right back at square one” at the next meeting.

City Attorney Brian Causey

- Notes he has advised his council not to engage in policy discussion.
- Reinforces that without quorum, legal limitations apply.
- Briefly states that from a legal perspective, it would not be appropriate to engage in policy/decision discussions without a quorum.

Chairman Gibbs

- Concludes that due to the situation, they will:
 - Postpone joint substantive discussions to a later date.
 - Still allow public comment so people can speak tonight.

Chairman Gibbs

- Outlines how public comment will work:
 - Come to the front, state your name and address.
 - You have three minutes; commissioners will not respond directly.
- Notes that city officials are not fully sworn in for this meeting and may leave if needed.
- Acknowledges that many city and county staff are present and asks for patience.

Commissioner Rowland

- Suggest allowing staff to leave since they were here to discuss, not to sit through extended public comment.

Chairman Gibbs

- Confirms staff may leave; some core staff must remain.
- Clears the room for those staying for public comment, then invites speakers.

Public Comment

Sheriff Brad Freeman

Offers “Merry Christmas”.

Ryan Bell (Orchard Ridge Drive)

- Notes he grew up locally.
- Expresses appreciation for the joint meeting.
- Raises data center concerns:
 - Residents have heard many things and are worried about impacts (power, water, daily life).
- Urges collaboration and slowing down to avoid “Pandora’s box.”

- Proposes a Community Advisory Panel:
 - Members from county and city residents, plus one county commissioner and one city councilmember.
 - Role: collect comments/concerns and mitigate impacts regardless of what is ultimately built (data center, warehouses, residential).
- Emphasizes it's a community issue, not just city vs. county.

John Pattillo (149 South Lee Street)

- Suggests a path to address concerns:
 - Ask the city to slow down on any major decisions affecting residents adjacent to the recently annexed land.
 - Admits he doesn't know why annexation occurred but comments on public perception.
 - Encourages the city to pause approvals on the proposed development as a first act of collaborative goodwill.

Yvonne Stewart (Hwy 41 South)

- Notes she does not live near the proposed data center but cares about those who do.
- Urges officials to slow down and think about:
 - The legacy of their decisions.
 - Long-term impacts on agriculture and natural resources.
- Warns that a poor rezoning decision will be a bad legacy for the county.
- Advocates making decisions in the best interest of all residents, city and county.

Fletcher Sams (Altamaha Riverkeeper)

- Thanks to the city and county for coming together.
- Frames the issue as regional:
 - Multiple counties are pursuing hyperscale data centers.
 - All are competing for the same water and power resources (e.g., Macon Water Authority, Butts County).
- Notes work with Jones County on their data center ordinance and recent work sessions.
- Encourages continued city–county collaboration and inter-county communication on data center and resource planning.

Commissioner's Comments

Commissioner Lamarcus Davis – District 1

- Thanks everyone for coming.
- States didn't accomplish what they came to do and feel they wasted people's time.
- Describes past attempts at city-county collaboration:
 - Joint town halls with city council members (e.g., Stroud, Wilder).
 - Very low turnout (~10 people).
 - Notes contrast with tonight's standing-room-only crowd driven by data center concerns.
- Argues collaboration should begin with small positive initiatives (parades, July 4th, etc.).
- Reflects on how Monroe County has changed since his childhood; wants a return to a more positive community culture.
- Highlights youth achievements and community events (toy drive) that get little attention.
- Calls for more focus on the positive and urge people to call commissioners when they see an agenda instead of assuming and spreading misinterpretation.

Commissioner Eddie Rowland-District 2

- Reiterates he is a problem solver.
- Explains that large public forums do not create genuine dialogue:
 - With "900 people talking," they speak, but he can't really talk back.
 - Invites small-group meetings (3–5 people) at his office or local spots (e.g., Walkabout) for real conversations.
- Says posting on Facebook is largely ineffective: "you're wasting your time; I don't read it"
- Offers to sit down and talk in person; that's how to solve problems.
- Wishes everyone a Merry Christmas.

Commissioner John Ambrose – District 3

- Appreciates strong public turnout.
- States the meeting was intended to "get back in step with the city."
- Notes that in 11 years on the commission, city-county working relations have generally been good.
- Praises Former Mayor Eric Wilson and notes he's moving on to higher office.

- Emphasizes:
 - Need to combine services where possible to save money and build a stronger joint force.
 - Importance of intergovernmental agreements.
- Shares his desire to keep Monroe rural, stating that he moved here in 1984 for that reason.
- Warns about growth pressure and rising land values; moratoria on subdivisions and data centers are in place while they set expectations.
- Asks for residents' help and input, identifies himself as "a railroad man, not a politician."
- Encourages safe holiday behavior, including using a ride if needed.

Commissioner Al Turner – District 4

- Thanks everyone for coming.
- Says other commissioners have mostly covered what needed to be said.
- Wishes everyone a **Happy Christmas**.
- Expresses hope for a "**Merry New Year**" of better cooperation between city and county.

Chairman Alan Gibbs – Chairman (Countywide)

- Asks for a **show of hands** from those who came for data center information; nearly everyone responds.
- Acknowledges that this confirms **why** the room is full.
- Clarifies again:
 - Joint meeting idea originated **months ago**, before the most recent data center events.
 - Timing and public posting caused confusion; not intentional.
- Summarizes what he's hearing:
 - People want **information, involvement, and transparency**.
- Affirms that as soon as the city has more information, it will be shared.
- Thanks the city for attending despite knowing the crowd's likely focus.
- Commits to:
 - Working with **Acting Mayor Dodd** and others to plan a **more workable next meeting**.
- Encourages the public to:
 - Check the **city's website** for upcoming meetings and **planning & zoning hearings** related to the data center.
- Agrees with Commissioner Davis that people should **call commissioners** if they have questions about agendas.

- States he will **remain after adjournment** to talk with anyone individually (public comment period is formally over).

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

Adjourn

Commissioner Ambrose motioned to adjourn at 6:29 p.m.

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

Respectively Submitted by:

Janet Abbott, County Clerk