

**CITY OF EUHARLEE
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES
OCTOBER 06, 2026 – 6:00 PM**

Mayor Craig Guyton called the meeting to order with the invocation, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present were Mayor Craig Guyton; Council Members Greg Free and Jayson Frederick; City Manager James Stephens and Community and Economic Development Director Katie Gobbi. Council Member Tim Abbott was not present.

Public Hearings

Mayor Craig Guyton opened the public hearing for Text Amendment Application TAZ 2026.01, Ordinance 2026.08, an ordinance to amend the zoning ordinance regarding signs and temporary banners. No members of the public had signed up to speak on this item. Mayor Guyton closed the public hearing.

Mayor Guyton opened the public hearing for Text Amendment Application TAZ 2026.02, Ordinance 2026.10, an ordinance to amend the zoning ordinance to add Article IX governing data centers.

City Manager James Stephens addressed the public with background on the proposed ordinance. He stated that over the past several months, the mayor and staff have received inquiries from attorneys and property owners regarding potential data centers, most of which are located outside the current incorporated city limits, with some inquiring about possible annexation. In response, staff developed a draft data center ordinance modeled substantially on Bartow County's ordinance, which has been amended three times based on experience with actual project.

Mr. Stephens noted that the draft ordinance includes the following key protections: A closed-loop cooling system requirement to minimize water consumption; noise restrictions; buffer requirements to protect adjacent property owners and criteria related to electric efficiency, added in response to public input received by the Planning and Zoning Board.

Mr. Stephens explained that the ordinance was drafted consistently with the county's ordinance in part because a recent residential development located just outside the city limits chose to remain in Bartow County due to Euharlee's more restrictive minimum lot size requirements, resulting in the city bearing impacts without receiving tax benefits. He emphasized that the question is not whether a data center will come to the area, but when, and noted that since the Planning and Zoning Board recommended the ordinance for council consideration, a property owner has picked up an annexation application, though no completed application has been received.

Mr. Stephens discussed the city's transparency and announced that in addition to the public hearing, the city will conduct a town hall meeting prior to the October 20th second reading to allow for additional public input and to have subject matter experts address citizen questions and concerns. Mr. Stephens stated that the final ordinance would be designed to protect property values and residents' quality of life while allowing for potential economic benefits to Euharlee, including the possibility of reducing the millage rate to zero.

The following members of the public spoke during the public hearing:

Steve Gray stated that he had previously suggested the minimum lot size for a data center should be lowered to five acres, but after further discussion he changed his position. He proposed the following alternatives for the council's consideration: A minimum lot size of 10 acres with no more than three 10-acre lots, a minimum lot size of 20 acres with no more than two 20-acre lots, and a minimum lot size of 50 acres with no more than one 50-acre lot all within a five-mile radius of City Hall.

Melody Dearing stated that although much of the draft ordinance was acceptable, it should include clearer sound-buffer standards; end-user agreements to discourage speculative property transfers; evidence of

power availability; developer payment for roads and other infrastructure; owner-funded decommissioning; protections against utility use of eminent domain on homes and businesses; and recurring environmental and health studies at least every five years, including effects on farms and livestock. She also asked the city to reconsider the proposed 65-decibel daytime and 55-decibel nighttime limits and evaluate how far noise would travel into nearby homes, medical and dental offices, and other businesses.

James Scroggins raised concerns about water use in closed-loop cooling systems, noting that even closed-loop systems require periodic draining and refilling with fresh water and asked where that water would come from. He also expressed concern about power supply, stating that a standard power supply would be insufficient for a data center and that the facility should have its own substation or transformer separate from the power supply serving Euharlee residents, so as not to draw power away from the community. Mayor Guyton responded that river water would not be used for the facility.

Amanda Abbasi referenced the Bartow County Joint Comprehensive Plan, which the city helped adopt, and raised the following questions and requests: Ms. Abbasi noted that 43% of residents surveyed identified industrial development as a threat and asked how that finding influenced the proposed ordinance. She questioned whether data centers, which are not listed as a land use in the 2023 Comprehensive Plan, would be evaluated for consistency with the plan; how their placement on farmland aligns with farmland-protection goals; and whether studies of wells, groundwater recharge areas, and drainage areas would be required before approval. She requested that any missing protections be added before the second reading.

Ron Hartman praised the city, council, and Planning and Zoning Commission for making the draft available for public review, noting that more than 75 public comments had been collected. However, he urged the council to reject the current draft as inadequate, citing the absence of a decommissioning plan and the risk that the city could inherit an abandoned facility. He recommended a second review cycle that incorporates valuable public comments and allows the council, Planning and Zoning Commission, and public additional time to study data-center operations and risks. He said there was no urgency because the approval process would take at least a month. Although he estimated that a 100-megawatt facility could generate approximately \$1 million in property taxes, \$2 million in equipment taxes, and \$2 million in franchise fees annually, he emphasized that he was not opposed to data centers but opposed adopting an ordinance that left the city vulnerable.

Mayor Guyton closed the public hearing for Text Amendment Application TAZ 2026.02.

UNFINISHED AND NEW BUSINESS

1st Reading Text Amendment Application TAZ 2026.01 - Ordinance 2026.08 - Amend Zoning Ordinance - Sign Temporary Banners – Katie Gobbi

Katie Gobbi, Community and Economic Development Director explained that Ordinance 2026.08 would allow temporary event banners on commercial and institutional properties and provide more flexibility for yard-sale and estate-sale signs. Weekend signs could be displayed from 1:00 pm Friday through 8:00 pm Sunday, while sale-specific signs could be posted one day before the sale and must be removed by 8:00 pm on its final day. The Planning and Zoning Board recommended approval, and the second reading was scheduled for October 20, 2026. During discussion, Mayor Guyton asked whether the rules could accommodate a resident selling eggs from residential property. Ms. Gobbi explained that retail activity and commercial signage in residential zones create zoning concerns, although weekend signs would be permitted under the amendment. No action was taken.

1st Reading Text Amendment Application TAZ 2026.02 - Ordinance 2026.10 - Amend Zoning Ordinance to Add Article IX Data Centers - James Stephens

City Manager James Stephens addressed several categories of public comments received. Regarding utility and power commitments, he noted that the Public Service Commission has recently approved new regulations requiring large load customers to pay a significant fee to initiate the evaluation process and to

pay for any utility infrastructure required for their specific project. He stated that these regulations are designed to protect residential rate customers from experiencing increases attributable to data center infrastructure, and that the approved protocols may actually help lower residential rates. He clarified that this protection exists independent of any ordinance adopted by Euclid, Cuyahoga County, or any other local government.

Mr. Stephens also addressed the sequence of approvals, noting that the PSC will not accept an application from a potential large load user unless a local government has already approved the zoning for the project. This place elected officials in the position of making a zoning decision before Georgia Power will evaluate the viability of the power supply for the project.

He reiterated that a town hall meeting will be held prior to October 20th, that the original draft plus any proposed edits will be made available to the public in advance, and that subject matter experts will be invited to help address citizen questions.

Council Member Greg Free reported that he had conducted extensive research on data centers, including attending sessions at the GMA convention where representatives from communities that have hosted data centers for 15 years discussed both the benefits and challenges. He noted that many proposed data center projects are turned down because Georgia Power is not readily granting power commitments, and that this is a significant limiting factor. He reviewed data center ordinances from all surrounding counties and offered the following recommendations for consideration in the revised ordinance; requiring a decommissioning plan; retaining agricultural zoning and using conditional or special use permits rather than rezoning to heavy industrial; limiting generator testing to Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm; requiring a qualified sound engineer to conduct studies and ensure ongoing compliance; imposing substantial recurring fines; requiring an emergency response plan approved by police and fire departments with annual drills; and restricting on-site power generation to emergency backup use only.

Mr. Stephens clarified, in response to discussion about requiring power commitments before zoning approval, that the PSC process requires local zoning approval before a power application can even be submitted, creating a procedural challenge for any requirement that a power commitment be in hand before zoning is granted.

Council Member Jayson Frederick stated that the council was taking public input seriously and was not seeking to act prematurely. He supported an owner-funded decommissioning plan; protections against costs being passed to citizens; limiting on-site generators to emergency backup use; ecology and wildlife impact studies before permitting; maximum daily fines and possible temporary suspension of operations for repeat violations; measures to minimize visual, noise, and light impacts, including dark-sky standards; and a comprehensive public presentation by the developer before zoning approval. He also suggested exploring whether the city could receive an equivalent financial benefit when a provider other than Georgia Power supplies electricity. He remained neutral on data centers but emphasized the need for strong community protections.

Public Comments

Jerry Bell, resident identified himself as 83 years old, commented on the life expectancy of data centers and noted that technology changes rapidly, citing his own experience with the evolution from homes without air conditioning to smartphones. He questioned what would happen to a data center facility if technology rendered it obsolete within 10 or 20 years. Council Member Frederick and Council Member Free responded that this concern is precisely why the council is focused on including a decommissioning and exit plan in the ordinance, and why maintaining the underlying agricultural zoning through a conditional use permit structure is preferable to rezoning to industrial, as it would require the property to revert to its prior zoning upon decommissioning.

A citizen offered to provide the council with a document listing conflict she had identified in the ordinance. Mayor Guyton asked her to bring it forward at the close of the meeting.

Mayor Guyton said a town hall meeting will be scheduled and announced prior to October 20, 2026, to allow additional public input on the proposed data center ordinance. Subject matter experts will be invited to address citizen questions. The second readings of Text Amendment Application TAZ 2026.02 and Text Amendment Application TAZ 2026.01 is scheduled for October 20, 2026.

Adjournment

With no further discussion the meeting adjourned at approximately 7:05 pm.

CITY OF EUHARLEE CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OCTOBER 6, 2026 – 7:00 PM

Mayor Craig Guyton called the City Council Meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Public Comments – Agenda Items Only

Ron Hartman addressed the council regarding the Osborne Park Negotiation and asked what was included in Phase 3. He questioned why the proposed fishing pier and kayak-launch platform would be located approximately 15 feet apart, expressing concern that kayak activity could interfere with fishing. He asked whether the pier could instead be relocated near the campground for use by campers, unless the current location was required by the Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, or the grant.

City Manager James Stephens explained that the original grant project map does not extend to the campground, although the project area could potentially be amended to include an essential approved and funded component. He said the proposed pier location was based on water depth, acknowledged the potential conflict between fishing and kayak activity, and noted that extending the project area to the campground may be possible but is not currently planned.

Approval of Minutes

Council Member Greg Free motioned to approve minutes for the work session and the city council meeting from September 1, 2026, as written. Council Member Jayson Frederick seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED AND NEW BUSINESS

Osborne Park Negotiation – James Stephens

City Manager James Stephens reported that he had hoped to present a more definitive update or a decision item for the council at this meeting but was unable to do so due to staffing changes at CTI Engineers. He explained that CTI Engineers has lost two staff members from their local operations office, and that he is now working with a representative based in Chattanooga who visits Cartersville periodically. As a result, negotiations have slowed. Mr. Stephens shared the Hasbun, the original low bidder, has agreed to extend their bid for an additional 45 days, keeping the low bid viable and intact, the negotiations are ongoing and he had reached out to a state-approved vendor through the Department of Administrative Services under an indefinite quantity contract, which was established through a competitive bid process. That vendor is reviewing the plans and pricing the project so that the city will have a comparison point to evaluate whether the negotiated price is acceptable or whether rebidding the project would be more advantageous. Mr. Stephens confirmed that he expects to have this information available for the council by the October 20, 2026 meeting. No vote was taken on this item.

Adjournment

Council Member Jayson Frederick made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Council Member Greg Free seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

With no further discussion the meeting adjourned at approximately 7:21 pm.