

**City of Harmony:**

Special Joint Meeting of the City Council, Economic Development Authority, and Planning and Zoning Board

**Date:** October 7, 2025

**Time:** 6:07 PM

**Location:** Harmony Community Center Gymnasium

Mayor Steve Donney called the special joint meeting of the Harmony City Council, Harmony Economic Development Authority (EDA), and the Planning and Zoning Board to order at 6:00 PM. He noted that the meeting was being held in accordance with Minnesota's Open Meeting Law due to the presence of a quorum from each body. The purpose of the meeting was to allow participation from all members in a shared discussion. Mayor Donney clarified that no action items would be presented or voted on during the meeting. He then introduced City Administrator Alissa Stelpflug to begin the evening's presentation.

City Administrator Alissa Stelpflug welcomed attendees and introduced herself. She expressed appreciation for the community's participation and outlined the evening's agenda, which focused on the role of data centers in rural communities. The presentation aimed to provide an overview of Harmony's development goals in partnership with MiEnergy and to explore the potential environmental and economic impacts of data center development.

Administrator Stelpflug explained that the presentation would cover various types of data centers and their implications for Harmony. Attendees were asked to hold questions until the conclusion of the presentation, after which a Q&A session would be held. Following the Q&A, participants would be invited to join breakout discussions organized by area of expertise. Representatives from MiEnergy, Dairyland Power, and the City of Harmony would be available at designated tables to answer questions and provide additional information.

She introduced the evening's speakers: Katrina Hurley, Economic Development Coordinator from CEDA; Brian Krambeer and Kent Witcomb from MiEnergy; and Chris Geisen from Dairyland Power. Administrator Stelpflug emphasized Harmony's commitment to thoughtful growth that benefits residents while preserving the community's unique character. She outlined the city's economic development goals, which include retaining, expanding, and attracting commercial opportunities; supporting local businesses through tourism and entrepreneurship; and maintaining a vibrant downtown that reflects Harmony's identity. She also highlighted the city's sustainability priorities, including water protection, noise mitigation, renewable energy, and electric vehicle infrastructure. Administrator Stelpflug concluded by reaffirming the city's commitment to responsible development and fiscal stewardship.

Katrina Hurley clarified that the EDA did not seek out a data center project. Rather, the concept was brought to the city as a potential opportunity. She emphasized that the city is not actively recruiting data centers but is responding to interest and exploring whether such a project could align with Harmony's long-term goals.

Brian Krambeer provided an overview of MiEnergy's mission, history, and infrastructure. He explained that Harmony's location near a 69 kV transmission line and proximity to institutions such as Winona State University, Luther College, and Mayo Clinic presents a potential opportunity for edge data center development. He reiterated that MiEnergy holds an option, not ownership, on 60 acres of land north of town and emphasized that any project would be contingent on community fit and environmental review.

Kent Witcomb described the types and sizes of data centers, emphasizing that MiEnergy is focused on modular and edge centers. He outlined the physical characteristics, energy demands, cooling systems, and noise levels associated with each type. Witcomb noted that modular centers typically use air or closed-loop liquid cooling and occupy one to ten acres. MiEnergy would require any data center to shut down during peak energy periods to maintain grid reliability and affordability.

Chris Geisen discussed the broader economic impact of data centers and cited national investment figures from companies such as Meta, Oracle, and Amazon. He clarified that Harmony is not pursuing hyperscale projects and emphasized the importance of community fit. Geisen referenced the CH Robinson data center in Oronoco, Minnesota, which contributes approximately \$151,000 annually in property taxes, representing about 15 percent of Harmony's current levy. He discussed the potential for local job creation, negotiated tax agreements, and long-term infrastructure benefits.

During the public Q&A session, community members raised concerns about kilowatt-hour rates, job creation, decision-making authority, environmental impact, infrastructure costs, and the broader rationale for pursuing data centers.

The panel explained that the meeting was hosted by the EDA to proactively inform the community and prepare for potential zoning updates. They emphasized that no nondisclosure agreements had been signed by the City of Harmony, MiEnergy, or Dairyland Power, and that no specific project or developer had been identified.

Panelists clarified that kilowatt-hour rates would be based on market pricing and that data centers would be expected to shut down during peak energy periods to qualify for favorable rates. Job creation would vary by project type, with modular centers requiring three to six employees and edge centers potentially supporting up to twenty. Mayor Donney confirmed that decisions would be made by elected city representatives and that no specific project was underway.

Concerns were raised about the environmental impact of data centers in other states. Mayor Donney responded that decisions made in Harmony would not affect those regions. Brian Krambeer emphasized that MiEnergy and Dairyland Power are committed to responsible development and reiterated that no project currently exists. Any future proposal would be evaluated for its fit, impact, and benefit to the community.

Panelists addressed questions about renewable energy sourcing, explaining that Minnesota's 2040 carbon-free mandate requires utilities to meet specific benchmarks. Dairyland Power is expanding its renewable portfolio, and renewable energy credits may be used to meet compliance if needed.

Water usage and waste management were discussed in detail. Panelists explained that any project would be designed to minimize water consumption and comply with environmental regulations. The city's zoning code and state permitting processes would govern water use, waste disposal, and environmental safeguards. The selected site has existing access to water and sewer at the property line. Any upgrades or pretreatment requirements would be the responsibility of the developer.

A community member asked whether the city or its partners would be willing to sign a nondisclosure agreement in the future. MiEnergy and Dairyland Power responded that it would depend on the project and its circumstances. While transparency is a priority, some businesses may request confidentiality during early negotiations. Any agreement would need to comply with Minnesota's public data laws and be subject to city oversight.

Another question focused on battery storage as an alternative to high-consumption development. Panelists confirmed that MiEnergy and Dairyland Power are actively pursuing battery storage projects, including a site with a two-megawatt solar array and a one-megawatt battery with four-hour capacity. They explained that transmission capacity is a key factor in accessing energy markets and that additional load could enable more renewable projects in the region.

Additional questions addressed the potential for future expansion beyond the initial 60 acres. Panelists acknowledged the concern and reiterated that it would be up to the city to establish parameters that protect Harmony's future. Katrina Hurley emphasized that the Planning and Zoning Board and City Council are responsible for setting the rules and safeguards, and that the city's priority is to protect Harmony and its residents.

Mayor Donney concluded the meeting by thanking attendees and noting that the discussion would continue at breakout tables. Representatives from the City of Harmony, MiEnergy, and Dairyland Power were available to answer additional questions and provide further information.

Adjourned at 7:30PM