

City of Harmony

Joint Planning Session: Data Center Ordinance Meeting Minutes

April 1st, 2026

Present: Mayor Steve Donney, Jesse Grabau, Tara Morem, Kelsey Bergey, Stuart Morem, Greg Schieber, Jim Strozyk, Miles Petree, Rod Johnson, Keith McIntosh

Absent: Kyle Scheevel, Erik Olson

Other City Employees Present: Alissa Stelpflug (City Administrator), Chris Hahn (CEDA), Katrina Hurley (Contracted Facilitator)

Community Attendees: MaryBeth Ostrom, Charlene Selbee (FC Journal), Richard Kiehne, Roxanne Johnson, Amy Bishop, Aaron Bishop, Erica Thilges, Benya Kraus, and Walker Ward

Harmony Community Center

The joint planning session of the Harmony City Council, Economic Development Authority, and Planning and Zoning Commission was held on April 1st, 2026, at the Harmony Community Center. The intent of the meeting was to continue the collaborative development of the Harmony Data Center Ordinance by focusing specifically on the Community Benefit Agreement portion of the process and gathering structured community input regarding expectations, protections, accountability, communication, and long-term community benefit. This focus aligned with the draft ordinance framework, which identifies a Community Benefit Agreement as a required component of future data center development approvals.

Contracted facilitator Katrina Hurley opened the meeting by explaining that the session would differ from prior ordinance drafting meetings. Rather than reviewing ordinance language line by line, the April 1st meeting was designed as a facilitated roundtable process intended to create more direct interaction between community members and representatives from the City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, and EDA Board. Hurley explained that the purpose of the format was to allow community members to discuss concerns, priorities, and ideas directly with board representatives while also giving those representatives an opportunity to hear recurring themes, answer process-related questions, and gain a better understanding of how residents want future protections and benefits structured.

Hurley reviewed that the roundtable worksheets had been designed in advance to keep the discussion focused on community-centered topics rather than returning to items that had already been substantially discussed in previous ordinance sessions, such as water use standards, noise thresholds, or setback measurements. The worksheets instructed facilitators to encourage participation from everyone, ask open-ended questions, avoid debating or correcting

responses, capture themes rather than individual arguments, and keep the conversations focused on community experience and expectations. Each team included a facilitator and a note taker, and participants rotated from table to table so that each group could engage with all six topic areas. Community members were intentionally mixed with board members and other participants during the rotations so that no single table became isolated by role or perspective.

Hurley explained that the roundtable structure was intended to support transparency and community understanding by allowing participants to ask questions, share expectations, and hear how different boards are approaching the ordinance process. The session was framed not as a decision-making meeting, but as an input-gathering workshop to shape the eventual Community Benefit Agreement framework and related implementation tools. The six roundtable topics used during the meeting were Community Relationship and Trust; Community Benefits and Local Investment; Community Experience and Quality of Life; Communication and Transparency; Complaint Response and Accountability; and Long-Term Commitment and Community Protection. Each table had a distinct set of guided questions and prompts.

Roundtable Process:

The meeting then moved into the facilitated breakout portion of the session. Participants rotated through six discussion tables over the course of the evening. At each table, one team member guided the discussion and another recorded responses, themes, and notable ideas. The goal was to create a format in which community members could speak directly with board representatives in a smaller, more conversational setting than a full-room discussion allows. This format also allowed questions to be repeated and tested across multiple groups, which helped reveal consistent themes and community priorities.

The discussion at each table was driven by a preset worksheet. The facilitator questions were intended to be broad and values based. They asked not only what residents wanted to protect, but also how a future company should behave in Harmony, how the community should be informed over time, what should happen when concerns arise, and what long-term commitments should be expected if any future development were ever approved.

Table 1: Community Relationship & Trust

The first roundtable topic addressed Community Relationship and Trust. Participants were asked what would make a company feel like a good neighbor in Harmony, what being part of the community should look like, how a company should communicate with residents over time, what would build long-term trust between the community and a developer, and what would make residents feel uncomfortable or disconnected from a project. Prompting questions invited participants to consider what good local businesses already do well, how trust is built in a small community, whether a company should show up at local events, support local organizations, be visible in the community, and whether lack of communication or decisions made without input would undermine trust.

The discussion at this table by participants emphasized that a future company would need to be actively involved in the community rather than remain distant or transactional. Participants described a good neighbor as one that helps support local events, collaborates with other organizations, communicates consistently, and follows through on commitments. Residents expressed that trust would come from honesty, transparency, and an ongoing local presence. Lack of communication and decisions made without community input were consistently identified as factors that would make a project feel disconnected from the town. The notes also reflected an expectation that a future operator should respect local institutions, show up visibly, and act in a way that reflects Harmony's small-town culture.

Table 2: Community Benefits & Local Investment

The second table focused on Community Benefits and Local Investment. Participants were asked what the community should receive in return if a project like this came to Harmony, what types of investments would have the most meaningful local impact, whether there are specific needs in Harmony that should be prioritized, whether benefits should be short-term, long-term, or both, and what would make a benefit feel meaningful rather than symbolic. Prompts asked participants to consider financial contributions, local improvements, services or amenities, childcare, infrastructure, emergency services, and what people would actually notice or use in daily life.

Discussion at this table centered on the idea that benefits should be tangible, community-wide, and lasting. Participants identified local needs such as childcare, school support, community center improvements, emergency services, and local infrastructure. Ideas raised in the notes included financial contributions to the school district, support for the community center, potential EMS or ambulance-related support, and long-term grants or investment mechanisms that would be administered locally for community benefit. There was discussion of whether benefits should include upfront investment as well as ongoing annual support, with the idea that long-term value is more meaningful than one-time symbolic contributions. Participants emphasized that meaningful benefits are those that improve community life in a visible and practical way, particularly for youth, families, and the town as a whole.

Table 3: Community Experience & Quality of Life

The third table addressed Community Experience and Quality of Life. Participants were asked what they value most about living in Harmony today, what should not change, what concerns they have about how a project could affect daily life, what would make a development feel like it fits in Harmony, and what would make it feel out of place or disruptive. Prompts directed participants to think about pace of life, community relationships, environment, traffic, feeling of the town, design, behavior, visual presence, and lack of integration.

This conversation reinforced that residents place a high value on Harmony's small-town charm, slower pace, safety, history, and environment. Participants described Harmony as peaceful and relationship-driven and emphasized that the town's support networks and rural character should be protected. Concerns about future development included noise, light, industrial scale, and the

risk that a project could appear visually out of place or inconsistent with the existing community. Participants indicated that the smallest possible scale would be preferred and that any future development would need to be thoughtful, responsible, and sustainable in both behavior and appearance. A project that is poorly integrated, visually intrusive, or out of character with local aesthetics would feel disruptive.

Table 4: Communication & Transparency

The fourth table focused on Communication and Transparency. Participants were asked how the community should be kept informed over time, what kind of information should be shared regularly, what the best methods of communication are for Harmony residents, how uncertainty or changes should be communicated, and what real transparency looks like. Prompts asked participants to consider website updates, meetings, reports, operations, issues, email, public meetings, early communication, and the difference between trust-building communication and communication that feels like public relations.

Participants strongly favored a communication approach that is open, regular, and accessible through multiple channels. Suggestions included website updates, public meetings, notices on social media, letters or inserts in utility bills, posters around town, email updates, and continued use of a specific city website page dedicated to the project. The discussion emphasized that major changes, ownership changes, operational issues, expansion plans, or changes in materials or cooling methods should be shared with the city and then communicated to the public. Participants described real transparency as honest and open communication with no hiding of important information. The notes also reflected strong concern that changes should come back through Planning and Zoning and the City before being implemented.

Table 5: Complaint Response & Accountability

The fifth table addressed Complaint Response and Accountability. Participants were asked what the complaint process should look like if a resident has a concern, how quickly concerns should be addressed, what would make a resident feel their concern was taken seriously, who should be responsible for responding, and what should happen if issues are repeated or ignored. Prompts encouraged participants to think about whether the process should be simple or formal, whether same-day or within-a-week responses would be appropriate, whether acknowledgment and follow-up matter, and whether escalation, penalties, or public reporting should occur when issues are not resolved.

Discussion at this table focused on the importance of having a formal, easy-to-access complaint process that flows through the City rather than leaving residents to navigate private channels on their own. Participants discussed the idea of a written complaint form available both online and at City Hall. There was support for prompt response expectations, including acknowledgment from the City within a week and rapid response from the developer or operator depending on severity. Participants emphasized that follow-up is essential and that complainants should be informed of the outcome, not simply told the issue was received. There was also discussion about assigning a liaison or dedicated point person to manage complaints and monitoring. If

issues are repeated or not resolved, participants supported escalation mechanisms such as correction orders, public reporting, fines, or shutdown authority if problems are not promptly corrected.

Table 6: Long-Term Commitment & Community Protection

The sixth table focused on Long-Term Commitment and Community Protection. Participants were asked what expectations the community should have over time, how a company should show long-term commitment, what concerns exist about the future, what would make residents feel protected long-term, and what the community should expect if plans change. Prompting language asked participants to consider consistency, maintenance, engagement, continued investment, ongoing presence, expansion, ownership changes, agreements, monitoring, financial safeguards, notification, approval, and input. The worksheet also asked each group to identify the one thing decision-makers should remember from the discussion.

This discussion emphasized the importance of making long-term obligations explicit and enforceable. Participants stressed that a company should follow through on its original agreements, continue to invest in the community, maintain the property well, and remain accountable even if ownership changes. Concerns included expansion, transfer of ownership, rising utility costs, contamination risks, and the possibility that a project could harm Harmony's reputation or future development patterns. Long-term protection was linked to ongoing monitoring, binding agreements, city review of proposed changes, and public hearing requirements if major changes are proposed. Participants indicated that if plans change, the City and community should be notified and there should be an opportunity for input before any adjustment to prior approvals. One summary sentiment recorded from the roundtable materials was that decision-makers should "respect your constituents."

Overall Themes:

As the breakout discussions concluded, participants reconvened to share and compare themes that emerged across tables. Consistent themes included the importance of respect for the community, visible and ongoing communication, practical and lasting community investment, strong complaint response procedures, enforceable long-term commitments, and the expectation that any future company must act as a genuine community partner rather than simply a private operator. Across multiple tables, residents expressed that benefits should be meaningful and useful, communication should be proactive and honest, and future changes should not occur without renewed City review and public awareness. The roundtable process helped reinforce that the community is not only concerned with whether protections exist on paper, but also with how those protections would be carried out in practice over time.

Hurley closed the meeting by summarizing that the roundtable format had provided a productive opportunity for residents and board members to engage directly with one another and for the City to gather more detailed community-based guidance on what a future Community Benefit Agreement should require. She noted that the information collected would be compiled and used to support the next stage of ordinance-related discussions, including continued work on

the Community Benefit Agreement framework and the Conditional Use Permit process. This next phase remains consistent with the broader ordinance structure previously discussed by the joint boards.

The meeting adjourned at 7:38 p.m.