Ralls County Planning and Zoning Meeting Minutes

Meeting Information

Date: October 14, 2026
Location: Ralls County Courthouse
Purpose: To discuss possible county regulations and safeguards for data centers and to receive public questions and suggestions. No data-center rezoning application was pending, and no final data-center ordinance or project approval was considered.

Officials and Board Members Identified

Shane McClelland, Administrator of Planning and Zoning; John Lake, Presiding Commissioner; John Wieczorek, Western District Commissioner; Planning and Zoning Board members David Locke (Clay Township), Glen Wiley (Road Supervisor), David Talbott (Salt River Township), Lowell Jackson (Center Township), and Jeff Thompson (Spencer Township) and Kaleb Thompson (Saline Township) was present. John Robison (Jasper Township), board member, was absent. It was noted that the Saverton Township board member seat is currently vacant following the resignation of Ryan Flynn on September 29, 2026. The meeting also included a total of 54 individuals in attendance including board members, county staff, and members of the public.

Call to Order and Opening

The meeting opened with a prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance. Mr. McClelland introduced the officials and board members present.

Approval of Prior Minutes

The minutes of the September 30, 2026, public informational work session were read. Lowell Jackson made a motion to approve the minutes, and David Locke seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Scheduled Presentations and Special Committees

Guest speakers John DiMaria and Kevin Jacobson presented an overview of the newly formed Data Center Risk Assessment Team. Mr. DiMaria explained that this is an independent, agnostic citizen volunteer committee tasked with building a data-driven risk assessment framework for Ralls County focused strictly on sourced metrics rather than public sentiment.

The committee framework intends to evaluate construction, daily operations, future growth, and decommissioning impacts across power, water, land use, roads, and public safety. Public safety and transportation components will remain distinct from first responder reviews. Electronic enrollment forms for residents, county experts, and landowners will launch by Monday, with a strict timeline targeting completion of a final risk priority matrix by the end of February 2027. In response to a public question regarding the Sunshine Act, Mr. DiMaria noted that while data compilation will occur in closed work sessions to protect technical output, all final report scoring metrics and prioritizing sheets will be fully transparent and available to the public. The committee's final product will serve as a recommendation to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Response to Prior Public Questions

The board addressed a compiled set of recurring public questions submitted during the September 30, 2026, informational work session.

Officials reconfirmed that the current scheduled meetings are strictly administrative work blocks to review draft regulatory changes rather than active project hearings or rezoning approvals. Legal counsel Joe Brannon discussed the integration of proposed Chapter 30 text with the active 1994 Comprehensive Master Plan (amended in 2025). Section 602 provisions give the commission explicit legal authority to establish rigid reclamation bonds, annual compliance inspections, and conditional use permit (CUP) site limits prioritizing agricultural land preservation. Officials disclosed that the preliminary text drafts were modeled after regulatory frameworks used in Camden and Webster counties, Missouri. Additionally, a formal legal opinion regarding public ballot vote options has been requested from Missouri Association of Counties (MAC) attorney Travis Elliott.

Public Discussion and Concerns

Members of the public and officials discussed the following subjects during a general comment period, which was restricted to a three-minute limit per resident:

Inquiries regarding long-term permanent employees, site infrastructure, and automated security measures including unmanned drone and K9 assets used in regional data center developments like New Florence.

Suggestions from local residents to integrate protective ordinance language preventing foreign entities from purchasing downstream utility or local property rights.

Public debate and clarification regarding the existing 6,500-acre limits placed on regional solar energy developments within the county zoning guidelines.

Requests for hard copies of the active Chapter 30 working draft, with officials directing the public to the official Ralls County Planning and Zoning website where the working document is maintained as public record.

Decisions and Formal Action

No data-center ordinance, rezoning, conditional use permit, site plan, tax incentive, or project approval was adopted. Other than approval of the prior meeting minutes, the session was informational and no final action on a data-center proposal was taken by the board.

A quorum of the Ralls County Commission may be present in the audience; No official public business of the Ralls County Commission will be discussed, formulated, or voted upon during this proceeding.

Next Meeting and Adjournment

Following the public comment period, the board members pulled their tables together to review and discuss the specific line items of the regulatory draft. Hearing no further administrative business, Lowell Jackson made a motion to adjourn, and Jeff Thompson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting officially adjourned at 8:40 PM. The next public working session is scheduled for Wednesday, October 28, 2026, at 6:30 PM inside the Ralls County Courthouse courtroom.

Approval of Minutes

Date Approved: 28 October 2026

Motion Made By: David Locke

Seconded By: David Talbott