

City of Byron
Mayor and Council Minutes
June 24, 2026

The City of Byron Mayor and Council met in special session at 6:00pm in the Auditorium at the Municipal Complex. Mayor Michael Chidester and Council Members James Richardson, Michael Chumbley, Rusty Adams, Alan Dorsey, and Chris Hodges were in attendance. City Attorney Brian Causey was also present. City employees that attended were City Administrator Tiffany Sandefur, City Clerk Telina Allred, Deputy Clerk Elissa Lee, Chief Court Clerk Dede Thibodeaux, Police Chief Wesley Cannon, Police Captain Bryan Hunter, Fire Chief Josh Riley, Fire Captain Doug Kelley, and several on-duty officers as well. There were 149 visitors present at the meeting and representatives from the Leader Tribune, Fox 24, and 13 WMAZ were also in attendance.

Mayor Michael Chidester called the meeting to order at 6:00pm, asked James Richardson to give the invocation, and led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

DATA CENTER ORDINANCE DISCUSSION: The public gathered in the auditorium at the Byron Municipal Complex to discuss the Data Center Ordinance. Mayor Michael Chidester went over the requested conduct and expected flow of the meeting stating that the power point would be presented and each section gone over with the opportunity for anyone with questions or comments to approach the podium or mic, introduce themselves, give their address, and then speak to council regarding any questions or comments that they had. He also added that the city cannot enact an Ordinance that states that there cannot be a Data Center on that particular property, however the city can enact an Ordinance so that it does not consume the city's resources, create much noise an unpleasantness, and make it as strong as it can be without subjecting ourselves to being sued.

The Ordinance which is still a "work in progress" as the Mayor stated, will be to add an Article VIII-Data Centers to Chapter 10 Businesses and Business Regulations to the Code of Byron, Georgia. Sections 10-651 through Section 10-664 were presented on the overhead projector for all to inspect. The Mayor began by going over each section of the code and following up with anyone who may want to speak. Sherry McNeal on Chapmen Road asked if the city is actively working to create Ordinances not have other Data Centers come to other areas like Benjamin Hawkins Parkway since there is about 600 acres out there. The Mayor said that nothing will happen due to the moratorium in place right now, but after the Ordinance is in place anyone who can fit within the Ordinance and is willing to comply with the requirements can develop one theoretically. He further said that council can visit that request regarding the Ben Hawkins area. Linda Kimsey on New Circle Drive asked if the city could limit the amount of power or water to which the Mayor commented that Georgia Power handles the power, but the city would handle any water or sewer. He said the city can't tell a citizen how much water or sewer they can use. He further said that power lines are out there and there is a load limit.

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Mayor Chidester spoke about the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) portion of the code where the Data Center would pay large amounts up front which would give Data Centers an incentive to do what they say they will do. They will be required to produce a bond, and issuance fees would apply as well.

Carol Lafferty asked which way the city wanted to go and the Mayor stated it may depend on who it was or limit it to the big four being Google, Meta, Amazon, and Microsoft. Payment up front would be preferred, he said.

Mayor Chidester went over the design standards of the code. Once an application passes Planning & Zoning, it goes to council. Don Gay of Old Oak asked how long the property had been zoned industrial to which the Mayor answered that the portion in Peach County was rezoned in January of 2025 at the request of the landowner. He then added that the property across the street is also zoned industrial and no one showed up to object to that as well. Mr. Gay stated that people didn't know about it. Mayor Chidester commented that the zoning code follows state law and it requires a notice be run in the paper and no one gets the paper anymore. It also requires that a sign be posted on the property and a sign was posted. No one came to council or Planning & Zoning to object. The Mayor encouraged those who are upset with the system to contact their General Assembly members to make improvements to these notices and applications. He assured everyone that all was done in accordance to the law. Richard Humel from Twin Lakes asked if Georgia Power supplies or expands the grid, would his power bill increase to which the Mayor answered that he cannot speak for Georgia Power, but their position is that Data Centers need to pay for Data Centers. Residential customers don't need to pay for Data Centers.

A citizen asked that in subsection 2 where it defines adverse impacts, that council defines what constitutes an adverse direct impact. Mayor Chidester thanked her for the request and tasked City Clerk Telina Allred with noting the request. Another citizen commented on distant requirements under Section 10-656 where the Mayor stated that these requirements will be studied and gone over and that he is aware that folks will have many thoughts on it. Mary Solomon requested that the distance be larger than 500 feet because she felt that was not a lot. The Mayor mentioned that there is a section on buffers and ways to screen the property that will be coming up on the power point for review and discussion. Mary Blankenship of Walker Road spoke on parapets and plumes regarding the need to remove heat. The Mayor agreed with Ms. Blankenship that he has read the studies and appreciates her and they will be covering those items as well. She said that of all the reports she is requesting like FAA reports, emission compliance, exhaust mitigation compliance, diesel compliance, she recommends that a non-governmental committee do an independent water evaluation to see how much water is being used, the purity of the water, depth and test the wastewater. The requirements for a Data Center will be low impact water requirements with a closed loop system. He said again that the city does not know what will be built and if it will ever

be built in Byron as the city has had no application. Generators will run only when being tested and in some type of weather event, etc. She asked if the Fire Department can handle this Data Center? Mayor Chidester said revenue from the Data Center, if it comes, will take care of the Fire Department and the city will have the finest Fire Department and Police Department on the face of the planet. He also said that if it comes then the city will use part of the money to build its own wastewater treatment plant. When it becomes fully operational, the Data Center will then be required to use the recycled water that comes from the wastewater treatment plant and will be taken off of the ground water wells. That is the plan. They will then be self-sustaining. He reassured Ms. Blankenship again that the city tests for everything that the Environmental Protection Division (EPD) requires.

Jason Jones of Creek Road informed council that at a meeting in Roberta last month, a Flint Engineer said that when either an 80 or 90% threshold is reached on the grid, there is an agreement where they must switch over to generators and that's not a weather event. Mayor Chidester thanked him for that information saying they would get that to consulting engineers. He also thanked him for his comments on wells from the previous meeting stating that it prompted him to look at some other information, but it is not in this version yet. Ms. Lafferty asked about roads that are in another county. The Mayor stated that all roads and interstate exits will be included in the impact study. A citizen asked about infrastructure needs regarding the exits transporting materials where they would exit at Sardis Road and the Byron exit. Mayor Chidester said it is a desirable solution, but DOT has plans in place, however it is difficult to get them to understand what is needed sometimes. A citizen asked about the two properties that were inside the 500' buffer zone and the Mayor did not know what those properties were and he hasn't seen a proposed layout.

Another citizen from Timber Ridge talked about his concerns with noise and what is harmful regarding decibels, to which the Mayor began to discuss. Tonya Miller asked for more detail on the buffers including canopy layers and other vegetation. Ms. Miller asked if there be something more advanced than chain link fencing. Mayor Chidester said he would consider that comment. The Mayor said that decibels cannot produce continuous noise that exceeds an average of 75 decibels in a 30-minute period between the hours of 8:00am-6:00pm measured at any property's boundaries shared by the Data Center and a property on which a residence is located. It drops to 65 decibels from 6:00pm-8:00am. Council Member took a reading outside his home in the evening, and it read 58db consisting of noise from his air conditioner, frogs, and crickets and Police Chief Wesley Cannon took a reading at the interstate, and it read 68db. The Mayor said that Council Member Adams visited the Data Center and tested the decibel reader 100 yards away and the reading was 42.2.

Jason Jones added that of decibels, dba is not registered bass, but dbc which is infrasonic sound levels can be very harmful. He passed a handout regarding this information to Mayor and Council

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as well that spelled out the health issues. Mayor Chidester tasked City Clerk Telina Allred with notating the information and told Mr. Jones he appreciated it. Council Member Rusty Adams commented that he went to the Boy Scout Hut camp on June 8th at 4:08PM and it was 41.3 dba and again on June 9th at 9:50pm and it was 51.7 dba. He stated that he has no way of reading the dbc frequency. Ms. Blankenship asked if a vibration study was going to be done to which the Mayor stated that there is nothing at the location to study, but in Section 2 he stated, talks about compliance regarding monitoring and vibrations so that is exactly what is going to happen and monitoring to stay in compliance and be held accountable or else they could lose their Certificate of Occupancy. It will be built into the Ordinance. He shared other items that will be added to the Ordinance as it goes through development. A citizen requested that they look at the section that reads over 30 minutes between 8:00-6:00pm on any given day and the Mayor asked the City Attorney to have a look at that in reference to his question.

Questions regarding if there is a temperature requirement in place for wastewater when it leaves their site to which the Mayor will make a note and look into it and Steven of Kay Road said the developer must meet the requirements before water goes anywhere. Citizen concerns were that wastewater is treated before it goes into the city system. The Mayor assured them that it would and will be checked for compliance on all aspects. He told Ms. Lafferty that their water would be metered just as every customer is and also metered it as it leaves the site which he said was a great idea! Mr. Jones said that in the handout that he gave Mayor and Council, there was a schematic about the close loop system to review. He also asked that there be added into the Ordinance how many violations they would be given before losing a license. The Mayor said that it was an excellent idea and made a note of it as well.

Someone asked if the existing wells were going to be used to which the Mayor said he would check on it. He also said that the more heads, the better and really appreciated the comments and ideas from everyone. Mary Blankenship asked if there is a way to check on an aquifer to see its levels and if it is getting low. The Mayor said he would look into it as he would like to know that as well. A citizen shared that she asked her local water authority about the same question, and you could tell in several days if it made a significant drop. It was asked that in the ordinance be placed language about natural springs and water flow not to be dammed up. Janelle Bailey of Jones Road introduced herself by saying that she has worked for a wastewater utility in North Carolina and ESG in Macon and has concerns regarding wastewater. She wants the city to enact some sort of preservation to decrease the environmental impacts to protect the people downstream of that area. She stated that the city is getting the cart before the horse saying that it needs a wastewater treatment plant before a Data Center. She commented on how she felt about the city taking away a Certificate of Occupancy if they were out of compliance and the city be left with an 80-foot empty building! She doesn't think this will solve the city's problems because the infrastructure is

needed first. She doesn't feel that the city is thinking this through and she is willing to bet that the Peach County Development Authority has been actively promoting that piece of land on behalf of a developer for a Data Center. The Mayor picked up on her job experience stating that he knows she is aware of how much a wastewater treatment plant costs and no one on the council wants to raise the taxes it would need to in order to build a wastewater treatment plant. He said that the current arrangement works within the city's budget right now and building a wastewater treatment facility cost around 40 million dollars per million gallons of treatment capacity so unless having something come into Byron that creates that prosperity then Byron will not get a wastewater treatment plant in the City of Byron. Byron will not grow and some people are fine with that. The Mayor also stated that the vision is that if a Data Center comes, the prosperity from it is that we build a wastewater treatment plant and then we use the water that comes from it in a recycling system so that we can eventually take them off of the well. He also said the efforts in writing this Ordinance is to protect people. Steve Edwards, who has property at Juniper Creek and Boy Scout Road offered his objections to the Data Center stating that the area is an ecosystem with a lot of wildlife and asks that the city make it so strict that they would not want to come. He also asked if the city could give him one positive about the Data Center coming. He says he feels that the city is only looking after themselves and not the people. Mayor Chidester replied stating they were in fact working for the citizens and if any industrial business comes there, it will disturb land and create impervious areas. Ms. Lafferty asked about retention ponds to which the Mayor said they would comply and have on site retention ponds. She said they don't live in Byron, but they are neighbors. The Mayor reiterated that they are listening, taking the comments, and it does help. He said that is what will make the Ordinance better!

A citizen addressed the audience and stated that everyone needed to attend all the meetings and be a voice. Council works for us. We need to be there at all of the meetings before it comes to this!

The Mayor spoke on energy standards and someone asked if the city could implement some sort of alternative power source. Mayor Chidester said yes, he would explore it and regarding those steps needed to supplement the grid in other areas as well. He then tasked City Clerk Telina Allred with notating that task. Another citizen asked if the city knew what percentage load limit the city was currently at and the Mayor answered that he did not know. She then asked that if the city was getting close to its load limit and the Data Center comes in if they could go to Georgia Power directly to increase load limit on the line. Mayor Chidester stated that it was a very good question and he would get with the engineer and get back with her.

A citizen asked for a show of hands who all had visited the Social Circle Data Center and all of Mayor and Council raised their hand along with the City Administrator, City Clerk, Police Chief, and several other employees. He then asked the Mayor to give a description of what he saw. Mayor Chidester said it was a 5-building campus and that each building was about 2,000 feet in length.

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He said that from the road, the entrance to the Industrial Park area looks a lot like the Amazon building. He heard birds chirping outside and inside the building it is a little louder and has employee areas and it is evident that they take care of their employees. He also commented to a citizen that it is their responsibility to supply the power to the building and Byron would require written verification that they can and are able to supply the power. A citizen stated that Georgia Power has a tool on their website to inquire about load, projects and specifications and the Mayor said that they would not be able to use that because no one has approached the city with an application or plans.

The Mayor continued going through the Ordinance draft covering Fire Protection and light pollution saying it will be beefed up as well. Mr. Jones said that construction hours needed to be looked at again because it runs until about 11:00 pm at night.

A citizen inquired about addressing contingency regarding cybersecurity attacks. The Mayor stated that would be an internal operating issue designated by the government.

Citizens asked about extra funding for Fire Protection and putting extra language in the ordinance in the event of extra expenses if Byron responds and hospitalization occurs where that would be a heavy burden to bear. The Mayor said that would be a great idea. Someone added an emergency turn-off valve possibility as well if a fire does happen.

Tonya Miller asked if the Data Center would pay for medical liability if someone who lives within 100 feet got sick from it. The Mayor stated that they would have to prove a cause and effect proving that it was or was not because of a Data Center. She asked about changing the fencing option from a chain link fence to something more solid.

A citizen inquired about blasting and the effects it has on a home. The Mayor said they would take a note of construction demolition damages, and earthquake-type events. Someone suggested to the audience that before something of that nature moves in, a person should have their health checked and verify that they are healthy, have their homes inspected to make sure all is well, and their wells inspected to show that it is functioning properly producing clean water. Mayor Chidester said that your smart lawyer will love you for that!

Mayor Chidester spoke on his thoughts of any damages to wells stating he would like a baseline reading be done on all wells in the radius of the Data Center to have someone do these readings regarding production capability and what is in the well to which they must follow up during the operation and sometime after construction is over which may be five (5) years. It will require that if there is a significant change or the well stops producing or something appears in the well, that the Data Center will have to pay for water to be provided to your property and allow you to be put on city water including paying your bill for some amount of time. The Mayor reiterated that if a

persons well stops working, the city will provide them city water, and they will not have to annex in because of it. A citizen on Kirkland commented that he is concerned that his property value is going to drop because of a Data Center. The Mayor said he would not mind to look into it.

Mr. Suggs from Crawford County but has a Byron address stated that they have been working on their Data Center Ordinance in Crawford County for nine months. Items that he feels city may want to look at is if the buildings are 500,00 square feet. Is it multiple buildings or total square feet and he feels that may need to be looked at. He asked if the city may need to extend the moratorium and the Mayor said it was entirely possible. He then recommended that the generators be put under noise requirements also or put in a building and that their used water be put in a storage tank until treated before being released onto the ground. He asked if there was some decommissioning language to which the Mayor said they were working on that. He asked if the city's fire department could handle the 80 ft. height in the event of a fire. He stated that he would have his Fire Chief look into the matter. Charles Flemming commented on how sound can be harmful to animals as well. He again thanked everyone for their input and ideas.

A question was asked that on the application process, would an environmental site assessment be done as well as a feasibility study and hydrology report which will show water run off and other information. The Mayor stated that those things are incorporated in other areas of the development ordinances. It was then asked if those reports would be made available to the public. The Mayor answered that when something is submitted and those studies and reports are done it does become public record to where they can be requested under the Open Records Act in accordance to timelines and costs. She thanked the Mayor for listening to their questions and suggestions because everyone loves their town. The Mayor responded that he certainly understood that. He further took the opportunity to say that he never meant to insult anyone's intelligence. He said with respect to social media and Facebook, he is very aware that he can be a little sharp, but people have said that he has referred to folks as ignorant, country hicks saying that he has never said that ; and it does get discouraging when people make direct threats to him and none of you rebuke that and it would be very helpful for someone to simply return a comment telling someone that threats and comments like that are not helping! The Mayor said that very rarely do Mayor and Council receive a thank you for what they do, so it is so appreciated, and he gave the names of Ms. Bailey, Ms. Lafferty and Mr. Jones to name a few for all of their input.

A gentleman stated that it may be helpful that the Data Center wells be periodically tested on site to make sure that nothing leaches out to others and to install a cut-off point as well. The Mayor asked that everyone please read an entire article before posting to check the content first.

A citizen asked if they could get testing done by an outside source and compare it to a city test to establish a base line. Someone then asked if another Data Center could come and they just keep

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popping up. The Mayor commented that he did not quite know how to answer the question except to say that there are still so many questions to answer before that could happen like load limit and the health of the aquifer. Heather Allmon stated that they own a lot of acreage in Taylor County and a hog farm was run off from the adjacent area because of all the testing that needed to be done and the runoff that would go into the creek. She further said to the crowd that testing through the proper agencies will be done so please just let them do their jobs.

Ms. Lafferty reminded the Mayor that he said at another meeting that taxes could be reduced. She asked if he could produce a report showing areas where taxes were reduced because of a Data Center. Mayor Chidester replied saying that over 115 cities out of 535 are not current and compliant in the State of Georgia on their audits. He is very proud of Byron for staying compliant and if something is needing to be corrected, it is as soon as it is found out. He then said with the projections that he has seen, there would be no reason not to lower the milage rate. He also answered the comment of language being added regarding decommissioning a Data Center, that is being addressed.

ADJOURNMENT: Motion was made by Chris Hodges, seconded by Michael Chumbley to adjourn the meeting at 9:16pm. Unanimous.

Telina Allred
Clerk of Council