



Maine Data Center Advisory Council Meeting Summary

June 3, 2026, 9:30am-12:00pm

Overview

The Maine Data Center Advisory Council (the Council) held its first meeting on June 3, 2026, from 9:30am - 12pm. The Council was established by Executive Order of Governor Janet Mills to evaluate issues related to large-scale data center development in Maine and make recommendations to protect ratepayers, maintain electric grid reliability, minimize environmental impacts, and enable responsible economic development.

The June 3 meeting was held virtually via Zoom and brought together members of the Advisory Council and project team members including staff from the Department of Energy Resources (DOER), Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and the Consensus Building Institute (CBI). The meeting was attended by 205 members of the public. The objective of this initial meeting was to introduce Council members to one another and set the context and a roadmap for the work ahead. The meeting provided an overview of key topics that the Council will engage with more deeply in future meetings. Agenda items included:

- Introductions to members of the Council and an overview of the Council's directives and roadmap
- Upcoming public meetings and opportunities for public input
- Discussion of three key topics: environmental impacts, ratepayer and grid impacts, and economic and community development

Background on the Advisory Council and meeting agenda, slides, and recording are available on the [Maine Data Center Advisory Council webpage](#). Below are high-level summary notes from the meeting.

Welcome and Introductions

DOER Acting Commissioner and Advisory Council Co-Chair Celina Cunningham welcomed Council members and other participants. Council members introduced themselves and each shared a challenge they are excited to explore during the process. Participants spoke about the importance of a thoughtful, evidence-based framework for considering data centers in Maine — one that learns from other states, engages a broad range of stakeholders, and carefully weighs environmental, energy, and community impacts.

Council Overview and Roadmap

Acting Commissioner Cunningham reviewed the directives guiding the Council's work and noted that a final report of findings and recommendations will be submitted to the Governor and the Legislature by January 29, 2027. The Council will meet at least monthly between June and November 2026, and will focus on three key topics: environmental impacts, ratepayer and grid impacts, and economic and community development. To do this, the Council will build understanding of existing safeguards, identify risks and opportunities and best practices, and develop and refine potential policy responses to recommend. All meetings will be open to the public, and public engagement will inform the work throughout. A meeting schedule is available on the [Maine Data Center Advisory Council webpage](#).

During discussion, the Co-Chairs clarified that the Council's work will track and integrate findings from potential changes in the federal policy landscape, while focusing on what is within the Council's purview. A Council member emphasized the importance of distinguishing between the environmental impacts of large data centers themselves, versus the energy needed to power them. Council members also noted that different use cases (small-load data centers, cloud storage, AI) carry distinct impacts and warrant precise framing.

When asked to imagine what success would look like for this Council, members highlighted the need for a transparent and evidence-based process that allows for open dialogue and yields actionable, well-defined recommendations. They highlighted the importance of engaging and building the trust of communities and stakeholders and maximizing community benefits. Detailed responses are available in Annex 1.

Members noted that Maine has the opportunity to set an example for coordinated data center policy, and that the Council's recommendations should maintain Maine's commitment to environmental, climate, and energy goals while allowing for appropriate economic development. The importance of honest communication in cutting through misinformation was also raised as essential to the long-term credibility of the process.

Public Engagement

Meeting facilitators highlighted the role and avenues for public engagement. Public engagement and input will be sought throughout the process to inform the Council's work. Members of the public are invited to attend Council meetings and share input through regular surveys and live meeting polls.

A kickoff survey was opened to the public ahead of this meeting, asking for core questions that respondents would like the Council to explore. Findings from the survey were integrated into the design of this meeting and were shared as a starting place for Council discussions. Future meetings likely will use a similar process of pre-surveys to inform the discussion. In addition, meetings will use interactive tools such as Mentimeter to lift up inputs and views from people attending the meetings (see below for Mentimeter results during this meeting)

The [Council webpage](#) has more information about engagement opportunities and a link to sign up for the email newsletter.

Key Topics and Discussion

Maine DEP Commissioner and Advisory Council Co-Chair Melanie Loyzim shared working definitions of data centers as defined in Maine law. She noted that Maine statute does not define a ‘large scale data center.’ As a starting point, the Council will consider facilities of 20 megawatts or more to constitute a large scale data center, and refine this definition over the course of the process.

Commissioner Loyzim reiterated that the Council will focus on three core topics: environmental impacts; ratepayer and grid impacts; and economic and community development. The Co-Chairs and facilitators reviewed each topic in turn, beginning with a thematic summary of relevant questions from the kickoff survey, a preliminary list of core areas for the Council to consider, and a review of existing safeguards and processes in place. There was a short discussion for each topic. A summary of each discussion follows below.

Review the presentation slides and meeting recording on the [Council webpage](#) for more details on each topic. See Annex 2 for more details on the results of the kickoff survey.

Environmental Impacts

In the kickoff survey, members of the public raised questions about the impact of data centers on local water supply, water quality and discharge, which are present on [Slide 16](#). Survey responses also included concerns about noise levels, land use and habitat protections, and impact on climate and GHG emissions. Members of the public also raised questions about the adequacy of existing permitting and regulations, and about long-term planning for decommissioning and remediation.

Commissioner Loyzim noted that Maine's existing environmental regulatory framework is robust and complex. She highlighted the safeguards already in place at the federal, state and local level, and the areas of environmental impact that will need the most focus from the Council on [Slide 17](#). The Council will work to identify gaps and opportunities in these existing policies and standards and identify areas in which more information is needed.

Council members expressed interest in examining how large data centers operate in other states for context, and to consider differences in scale and types of impact. Council members said they wanted to focus on the environmental parameters that distinguish large data centers from other types of development, including energy and wastewater discharge, water use, air emissions (particularly from backup power generation), land use, and PFAS concerns. The type of energy source, including renewable options and biomass, will be an important factor. Proposed subsea projects were also noted as a potential consideration that might have unique environmental impacts. Councilors also noted the value of mapping the full permitting sequence a project would navigate.

Energy Impacts

In the survey, members of the public raised questions about costs of upgrading the grid and impacts on electricity rates, which are present on [Slide 19](#). They also asked about energy sourcing for data centers, whether the state will impose clean power requirements on developers, and what interim and transition standards will be applied.

Acting Commissioner Cunningham noted that electricity use is projected to increase across New England, which will necessitate new energy supply and improved grid reliability. She spoke about safeguards and processes already in place. Additionally, the Maine Public Utilities Commission (PUC) has recently opened a docket that will explore existing rules for data centers, processes for data center interconnection, and will inform future strategy and planning.

Council members underlined the need for transparency around data center energy loads, noting that in current practice, cost allocation is privately negotiated between the project and the utility. Discussion touched on ways to ensure that data centers pay for any costs they create as well as provide assurances in case a project ends early or fails. Ideas offered included large-load tariffs, collateral deposits, and rate structures similar to those used elsewhere in the US and in Canada. Council members also noted that data centers must ultimately be financially viable in order for Maine to see any potential benefits from their development.

Council members discussed load flexibility and the concept of black start capability as potential benefits of keeping data centers grid-connected. There may also be locations in Maine where the grid can benefit from new large loads, and there could also be potential savings to ratepayers from adding additional customers to the grid. Council members discussed tariff structures, and whether they could be used to help fund grid upgrades in areas most in need of investment. Council members spoke about identifying and avoiding worst-case scenarios, such as situations when behind-the-meter gas generation competes with energy supply during peak periods. Members encouraged drawing on current research that explores dynamic loads and defining grid priorities, as well as protecting communities and ratepayers from abandoned investments. Lastly, the interplay between this Council's work and the PUC process was raised and will be discussed in future meetings.

Economic and Community Development

Survey responses included questions about local job creation and related skill building. Respondents asked about fiscal impact on municipalities, projected tax revenue, community benefit agreements, and whether use of brownfields and industrial sites can be prioritized over greenfield development, which is present on [Slide 20](#). There were also questions about Home Rule, the state's role in supporting local processes, and how citizen voices will be heard in decision making.

Acting Commissioner Cunningham noted that economic and community development safeguards will be highly contextual, and that communities will need to exercise their own processes and tools to ensure their needs are met. In assessing potential data center projects, a balance must be struck between financial viability and community benefits. The Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) was directed by the state legislature to review incentives for investment in the state that may be applicable to data centers. The Council process will be informed by this information, which will be available in November 2026. Job opportunities will need close consideration, particularly regarding differences based on the size or scale of the project. Impacts on other industries must also be considered to ensure responsible growth and economic development may continue.

Council members explored how data center development could generate broader economic co-benefits for Maine, including opportunities in fiber and data transport infrastructure, brownfield site remediation, and university research partnerships. The state

has limited data connectivity between Bangor and Boston, which was raised as a potential investment opportunity to benefit Maine's economy. Council members noted the importance of examining both positive and negative impacts on existing industries, including whether improved broadband infrastructure could be a benefit. DECD expressed interest in being more embedded in the planning and roll out of the Council process and final deliverables.

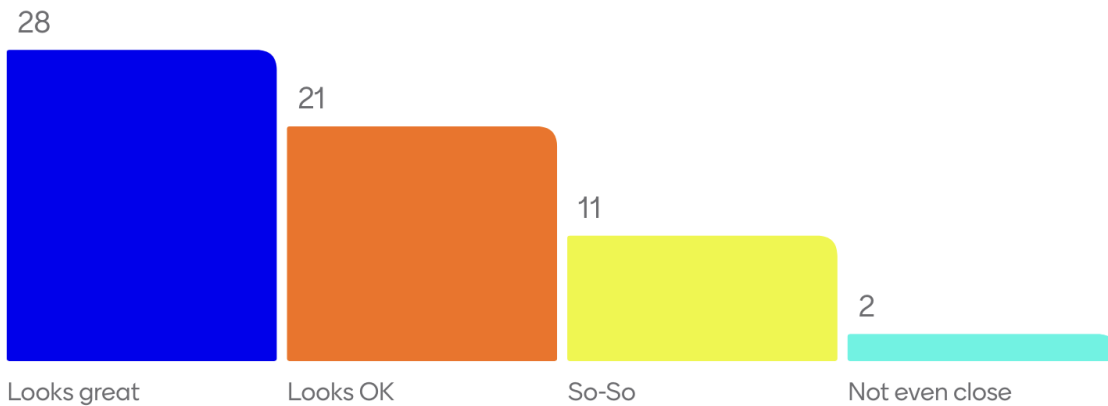
Public Input: Mentimeter Poll

Following the Council's discussion, members of the public were invited to participate in a Mentimeter poll to offer input and feedback. Results and a summary of answers are included below.

1. Which of these Advisory Council topics is most essential in your view (in just one word)?



2. How well do the focus areas discussed by the Council cover the issues that are most important for you?



3. How might these focus areas be improved?

Please see Annex 2 below for participants' answers to this question.

Next Steps

- The next Council meeting will focus on environmental considerations of large-scale data centers. The meeting will be held on June 23, 2026 from 2-5pm, via Zoom.
- An email newsletter will deliver regular updates about the Council process directly to your inbox.
- Meeting registration links and a link to sign up to the newsletter are available on the [Council webpage](#).
- Meetings will be recorded and posted to YouTube, with links shared on the Council webpage.

Annex 1

Council members responded to the prompt: *Complete this sentence: "This process will be successful if ..."*

- We find areas of consensus that maximize benefits to Maine
- The recommendations that result are actionable and can become law swiftly, providing the needed structure to govern data centers that want to build here.
- This process will be successful if it directly informs <https://www.maineconnectivity.org/vision>
- The council clearly defines goals (enable responsible data center construction to benefit Maine and its citizens, etc.) and works to constructively and creatively to achieve the goal.

- The recommendations that will result will benefit the economy, the environment and the people of Maine, thanks to a process that is based on shared values of responsibility, transparency, and ethics, and is informed by data and current research
- This council can recommend a process for data center development in Maine that maintains our commitment to our environmental, climate and energy goals while allowing for appropriate economic development
- ...we all go in with an open-minded perspective and have collaborative coordinated conversations that lead to actionable and clear recommendations
- We keep open minds and develop actionable recommendations
- This process will be successful if communities, stakeholders, and the public feel confident that Maine as a sufficient policy framework in place to ensure any large-scale data center development creates benefits for ratepayers, our climate goals, and does not negatively impact the environment or communities
- I would like to see us identify locations that are more suited to data center development from all the different stakeholder perspectives represented on the council. I'd also like us to think about ways to ensure that the host communities are benefiting from having a Data Center.
- Clear understanding and prioritization of the risks and opportunities, with a focus on lowering costs, strengthening the grid and ensuring meaningful community benefits and engagement.
- Maine develops a leading plan for data center development which benefits the state in a long-term productive manner for others to follow.
- For me, a successful outcome will mean we have educated ourselves about the key issues and that we understand the tradeoffs inherent in action (and inaction). That we engaged in thoughtful dialogue and worked to find areas of consensus. And that we have identified opportunities to leverage the existing grid in a way that may be able to bring costs down for electricity T&D customers and to ensure that the costs of new investment are appropriately assigned.
- This process will be successful if it is transparent, evidence-based, and objective, identifying an adaptive framework for development given resource availability and constraints.
- We have honest discussions about data centers and AI, the difference between the two. What positive community impact these projects may produce.

Annex 2: Kickoff Survey Results

A kickoff survey was launched on May 20 requesting public input to inform the Council process. The survey asked: *What are the core questions this group should explore over the next few months?*

A summary of initial results from the kickoff survey (received by June 2) were shared during the meeting and are available in the meeting slides.

The kickoff survey remained open until June 11. An updated summary follows below that reflects the additional feedback received from members of the public.

Summary statistics:

- 173 total responses
- 102 Maine towns and 15 counties represented

Environmental Impacts

- **Water supply & private wells.** How will large cooling water withdrawals affect aquifers, private wells, rivers, and great ponds — especially during drought? Who monitors and who is liable?
- **Water quality, PFAS & cooling discharge.** What toxic or chemical-laden water is produced and where does it go? What are the PFAS risks? How will potential impacts from chemical additives in cooling discharge be assessed and monitored?
- **Noise & infrasound.** What are the audible and infrasound impacts and safeguards, for both construction and operation? How will they be measured and limits enforced?
- **Land use, forest clearing & habitat.** What are the limits on footprint size, forest loss, habitat fragmentation, and light pollution? Will coastal/shoreland zone protections apply?
- **Climate & GHG emissions.** How will data centers avoid negative impacts to Maine's climate goals?
- **Adequacy of existing permitting & regulations.** Are existing DEP permits, Site Law, shoreland zoning, and water regs sufficient? Should data centers trigger Site Law review? How will the impacts be assessed? How are cumulative impacts from multiple centers evaluated?

- **Decommissioning & long-term remediation.** What protections can be put in place now for when a data center closes? Can we include requirements for mandatory removal, remediation bonds, and liability for decommission construction.
- **Human health & community safety.** What health impacts could data centers have on surrounding residents, such as respiratory effects, contamination from toxic chemicals used in cooling systems, and PFAS exposure?

Energy Impacts

- **Grid upgrade costs & cost allocation.** Who funds substation, transmission, and reliability upgrades — developers or ratepayers? Can we require data centers to supply their own power and prohibit cost socialization?
- **Electricity rate impacts.** Will data centers drive up rates for households and small businesses? Can we ensure financial liability if rates increase? Will data centers get grid priority during emergencies?
- **Energy sourcing & clean power requirements.** Can or should Maine require data center energy supply to be renewable? Can/should developers build their own generation? Should preference be given to projects with local clean energy supply?
- **Interim & transition standards.** What rules apply before the Council finishes? How should large-load approvals integrate with Integrated Grid Planning?
- **Grid reliability and emergency prioritization.** Will data centers be prioritized over households during power emergencies? Who is accountable for outages and distribution failures? What forms of backup power should data centers be permitted to use?

Economic Impacts

- **Job quality & quantity.** How many permanent, local jobs are actually created? Are the skills present in Maine, or will workers be imported?
- **Tax revenues & municipal fiscal impact.** Will data centers expand the tax base? How will municipalities in economically challenged counties benefit?
- **Community benefit agreements.** Beyond tax revenue, what community investments are required — housing, infrastructure, emergency services, workforce training? Are incentives offered in exchange? What standards ensure "net positive" development? How will the state hold developers accountable to their commitments?

- **Prioritizing brownfield & industrial redevelopment.** Can state and federal policies steer data centers to existing industrial or mill sites — reducing greenfield impacts while benefiting struggling communities?
- **Home Rule and Citizen Voice.** What role should the state play in supporting towns and citizens in local processes? How can the state bolster municipal capacity and legal representation? How are cross-jurisdictional impacts considered? What disclosures are required? How will citizen voices be heard in decision making?
- **Minimizing impact on existing industries.** Could new or additional standards and regulations around data centers impact well-established industries in Maine?

Annex 3: Mentimeter Results

All meeting participant answers to the Mentimeter question: *How might these focus areas be improved?*

- Public comment periods throughout
- Don't stack the deck with opponents, but consider benefits equally
- Bring in outside experts
- Energy costs are deeply connected to economic development - let's ensure we factor that into economic development. It's not just about how many jobs a data center would bring.
- Understanding data center scale and different impacts each brings
- Making sure our indigenous voices are engaged
- People first always
- Flash out the scenarios to dig in for pros and cons
- What code of ethics are the data center owners or developers adhering to? I'm not confident that ai corporations have made a commitment to the public welfare.
- "This process will be successful if we build data centers that don't break the grid, don't drain the watershed, and don't require incentives to be viable.
- Zero-water, zero-HVAC, sovereign-cooling"
- Community Engagement
- Meaningful public voice
- Put a member of public on panel, or legislator
- Ethical/safety issues around AI
- Define Maine specific resources, constraints, and goals, and always refer to those when making decisions.
- Focus on the if, not the certainty, that these centers will be right for our communities.

- I think there needs to be a lot more considerations to each environmental impact as more information comes to the council about each one. Each impact can be detrimental they can't be lumped together.
- Identify real examples of datacenters that reduce energy costs for communities.
- Broadband was not addressed until the end of the meeting. We need to retain the viability of our three ring binder to benefit the residents of Maine, not data centers.
- Our community is anxiously awaiting policy frameworks
- Increased focus on town/state relationship on data center decisions, especially towns being able to leverage state skills and experience.
- Consider Wabakani perspectives
- See through fear; get good things for Maine AND be open to business; predictability is wildly important
- You need to have representation from small communities. Communities will be dealing with data centers at the local level and need to have a say in how the state guides development.
- Comparing to other data centers around the globe
- Direct involvement by tech sector SMEs with experience building them
- Research
- "Combine and sort on what's important and that should include other business that are here and maybe more in the future.
- Economic, environment, tax base"
- Specificity as we dive deeper.
- Impact on local communities should be foregrounded in the discussions of siting, energy and environment impact, economic growth, job creation, etc.
- Clear solicitation for public comment (and simple methods for submitting).
- Consult the more vulnerable population
- Input from communities/municipalities
- Research using existing case studies
- Require 100% clean energy
- Considering human health impacts
- Review misinformation that is being weaponized against these types of developments by outside actors trying to hamstring industry within our state and country.
- Need 100% consensus: FIRST DO NO HARM.
- Enforcement responsibilities and repercussions
- Look at Maine based technologies to address power and cooling
- Engagement with municipal officials

- More worker/Union participation
- Please open access so that all webinar participants can add comments in the chat :)