

Summary Notes from Maine Data Center Advisory Council

August 13, 2026

Overview

The Maine Data Center Advisory Council (the Council) held its fourth meeting on August 13, 2026, from 9:30am-12pm. The Council was established by Executive Order of Governor Janet Mills in April 2026. It will provide strategic input, facilitate coordinated state planning, and evaluate policy tools to address large-scale data center opportunities and related benefits and risks to the State of Maine.

The meeting was held virtually via Zoom Webinar, and brought together 16 members of the Advisory Council, 6 project team members, 5 external presenters and speakers, and 121 webinar attendees. The meeting was facilitated and supported by the Consensus Building Institute.

The objective of this meeting was to discuss community and economic development associated with large-scale data center development in Maine. Agenda items included:

- Recap of the previous meeting on energy and survey results
- Preliminary community and economic development survey results
- Guest presentation by Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory
- Panel discussion
- Council discussion and public input opportunities
- Next steps

The meeting agenda, slides, and recording are available on the [Maine Data Center Advisory Council webpage](#).

The following are high-level summary notes from the meeting.

Welcome and Introductions

Maine Department of Energy Resources (DOER) Acting Commissioner and Advisory Council Co-Chair Celina Cunningham welcomed Council members and reviewed the agenda for the meeting. She highlighted the upcoming public listening sessions and reviewed key takeaways from the Council's third meeting on July 9, which focused on energy impacts of large-scale data center development.

Among the key takeaways, Commissioner Cunningham noted that large-scale data centers can have different energy use profiles, though all have significant electric loads, and location and timing of energy use is important. Maine PUC is investigating data center impacts, and ISO New England is closely monitoring potential future large loads. Council members' recommendations included mechanisms like tariffs to further protect ratepayers and maximize benefits as well as

requirements for developers to bring their own generation and to comply with Maine's clean energy laws.

Council members offered the following reflections on the previous meeting:

- There is a lot to consider with the utility discussion, including water, sewer, and electricity, and how these impacts are interrelated.
- Appropriate oversight and communication is needed to ensure public confidence that data centers are not increasing costs, and are instead helping reduce overall system costs.
- The Council has a range of policy options to draw from across jurisdictions to protect ratepayers and support the state's climate and clean energy goals as recommendations are developed.
- Interconnection proposals are unique to each project, but broader frameworks may still be flexible enough to accommodate a range of interconnecting customers.
- The scale of energy consumption nationally, and the shift from current to projected load, raises questions about the role of distributed, smaller-scale compute facilities, and whether they could better align with regional grid capacity and local priorities.
- Evaluating a proposed data center's specific details is necessary to assess its generation and grid needs and its potential system impacts. There is an opportunity to create a consistent, comprehensive framework for evaluating projects.
- Several members valued hearing a range of different views and ideas, with a shared focus on supporting Maine and its residents as this work moves forward, and noted the opportunity to learn from other states navigating this new industry.

Pre-Meeting Survey Results on Community and Economic Development

Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner and Advisory Council Co-chair Melanie Loyzim reviewed preliminary results from the Council's fourth public survey, which focuses on economic and community development considerations related to large-scale data centers. Survey results are included in Annex 1.

Presentation and Remarks on Data Centers and Maine Communities

Alex Hubbard, Technology Researcher at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL), presented documented benefits and risks experienced by data center host communities nationwide, with a focus on relevance to Maine. The presentation focused on the following topics:

- **Taxes and town budgets.** Data centers can generate substantial local tax revenue. For example, in Quincy, WA, seven facilities generate 57% of the town's tax revenue which has supported a new hospital, high school, and library. However, tax breaks can offset some of that benefit. Facilities can increase town valuation, but in turn this can impact the amount of support a town receives from the state, e.g., funding for schools. Maine

has already excluded data centers from its Business Equipment Tax Exemption and Dirigo Business Incentive programs, so results here will vary by town.

- **Host community agreements.** These legally binding agreements between developers and towns can secure major community benefits. Some documented agreements have ranged from \$25 million to \$143 million in community funds. Reliance on Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) during negotiation can raise transparency concerns.
- **Jobs and workforce.** Data center construction creates many temporary jobs, while permanent operations require a much smaller staff (typically 50–300 employees). Wages for permanent employees are typically above median incomes. Maine's existing trades workforce and training programs are well-positioned to fill these roles.
- **Broadband.** Developers often build new fiber infrastructure, which can expand rural internet access if built with open-access terms. However, open-access is not guaranteed and must be negotiated with the developer.
- **Community acceptance and siting.** Existing research shows that data centers have not broadly affected property values, but public sentiment has declined sharply. Many conflicts have arisen from siting near residential areas. The scale of the facility relative to the size of the host community is the biggest driver of risk.

Josh Broder, Founder and CEO of Verta, a digital infrastructure company, offered brief remarks following the LBNL presentation. The presentation's summary of broadband impacts aligned with his own experience providing digital infrastructure to data centers. Data center operators rely heavily on fiber optic infrastructure and place a premium on that infrastructure being resilient. This generally means requiring underground rather than pole-mounted lines, high-capacity duct banks, and multiple diverse routing paths.

As a result, data center development in Maine could lead to new connections to Boston and other parts of New England. Currently, the closest access points to subsea cables are in Boston and Halifax, with a limited number of connections available. Energy availability is also a major factor driving these siting decisions.

Maine is already investing in middle-mile infrastructure, including MOOSE Net, which will add roughly 500 miles of new fiber. Broder noted that for residential users, these types of investments will not immediately translate into faster service but will meaningfully strengthen infrastructure more broadly and help expand the reach of service over time.

Community and Economic Development Panel

DEP Commissioner and Advisory Council Co-Chair Melanie Loyzim introduced the panelists for the Community and Economic Development panel: Commissioner Michael Duguay, Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), Hannah Silverfine, Maine Office of Community Affairs (MOCA), Paul Johnson, Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG), and Amy Landry, Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments (AVCOG).

The panel responded to three questions:

- What are the opportunities for data centers to support economic development and community benefits in Maine, and what safeguards are needed?

- How can communities have a voice and shape outcomes?
- What can or should the state do to help communities maximize benefits and ensure safeguards are in place?

The following themes emerged during the panel discussion.

Local decision making and learning from past transitions. Panelists emphasized that Maine's home rule means each community will decide for itself whether to host a data center, with responses varying by local capacity and priorities. For example, communities with underused infrastructure and brownfield sites may be more motivated to rebuild their tax base and take advantage of the significant property and equipment taxes from data centers.

DECD Commissioner Duguay pointed to Augusta's experience with a 1990s-era retail development and community benefit agreement as an example of how a town can benefit from an increase in valuation and direct new tax revenue toward local priorities. The city held a stable tax rate for 10 years while public services were funded through retail growth. An early community benefit agreement had the developer fund local improvements and impact mitigation. The city used tax revenue to invest heavily in revitalizing its downtown.

Need for more information and resources. Communities' responses to data center interest vary widely, but most indicate a need for more education and resources, including case studies of experiences from other areas. Paul Johnson noted that skilled developer negotiators can put communities without dedicated staff or expertise at a disadvantage. Panelists suggested that the state could help by centralizing information, sharing case studies, and connecting communities with experts. The Maine Office of Community Affairs has used this approach on other topics, such as housing.

Communities need support and assistance. Communities are supported at the state level in their planning processes, and through regional Councils of Government (COGs), which provide interlocal resource planning and cooperation. Panelists called for state-level definitions (for example, of what counts as a small, medium, or large-scale facility) to help local officials apply home rule processes more consistently.

The group discussed the distinction between statewide standardization and dedicated technical assistance for communities, particularly around negotiation support. The panel noted that the intent behind negotiation support is to help equip communities to negotiate more effectively themselves. Advisory Council member and Saco Deputy City Administrator Emily Cole-Prescott noted that the challenge is less that communities feel overwhelmed, and more that uneven staffing levels across municipalities and lack of clarity hinder communities in making decisions that fit their needs.

How investment in new digital infrastructure aligns with state economic development plans. Data center developers are unlikely to consider locations without existing infrastructure or a track record of successful projects. The downstream impact of new digital infrastructure is

hard to predict, but experience suggests that new connections may support data centers as well as secondary and tertiary infrastructure nearby. Maine's existing middle-mile fiber investment (MOOSE Net) has made the state a more credible partner in these conversations.

Council Discussion

Council members were asked to focus their discussion on two questions:

- What is the top opportunity the Council should prioritize in its recommendations to support economic development and community benefits?
- What actions could the state take to support municipalities?

Resources and support for municipalities. Council members spoke in support of standardized review processes and dedicated technical assistance for communities. Council members suggested a checklist or toolkit outlining what to expect from a proposal and how to identify community benefit opportunities, or a grant or cost-sharing program to help communities hire assistance during proposal review. Members also suggested establishing a dedicated point of contact or advisory committee within an existing state office to reduce uncertainty for both municipalities and developers, as few towns can justify retaining a permanent staff member focused on responding to data center developers.

Tools for project evaluation. A community should have the resources to weigh their options and move forward as best suits them, whether that means signaling openness to developers or choosing not to engage with a project at all. A decision or risk matrix could help communities, though it would need to be flexible rather than one-size-fits-all. All programs and evaluation tools should be widely available. There was a suggestion to standardize the information communities receive from developers so it's consistent from proposal to proposal, which can help communities streamline their review processes.

Community benefit agreements and other development tools. Council members raised that Maine law currently allows for municipalities to negotiate agreements with developers, but communities may need further support to implement them. Impact fees, such as those imposed for traffic impacts from new development, can provide a legal foundation for broader community benefit agreements, but other tools such as Credit Enhancement Agreements are also available. It will be important to ensure the use of specific and precise language as recommendations are developed.

Asymmetries in pace and information. A recurring theme was the mismatch between the recent increase in large scale data center proposals, and the much longer timelines for permitting, power generation, and community decision-making. Members discussed how to manage development risk and mechanisms to hold developers accountable to commitments made early in the process, such as infrastructure upgrades.

Public Input: Mentimeter Poll

Members of the public were invited to submit questions following the panel discussion via Mentimeter. Results are available in Annex 2.

Next Steps

- The next Council meeting will focus on policy recommendations and will be held on September 9, 2026, from 9:30am–12pm, via Zoom.
- Two virtual Listening Sessions for the Council to hear directly from members of the public will be held on:
 - August 27, 2026 from 1-2:30pm ([Register here](#))
 - September 1, 2026 from 5-7pm ([Register here](#))

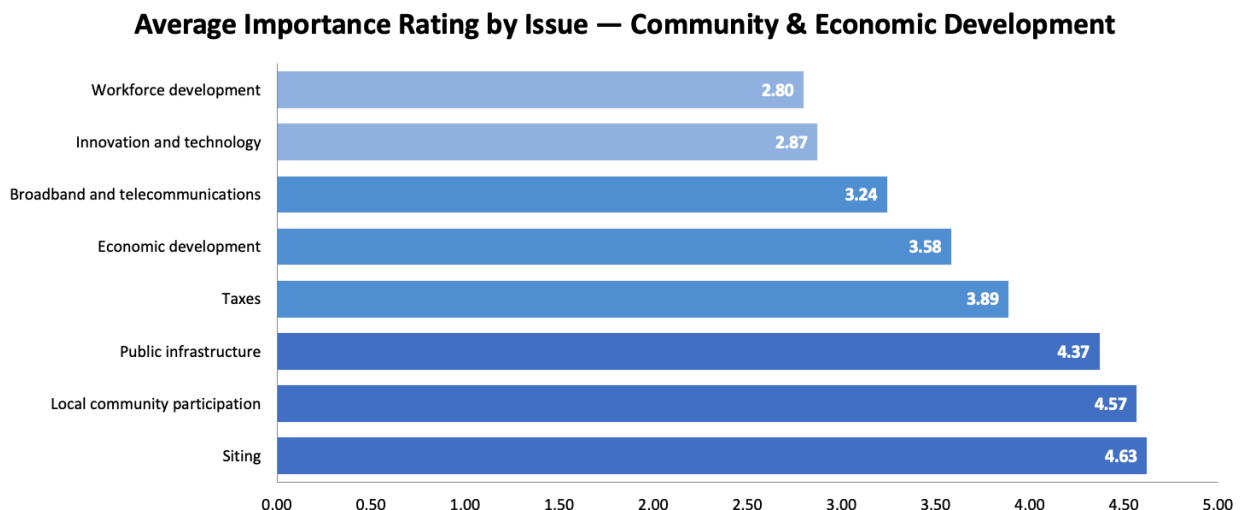
Annex 1: Results from Survey #4

In this survey, members of the public responded to two questions.

1. Rank each of the following community and economic development considerations related to large-scale data centers based on importance to you, with 1 being least important and 5 being most important.
2. The August 13 meeting will include an overview of data center community and economic development impacts. What is one question you have about community and economic development pertaining to large scale data centers?

The survey closed on August 20, 2026 and received a total of 72 responses. Responses were submitted from residents across 54 towns and 16 counties in Maine.

Rank each of the following community and economic development considerations related to large-scale data centers based on importance to you, with 1 being least important and 5 being most important.



The August 13 meeting will include an overview of data center community and economic development impacts. What is one question you have about community and economic development pertaining to large scale data centers that you feel the Council should address?

- **Potential risks and costs to communities.** If a development project fails, who might benefit and who will be harmed? What recourse do communities have if data center development drives up costs locally?
- **Jobs and workforce capacity.** Can data centers create new jobs? How well will those jobs be compensated, and will workforce availability or capacity be a concern? Can/should Project Labor Agreements be required of developers?
- **Community consent and local control.** How will local communities and residents be included in zoning, tax, and incentive decisions? Can the state prohibit NDAs that hide deal terms and ensure public hearings before agreements are finalized? Should legally binding community benefit agreements be required?
- **Taxes and economic return to the state.** How much new tax revenue will data centers generate for host communities? To what extent will this offset infrastructure costs and environmental impacts? What could Maine stand to lose by not pursuing this opportunity compared to other states?
- **Privacy and security concerns.** Should communities be concerned about surveillance or security risks tied to the presence of large-scale data centers?

Annex 2: Mentimeter Results

Following the panel and before the Council discussion, participants were asked: *What questions or reflections do you have based on today's conversations?* We received 32 answers from 21 participants, with some participants offering multiple answers.

- I wish local officials with experience had been asked to participate today.
- Agree 100% municipal officials are not overwhelmed but are taking the necessary steps to effectively engage the communities.
- Leveraging existing public assets represents an opportunity to capture full value of Data Center development (ie; existing facilities, fiber networks, water and energy infrastructure etc.)
- Communities could benefit from additional infrastructure, including data centers, if planned and negotiated properly.
- I'm concerned that communities once again will be fed information by developers that is inaccurate or filled with false promises and I would like to make sure that there are measures in place to ensure
- Towns need actual information rather than reacting to kneejerk fears, but this may also counter the potential for other beneficial large loads being contaminated by the data center narratives.

- Reflecting that setting aside the potential downsides, there could be real economic benefits for communities (tax revenue, some good-paying jobs, etc.) but will have to be balanced.
- Reflections: Great workshop/webinar. Clarifying question: Little mention of location & climate risk associated with DCs. Rising temperatures, sea level rise will impact H2O & energy impact/demand.”
- Data centers require fiber. Cost for dark fiber when fiber is implemented, is comparatively small. Having data centers manage access for remote communities would provide benefit for Maine. Thoughts?
- Why were no local officials invited to participate in the panel?
- Happy to hear discussion about the opportunities data centers might offer.
- Could we create a tool that communities could use to figure out if it's advantageous to them to have a data center? Something that gives rough \$\$, ideas for next steps with revenue, cautions, etc.?
- Discussion around community impact on jobs, best way to protect the municipalities. Agree having a state sponsored expert help communities work through decisions and contracts is also excellent idea.
- Helpful info from Berkley lab to identify both regulatory considerations but also the economic opportunities when data center siting is "done right"
- Communities in rural Maine need assistance now - not later. Look at Eastport - a submarine data center proposal is about to go to FERC for the second time.
- The discussion around developing expertise and consistent language and definitions at the state level to be referenced by municipal decision makers strikes me as being an important resource.
- I'm a newly elected select board member for my small town. Many residents are concerned about data centers but it's a black box so I appreciate these meeting for the specific info/examples conveyed
- Excellent summaries, especially by Alex Hubbard, as well as great follow-up comments. Appreciated the real-life data! Are any developers asking Maine to build datacenters at this time?
- Communities need access/entry to establishing parameters the State will be putting in place re: siting/constructing data centers. When/how will that happen?
- A lot of great information is being shared. This is presented in such a way that welcomes varied feedback, which addresses many questions encircling data centers.
- It sounds like the discussion is focused on how to do Data Centers in Maine and not whether Maine should do Data Centers. Can Council look more deeply into the reasons not to have data centers in ME
- Expert neutral advisors/negotiators definitely needed to support communities
- What communities have already created ordinances to site data centers (such as Brewer) and do they have standard definitions that could be used to develop that statewide framework that was mentioned?
- The negative narrative about data centers has overwhelmed public sentiment. Hoping the opportunities they present can find its way back into the spotlight to help support communities that want one

- Regulatory oversight is one important consideration. But also critical to examine what that oversight sends as a signal to investors., e.g. "are we open for business?"
- To Michael's point- the shopping malls & large box store developments of the 80's and 90's contain valuable lessons for today's municipal decision makers re: dealing with corporate entities
- I have been capturing info the various state agencies mentioned and sharing them with my town manager and fellow select board members (3 out of 5 are new to office). We don't know what we don't know.
- What parts of Maine do developers target for datacenters?
- My apology if this was covered and I missed it. What are Medical/health impacts and costs? Things like noise pollution can result in chronic medical conditions that cost patients and insurance dollars.
- Towns need guarantees not just "anticipated" benefits
- Huge asymmetry at the negotiating table with municipal officials and developers
- Towns need to be sure to address the issue of what happens if a data center leaves after X years