

DRAFT MINUTES
JACKSON COUNTY ZONING COMMISSION

6:00 p.m.

Monday, December 15, 2025

Community Room, Jackson County Courthouse
201 W Platt Street, Maquoketa, Iowa

Commissioners Present: Chair Mike Burke Commissioners, Kristine Pfab, Monica McHugh, and Brian Venema

Commissioners Excused: Sandra Gerlach, Emerita Kies, Tom Stewart

Staff Member Present: Becca Pflughaupt

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL: The meeting was called to order by Chair Burke at 6:00 p.m. and roll call taken. A sign-in sheet was distributed. The Zoom meeting was launched. Those noted in attendance were:

Randy Rowan – Spragueville

Rhonda Rowan - Spragueville

MINUTES

Commissioners reviewed the minutes of the November 17, 2025 meeting. With no corrections noted, a motion was made by McHugh and seconded by Pfab to approve the minutes as submitted. Motion carried by voice vote.

WORK SESSION

Data Processing / “High Density Computing Facilities” Ordinance Draft

The Commission resumed its work session on the draft ordinance regulating facilities commonly referred to as data centers / crypto mining operations.

A. Title/Terminology Consistency

The Commission discussed inconsistency in terminology throughout the draft (e.g., “Data Processing and Crypto Mining Facilities” vs. “High Density Computing Facilities”). The Commission directed staff to make the terminology consistent throughout, aligned with the defined term.

B. Staff Summary of Changes Since November 17, 2025 Work Session

Staff summarized key updates incorporated since the prior meeting, including:

- Cooling systems requiring air-cooled or closed-loop systems,
- Addition of structural standards,
- Clarification that sanitary systems are deferred to Health Department authority,
- Clarification of Board of Adjustment approval terminology, and
- Completion of draft sections not previously reached, including road use and infrastructure agreement, decommissioning and abandonment, enforcement and penalties, and miscellaneous provisions.

C. Agricultural Resource Considerations (CSR / Prime Agricultural Land)

The Commission discussed whether to more explicitly address CSR scores and/or prime/highly productive agricultural land in siting considerations. Discussion included:

- Concerns about removal of productive crop and pasture ground from agricultural use,
- Consideration of landowner rights and evolving agricultural productivity over time,

- Support for language framing this as a siting consideration rather than an outright prohibition,
- The potential to add "check boxes" / evaluation factors to strengthen the review record.

D. Road Use and Infrastructure

Staff introduced the road use and infrastructure section and noted intent to keep it consistent with the County's wind energy ordinance approach and prior coordination with the County Engineer's Office.

E. Decommissioning and Abandonment

Staff reviewed draft decommissioning plan requirements (engineer-sealed plan; dismantling/removal; restoration; topsoil replacement; cost estimate excluding salvage value; identification of responsible parties; erosion control; grading/revegetation). The Commission discussed:

- The relationship between ordinance requirements and private contracts,
- Responsibility if an operator fails to decommission,
- Whether certain provisions should be reviewed by the County Attorney.

F. Enforcement and Penalties

Staff reviewed the enforcement framework, including:

- Operator responsibility for performance standards (noise, vibration, water use, waste management, fire safety, testing),
- Landowner responsibility related to land use authorization and restoration if operator defaults/abandons,
- Potential joint/several liability concepts,
- Violation notice procedures (notice to operator, copied to landowner; corrective action/timeframe),
- Potential enforcement actions (citations/fines; suspension/revocation of BOA approval; shutdown orders for imminent threats; civil abatement/nuisance action),
- Cost recovery concepts including possible lien authority.

The Commission discussed the need to ensure the County's authority is clear and legally defensible.

G. Miscellaneous Provisions

The Commission discussed:

- Non-transferability of approvals without prior County approval,
- Conflict of regulations and whether the County can be more restrictive than the State in certain contexts,
- Severability, and
- Periodic review (e.g., at least every three years to address regulatory/technology changes).

ADDITIONAL REVISITS / CLEANUP ITEMS (SECTIONS 3–12)

The Commission and staff briefly revisited prior sections and noted additional cleanup items, including:

- Pre-application conference language revised from "strongly encouraged" to required meeting with applicable officials.
- Courtesy notices described as supplemental mailed notice (in addition to published notice), mailed by regular mail to property owners within one mile.

- Clarification of the sequence for Zoning Commission and Board of Adjustment review depending on whether a rezoning is required.
- Setback discussion, including consistency with wind ordinance concepts for certain sensitive features (e.g., sinkholes/karst-sensitive areas) and consistency checks on numeric standards.
- Noise standards discussion, including concerns about whether 50 dBA is appropriate, and whether setbacks vs. noise limits should be adjusted; staff was directed to research comparative approaches and defensibility.
- Monitoring/testing discussion (baseline noise testing; post-operation testing; and testing in response to complaints), including the role of administrative discretion to address repeat/unfounded complaints while still allowing enforcement when warranted.
- Discussion of language such as “materially reducing service quality,” and whether certain electrical grid/backup power testing provisions fall outside land use authority; Commission indicated these issues should be reviewed for zoning scope and potentially referred to the County Attorney.
- Addition of “e-waste” terminology and direction to check DNR-related requirements and whether certain removal/documentation requirements are within County authority.
- Noted formatting consistency issues in one section (shading/bullets) for staff cleanup.
- Discussion that some exterior lighting standards may already exist in older County zoning provisions; staff to check and align.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was received during the work session.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS / STAFF UPDATES

Staff noted the next regular meeting date and agenda expectations. The Commission confirmed the next meeting as: Monday, January 19, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

Staff provided a brief update that the Board of Supervisors had signed the zoning ordinance. Staff noted receiving questions from residents regarding spring projects and that some residents were pleased with new zoning regulations after staff explained changes.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by McHugh and seconded by Pfab. Motion carried by voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Becca Pflughaupt
Zoning Administrator

Adopted: 2/16/2026