

HEARD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WORK SESSION
November 18, 2025 – 4:00 P.M.

The Heard County Board of Commissioners held a work session on November 18, 2025, at 4:00 p.m. in the Commission Chamber of the Heard County Administration Building. In attendance at the meeting were Chairman Tracy McCormick, District 1 Commissioner Curtis Mock, District 2 Commissioner James Perry, District 3 Commissioner Iris Harris, District 4 Commissioner Larry Hammond, District 5 Commissioner David Walls, and Deputy Clerk Sandy Cox.

District 2 Commissioner James Perry opened the meeting by welcoming and introducing Dr. Julie Post, President of West Georgia Technical College, and Senator Tim Bearden. They were invited to provide background on the rapid growth of data centers in Georgia and the factors driving national demand, including AI, cloud services, mobile applications, and the increasing volume of digital data. Dr. Post explained the involvement of major companies—Microsoft, Google, and Amazon Web Services—in workforce development, training programs, and regional partnerships. She noted that over twenty data-center projects are in development across her service area alone, with incentives, infrastructure, and Georgia’s business climate making the state a competitive location.

The Board discussed several major projects, which demonstrated how companies often partner with local governments on water, sewer, and other improvements. Senator Bearden added that states like Texas are aggressively positioning themselves to lead in data-center and SMR development, emphasizing the importance of local governments being prepared with the right questions when developers approach them.

Noise levels, water use, and other public concerns were discussed. Dr. Post reported that in her experience touring facilities, noise inside and outside modern data centers is minimal, aside from occasional generator testing. She and others stressed that misinformation spreads quickly on social media and can derail good projects, so counties must be proactive in educating residents with accurate

information. Georgia Power has stated it will not approve any data center that reduces power availability to residential customers, and modern facilities offer efficient closed-loop cooling systems that greatly reduce water consumption.

The Board acknowledged the economic benefits data centers bring, primarily from the high taxable value of equipment housed inside the buildings and from recurring replacement cycles that create ongoing local spending. Commissioners agreed that Heard County must prepare ordinances and infrastructure expectations in advance to avoid being caught off guard, since companies often prefer communities with clear processes, partnerships, and minimal conflict.

Later in the meeting, the discussion shifted to water, septic systems, and lot-size requirements. Jake Holiday, a representative from the Health Department, explained that although small lots once required county water because wells and septic systems cannot safely coexist at close distances, state law now prevents counties from denying a well based solely on lot size. If state-mandated setbacks can be met, a well must be allowed. To manage this, Carroll County's Board of Health adopted a rule in 2017 requiring at least half an acre of usable septic area regardless of total lot size. This rule has reduced subdivision issues and may serve as a model for updating rules in Heard County, particularly for commercial properties. The representative offered to draft proposed language for county review and coordinate with planning staff. He noted that septic denials in Heard County are rare due to its larger, rural lots, and that most problems occur when buyers fail to do due diligence before purchasing land.

The Board discussed lessons from Peachtree City, Douglas County, and other communities where either misinformation caused unnecessary conflict or well-structured ordinances facilitated successful partnerships. Heard County leaders agreed they need to move quickly to develop clear data-center ordinances, educate the public, and position the county for future opportunities. They noted the

county's financial realities and the need to expand the tax base, as existing residents cannot continue subsidizing the full cost of essential services.

The work session ended with no official action being taken.

End time 6:13 p.m.

Katrina Billingsley

County Clerk

Date 12/16/25

Tracy McLean

Chairman

