

Data Centers

From Front

ter item to the top of the agenda, acknowledging that most of the crowd had turned out specifically for that discussion. He introduced the measure as Ordinance No. O-7-13-26-1, a 15-page document he said had been roughly a year in the making in consultation with the county’s legal counsel at KACo and County Attorney Chris Whitworth.

Elleman told the audience that many residents had urged the court to enact a moratorium on data center development, but that county attorneys advised that a moratorium is not legally available to Garrard County because it lacks county-wide planning and zoning. As a result, the court pursued a standalone ordinance instead, drawing heavily on the Kentucky Resources Council’s model data center “home rule” ordinance.

“I’m not a fan of data centers,” Elleman said on the record, adding that he believed the proposed rules were intentionally strict. He emphasized that no data center company has approached Garrard County about a project, and that the ordinance is intended to get protective standards in place before any developer comes calling. He noted that a similar ordinance passed elsewhere last year appears to have already deterred inquiries, telling the crowd that prospective developers who learn a protective ordinance exists tend to “hang up” once they hear it.

According to Elleman’s summary and the ordinance text distributed at the meeting, the measure would:

- Prohibit data centers on prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance, as

well as on slopes over 20 percent, in floodplains, within 50 feet of wetlands, in karst-vulnerable terrain, or where threatened or endangered species or critical habitat would be affected.

- Impose setback requirements — 1,500 feet from any “Sensitive Use” (homes, schools, churches, hospitals, daycares, nursing homes, agricultural operations, etc.) or the boundary of residential, commercial or agricultural property, with additional 1,000–2,000-foot setbacks for emission points or exhaust stacks from backup power systems.

- Set strict noise limits of 40 dBA/60 DBC at night (10 p.m.–7 a.m.) and 45 dBA/65 DBC during other hours, measured at the property line, along with vibration and low-frequency infrasound standards tied to ANSI and ISO human-exposure guidelines.

- Require extensive lighting controls (full cutoff/shielded fixtures, a 0.1 foot-candle limit at the property line, automatic dimming or shutoff after hours).

- Mandate landscape buffering, screening and berming, and restrict fencing materials and height.

- Require a detailed application including a site development plan, traffic study, noise assessment prepared by a certified acoustical engineer, waste management plan, water and wastewater usage assessment, emissions assessment, and a property-value impact appraisal for landowners within one mile of a proposed facility.

- Require documented proof from utility providers that a project’s power, water and wastewater demands can be met without raising costs or reducing service quality

for existing customers.

- Give the Fiscal Court authority to hire an outside consultant, at the applicant’s expense, to review any application.

- Require a decommissioning plan prepared by a registered professional engineer, including a cost estimate and a performance bond or letter of credit payable to the Fiscal Court to guarantee removal of the facility if the developer defaults.

- Require final approval by the Fiscal Court only after public notice and a hearing, meaning any real project would face a town-hall-style process before construction.

Beth Carlin, a District 4 resident, was the first to speak and delivered the evening’s most extensive remarks. She said she believed the state should be regulating data centers rather than leaving the burden to counties, but urged the court to treat the first reading as a critical moment rather than a formality. She pressed the magistrates on how residents could formally propose changes to the ordinance before the second reading, in writing, individually, or otherwise, and asked the court to publicize upcoming town halls more broadly than Facebook, saying she had struggled to find information about the meeting online.

Carlin also used her time to propose a separate amendment to the county’s Code of Ethics Ordinance that would bar any elected official, appointed official or county employee from signing a non-disclosure or confidentiality agreement with a private developer regarding data center negotiations, except where confidentiality is required by state or federal law. She argued that NDAs “weaponize secrecy against the taxpayers” and that residents have a right to know what commitments officials

make on their behalf.

Later in the meeting, Carlin returned to the microphone with specific technical requests: raising the setback from 1,500 feet to a minimum of 2,600 feet (roughly half a mile), tightening the nighttime noise limit to 45 dBA rather than a higher figure some jurisdictions allow, adding cemeteries to the list of protected sites requiring setbacks, and raising the decommissioning financial assurance to a minimum of 150 percent of estimated costs.

Angela Lee, a Boyle County resident who said she lives on the lake and raises horses, urged magistrates to personally visit communities near existing data centers to see the effects firsthand, citing disruption to horse breeding cycles and cattle as an example of impacts not always captured in written reports.

Ellen Hopp, describing herself as a new Garrard County resident and a former environmental consultant, asked procedural questions about the timeline before the second reading (set for July 27) and how residents could submit comments in the interim. She raised concerns about water quality given what she described as reduced state-level water protections in Kentucky, noting she and her family had moved to the county specifically to live near the Dix River. Hopp also cautioned the court about how it selects the third-party consultant authorized under the ordinance, warning from professional experience that developers often steer applicants toward friendly consultants and urging a screening process independent of any applicant’s influence. She offered to help design that process.

Ken Hurt urged the court to seek a broader consen-

sus from county and city residents on data centers generally, citing concern about shared water resources with neighboring Boyle, Jessamine and Madison counties and the volume of water used for cooling systems. He said he worried the ordinance, despite its restrictions, effectively signals openness to data center development. Elleman responded that he saw the ordinance as protective groundwork meant to be in place before any company approaches the county, not an invitation.

Mary Jane McKenzie, a visitor from Mercer County, raised concerns about noise carrying farther than the ordinance assumes, citing her understanding that sound can travel a mile and a half to two miles rather than the half-mile reflected in the proposed setback.

Magistrate Glendan Barker raised several concerns during the magistrates’ discussion period, including whether the proposed 1,500-foot setback was adequate compared to other jurisdictions using 2,000 feet or more, and whether noise limits were strict enough given research he said showed some facilities registering 60–80 decibels at the property line. He also flagged the ordinance’s slope restriction (properties with grades over 20 percent) as relevant to Garrard County’s hilly terrain, particularly around Buckeye.

Barker and Elleman also discussed correspondence and meetings with outside experts, including a private study conducted by a University of Louisville professor and separate written comments submitted by a resident, Stephanie Able, on water-related concerns. Elleman said most of those concerns were already addressed in the draft ordi-

nance, with one exception: a request to add a provision explicitly allowing residents to sue over violations, which Elleman said the court would not include, noting that residents already retain the right to pursue legal action independent of the ordinance.

County Attorney Chris Whitworth told the audience that, while the county cannot stop a landowner from selling property to a developer, the ordinance’s siting restrictions and setback requirements would make it “nearly impossible” to actually locate a data center within the county.

After discussion, Magistrate Barker made a motion to approve the first reading of the ordinance with a correction to the setback provision discussed during the meeting; Magistrate Chris Davis seconded. County Treasurer Jennifer Seagraves conducted a roll call vote, with magistrates Barker, Preston, Day, Butner and Davis all voting yes. The first reading passed unanimously.

Under Kentucky law, the ordinance must be advertised for two weeks before a second reading, which Elleman said is scheduled for the court’s next regular meeting on July 27.

That reading will include a vote on whether to formally adopt the ordinance.

Elleman and several magistrates encouraged residents to submit feedback before then; by phone, email, in person, or through neighborhood or subdivision meetings the judge executive said he would be willing to attend personally.

Printed copies of the full ordinance were made available to attendees at the meeting.

Circuit Clerk

From Front

acknowledging that while retirement has long been anticipated, saying goodbye has proven far more difficult than she expected.

She credited former Circuit Clerk Jennifer Grubbs with giving her the opportunity that launched her career and thanked Judge Hunter Daughtery for placing his confidence in her by appointing her as Circuit Clerk, calling the appointment one of the greatest honors of her life.

Hensley repeatedly turned the spotlight away from herself and toward the people she worked alongside every day.

She offered heartfelt appreciation to Chief Deputy Bridgett Sebastian, describing her as both her “right hand” and a loyal friend whose work ethic and sense of humor made every day

better. She praised bookkeeper Bethany Denny as one of the smartest and kindest people she knows and recognized Nancy Moberly for years of dependable service and friendship. Together, she said, the three women stood beside her through countless challenges and successes, providing support she will never forget.

Hensley also expressed gratitude for current staff members Stephanie Taylor, Whitney Prewitt, Julie Teater and Theresa Sanders Long, while recognizing Shelia Gutenson and Twyla Thomas as valued members of the courthouse family despite serving outside the Circuit Clerk’s office. She also thanked Montez Ison, saying his friendship and ability to bring laughter into the workplace made each day brighter.

Looking back on her years

at the Garrard County Justice Center, Hensley said she had the privilege of working among some of the finest public servants in Kentucky. She thanked Judges Hunter Daughtery, Jeff Moss, Bill Oliver and Janet Booth for their leadership, along with County Attorney Chris Whitworth and Commonwealth’s Attorney Andy Sims for their partnership and dedication to serving the county.

She also paid tribute to the Court Security officers who, she said, not only protected courthouse employees and visitors each day but also helped create a welcoming atmosphere, often lifting spirits with music and fellowship during busy days at the courthouse.

Hensley recognized a long list of current and former coworkers whose friendships and contributions enriched her career, saying each person left a lasting and positive impact on her life. She

be determined by the State Medical Examiner’s Office in Frankfort.

“Our thoughts and prayers are with the Svintozelskiy family during this extremely difficult time,” said Col. Jeremy McQueary, direc-

tor of the Law Enforcement Division for Kentucky Fish and Wildlife.

“The family is sincerely appreciative of the outpouring of love and support from the community,” Peterson said. “I am also impressed by the number of witnesses who have come forward with useful and relevant information.

the bridge may be structurally passable before the permanent guardrail is installed.

“They’ll have the bridge deck down, I’d say, rocking the next week,” he added, though he stopped short of guaranteeing the guardrail would arrive in time for the school start date.

Elleman said he has personally visited the site “a couple times” to check on progress and credited the crew’s pace of work.

also expressed appreciation to Garrard County’s elected officials and magistrates for their public service while remembering the late Ronnie Wardrip as a mentor whose guidance helped shape her along the way.

As one chapter closes, Hensley said she is looking forward to spending more time with those closest to her. She thanked her husband, Greg, for standing beside her throughout her career, supporting her through political events and the demands of public office. Retirement, she said, will bring more opportunities to enjoy fishing together, while also allowing her to spend treasured time with her son, Hunter Hensley, daughter-in-law Marissa Ives Hensley, and grandchildren Annzley and Jhett, who are already making plans to teach their grandmother how to farm.

While reflecting on the emotions of retirement, Hensley acknowledged that

being led by the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources Law Enforcement Division in collaboration with the Commonwealth Attorney’s Office.

Anyone with information

We will continue to investigate until those at fault are held accountable.”

The family has requested privacy as they mourn.

The attorneys said they are seeking additional information from anyone who witnessed the collision or has

leaving the people she has worked beside for so many years has been the hardest part of the decision.

“I have looked forward to this day for a long time, but now that it’s here, I realize just how much I’m going to miss the people I’ve worked with and the community I’ve been blessed to serve,” she said.

Hensley also announced that Bethany Denny will succeed her as Garrard County Circuit Clerk. Denny, who has served in the office since 2002, recently passed the Kentucky Circuit Court Clerks examination and will be appointed by Judge Hunter Daughtery on Aug. 1.

Calling Denny “incredibly smart, dedicated, hardworking, and more than qualified,” Hensley said she is proud to pass the responsibility of leading the office to someone she has worked beside for more than two decades. She expressed confidence that Garrard

County’s Circuit Clerk’s Office will remain in capable hands for years to come.

In closing, Hensley offered one final message to the citizens she has served throughout her career.

She thanked the people of Garrard County for their trust, kindness and support, saying she hopes every person who came through the courthouse doors was met with kindness, understanding, respect and a willingness to help.

For Hensley, retirement marks more than the end of a career, it closes a chapter built on public service, lasting friendships and a deep commitment to the community she has faithfully served. As she leaves the office she has called home for so many years, she does so with gratitude, cherished memories and the knowledge that her legacy will continue through the people she mentored and the lives she touched along the way.

about the incident is asked to contact Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Law Enforcement via Kentucky State Police Post 7 at 859-623-2404.

photographs or video of the incident.

Authorities have not released additional details about the cause of the crash, and no findings have been announced as the investigation remains ongoing.

describing plans to “line that channel work” on both sides of the creek and around a bend where one side of a wing wall extends into the waterway.

The rock will help protect the property of a nearby landowner whose land borders the project, Ford said, and will also help stabilize banks that have been eroding near the site.

Bridge Repair

From Front

walls), and topped off those structures. Concrete cylinder strength tests were run Monday morning to clear the concrete for backfilling, which was scheduled to begin Tuesday. Ford also said his team has been coordinating debris removal at the site of the old school building near the project,