

What candidates in Lexington vice mayor race say about data centers

BY BETH MUSGRAVE
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The six people who want to be Lexington’s next vice mayor agree on one thing: data centers need regulation.

The candidates, though, disagree on what those regulations should look like.

The Nov. 3 general election for the at-large race pits two incumbents, Vice Mayor Dan Wu and Lexington-Fayette Urban County At-Large Councilman James Brown, against four challengers: Stephanie Spires, Tate Ohmer, Herbert Lynn and Chris Shafer.

The top vote-getter in the nonpartisan election becomes vice mayor. The second and third place finishers become at-large members. The vice mayor and at-large members serve four years and represent all of Lexington. Council district members serve two years.

Longtime At-large Councilman Chuck Ellinger opted not to run for reelection this year.

DATA CENTER REGULATION A TOP ELECTION ISSUE IN LEXINGTON

Regulation of data centers has emerged as a top election issue in Lexington, other Kentucky counties and across the country.

The council imposed a moratorium on all data centers until Oct. 31. It is currently reviewing an ordinance that would put limitations on data centers. That ordinance would largely prohibit data centers in most zones. Small data centers of less than 40,000 square feet would be allowed in industrial zones as a conditional use. The proposal also includes an energy cap and requires multiple studies including a stormwater management

plan. The council could vote on the proposed regulations after a 5:30 p.m. Oct. 6 public hearing, where citizens are allowed to give input.

SHAFER, WU, LYNN AGAINST CONSTRUCTION OF NEW DATA CENTERS

Chris Shafer, a city employee, who is running in his first council race, said after listening to many Lexington residents, he supports a ban on all data centers in Lexington.

“I support no data centers in Lexington at this time,” said Shafer, a longtime Lexington resident and Bryan Station High School graduate.

“I recognize that data centers can bring significant investment, construction jobs and additional tax revenue to a community,” Shafer said. “But we also have to consider the long-term costs and demands they can place on our electric infrastructure. Data centers operate around the clock and can require enormous amounts of electricity.”

Wu, a former restaurant and small business owner, who was the top vote-getter in the 2022 at-large race, said residents have legitimate concerns about water, electricity and utility usage.

“I have heard from our community and I share your concerns about the potential harms of new data centers to our city,” Wu said. “I am opposed to the construction of new data centers, large or small, that increase our utility bills, use water intensively, or cause environmental, noise, light, or other negative impacts on our residents.”

Herbert Lynn, a democratic socialist, an HVAC dispatcher and community organizer, said he supports a ban on large data centers.

“I support a permanent ban on the construction of hyperscale and AI data centers in Fayette County,” Lynn said. “These data centers have proven time and time again to be a blight on the communities in which they are built – communities that are often made up of marginalized, working-class people. They cause deadly air and noise pollution, consume a massive amount of water, and drive up energy bills for folks that are already struggling to make ends meet.”

SPIRES, OHMER, BROWN TAKE DIFFERENT APPROACH

Spires, who served on the Fayette County Board of Education from 2017 to 2022, said she is opposed to large data centers but said she thinks data center regulations needs more study. Spires, who has worked for various education and youth-centered nonprofits, said she would like to see the issue returned to a council committee for further study.

“I have concerns with the current proposal and would like to see the moratorium extended and this issue placed into committee to allow for more clarity around this issue,” Spires said. “I believe size, scale, and location are important and we need to have an understanding as to where these will be located and how they will impact the community. I do believe we should ban large data centers as the priority for many is housing and jobs, neither of which are created by large data centers.”

Brown, a real estate agent who has served on the council since 2015, said he opposes all large data centers.

“I have some serious concerns with the current Zone Text Amendment for small-scale data centers,”

said Brown. “Residents have made clear that it does not address all of their concerns. In addition, I believe the policy does not adequately address existing technology centers and the needs of our local business community. It would also be helpful to have better guidance from state and federal governments.”

“I do support a permanent ban on hyperscale data centers in Lexington-Fayette County,” Brown said. “Residents and the broader community have made their position crystal clear, and we should listen.”

Ohmer, a Transylvania University graduate, campaign consultant and first-time council candidate, said data centers are needed, but the city needs a measured approach.

“My concern surrounding data centers is not size as much as it is energy usage. A facility can be utterly massive and simultaneously not be as intense in using power or water as a smaller, energy-intense center,” Ohmer said. “Newer facilities, especially in the post-AI world, operate with a great deal more power per square foot than the former Lexmark facility did when it was set up as a data center in the 1980s. I would much rather see the city regulate intense utility usage, since that is what has the most potential to increase our water and power bills.”

DartPoints, a developer, has proposed using a current data center on the Lexmark property. Those plans have stalled due to the moratorium.

Ohmer also said he is concerned about an “out-right ban because that may leave us with unintended consequences. For example, banks and hospitals rely on server rooms or smaller-scale centers to hold crucial data both on site and away from hackers or potential data leaks,” he said.

Investigation into death of 7-year-old girl reopened as a homicide, police say

BY KARLA WARD
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An investigation into the 2020 death of a 7-year-old girl has been reopened, and law enforcement in south-central Kentucky say they now believe the child died by homicide.

New information and evidence has been recovered in the death of Revelin Meador, which led to the case being reclassified as a homicide and reopened early this month, the Allen County-Scottsville Crime Task Force said Tuesday.

Revelin died Aug. 1, 2020, on Celsor Road in Fountain Run, according to the task force. The community is about 150 miles south of Lexington, near the Kentucky-Tennessee state line.

The task force said investigators are “moving deliberately through the newly acquired data” and are “calling on the public to help finalize the timeline.”

They are reaching out to people who might have been on Celsor Road around August 2020.

“Even the smallest detail you remember could solidify the final pieces of this case,” the task force said in a social media post Tuesday.

“To those who have carried knowledge of this crime or protected those responsible: the circle of information is tightening. Relationships change, alliances fade, and secrets become a liability,”



Allen County-Scottsville Crime Task Force

Revelin Meador

the agency said. “We are actively speaking with individuals connected to this case, and the window to come forward voluntarily is rapidly closing. The choice to cooperate and control your own narrative is yours before that choice is taken away from you entirely.

“The Allen County Scottsville Crime Task Force will not rest, stall, or back down until those responsible face the full weight of the law. Let it be completely clear to the community and to those hiding from the truth: this unit operates with zero tolerance for delays, and we will exhaust every resource, follow every lead, and tear down every wall to secure absolute justice for Revelin Meador.”

Anyone with information is asked to contact the lead investigator on the case, Detective Robert Smith, at r.smith@scottsvillepolice.org.

Isaias reaches hurricane status, forecast to hit Gulf Coast on Saturday

BY BRAD BROOKS AND NATHAN CROOKS
Reuters

Hurricane Isaias formed in the Gulf late Wednesday and is forecast to strengthen before slamming into the southern Gulf Coast early on Saturday, bringing heavy rains, storm surges, and possible tornadoes across several states, the National Hurricane Center said.

NHC Director Michael Brennan said in a video briefing on Wednesday that Isaias could be a “major” hurricane - Category 3 or higher - when it makes landfall and could have “multiple, life-threatening impacts from storm surge, heavy rainfall flooding and hurricane-force winds.”

Isaias is the first hurricane of the season in the Atlantic, according to the NHC, tying the record for the latest first Atlantic hurricane with one that hit on Oct. 8, 1905. The strong El Niño weather pattern this year has suppressed Atlantic hurricane development by increasing vertical wind shear, which disrupts the formation of strengthening tropical storms.

The NHC expects Isaias to quickly pick up power over the warm Gulf waters before making landfall early on Saturday, most likely somewhere along the Mississippi, Alabama or Florida Panhandle coast.

In its 11:30 p.m. Eastern advisory on Wednesday, the NHC said the storm has maximum sustained winds at 75 mph. Isaias, moving east-northeast at 9 mph, was about 180 miles northwest of Progreso, Mexico, and about 460 miles south-southwest of the mouth of the Mississippi River.

A hurricane warning was

in effect from Ocean Springs, Mississippi to the Bay/Gulf County Line, Florida. A tropical storm warning was issued from the Jefferson/Plaquemines parish line, Louisiana, to west of Ocean Springs, Mississippi, and east of the Bay/Gulf county line to Aucilla River, Florida.

Isaias could produce isolated rainfall amounts of 10 inches across parts of the Gulf Coast, stretching from Louisiana to the Florida Panhandle, the NHC said in its latest bulletin.

Tornadoes are possible in the rainbands of Isaias across the Florida Panhandle and Alabama from Friday evening through Saturday, with more tornadoes expected further inland as the storm moves north.

The storm could also produce 1 to 3 inches of rain further inland, with the NHC warning that “flash and urban flooding, along with isolated river flooding, will be possible” across the Southeast.

A storm surge warning was in effect for the mouth of the Mississippi River to the Steinhatchee River, Florida. A storm surge watch was in effect from the Steinhatchee River to Yankeetown, Florida.

Isaias is expected to run into strong upper-level winds, known as vertical

wind shear, in the final 24 hours before it reaches the northern Gulf Coast, which could weaken the storm.

Still, the NHC says it is “looking more likely that Isaias will be a significant hurricane when it reaches the coast.”

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis on Tuesday had already declared a state of emergency for portions of the state. Some officials across the Panhandle were urging residents to voluntarily evacuate.

Florida U.S. Sen. Rick Scott wrote on social media that he had spoken with President Donald Trump about the storm, and that “the federal government is going to show up for Florida and make sure we have everything needed to prepare, respond, and recover.”

The storm is expected to pass through areas with significant offshore oil and gas production, along with onshore refining facilities, which could pressure inventories and already-high prices at the pump.

About 11.2 million barrels of oil production could be lost across the Gulf through the duration of the storm, a marked increase from the 7.1 million barrels impacted by Tropical Storm Bertha in July, according to a model forecast from consulting firm Earth Science Associates.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Pursuant to KRS 241.066, KRS 241.067 and KRS 241.068, the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control gives notice of the following vacancies in Fayette County:

- a. Four (4) Quota Retail Package Liquor Licenses

Applications for these quota vacancies will be accepted by the Department for a period of thirty (30) days following this announcement.

Scotty Tracy, Commissioner
Maggie Woods, Distilled Spirits Administrator
Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control
500 Mero Street, 2NE33
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