

Town of Scarborough Sustainability Committee

July 22, 2026 | 8:00 – 9:30 a.m. | Hybrid Meeting – Town Manager’s Conference Room and Zoom

To participate in the Sustainability Committee’s meeting, please use the following link:
https://scarboroughmaine.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_0SBd0bE-T3qe7GdKt1KK4g

To view in the Sustainability Committee’s meeting, please use the following link:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCD5Y8CFy5HpXMftV3xX73aw>

Agenda

- 8:00 am** **Call to order and attendance**
- (1) Welcome and introductions
 - (2) Vote on minutes from 6/24/26
 - (3) Review 7/22/26 meeting agenda
 - (4) Public Comment
- 8:10 am** **Old Business**
- (1) Data Centers
 - Overview of Town Council process
 - Review GPCOG information
 - Review draft Data Center Pros and Cons
 - (2) Sustainable Scarborough Day – determine plans for 2026
- 9:15 am** **Updates**
- (1) Town Council
 - (2) Planning Board
 - (3) Transportation Committee
 - (4) Conservation Commission
 - (5) Climate Action Plan
 - (6) Scarborough Public Library
- 9:25 am** **Next meeting**
August 26, 2026
- 9:30 am** **Adjourn**

Town of Scarborough Sustainability Committee

June 24, 2026 | 8:00 – 9:30 a.m. | Scarborough Town Hall and via Zoom

Meeting Minutes - DRAFT

Attendance

Committee (in person): Ron Allen, Anton Bodor, Lydia Jopp, Patrice Kastenholz, Deb McDonough, Dan Shapiro

Staff: Jami Fitch, Helen Harman, Autumn Speer

Guests (Zoom) Maggie Sommers and Sarah Woodbury from Maine Conservation Voters

[Meeting recording](#)

Call to Order

1. The meeting is called to order at 8:02 am.
2. Patrice motions to approve the minutes, Lydia seconds. Vote was unanimous. Motion passes.

Public Comment

1. None.

Old Business

1. Data Centers
 - Jami updated the group on the status of Scarborough's temporary moratorium on data center development. The Town Council passed the six-month moratorium at its 6/3 meeting. The moratorium is retroactive to 4/1 and is set to expire in November. The Town Council is able to pass a six-month extension, if needed.
 - Maggie Sommers and Sarah Woodbury from Maine Conservation Voters (MCV) attended the meeting to provide an overview of issues surrounding data center development, the State's Data Center Advisory Council, and things municipalities should consider when evaluating data centers as allowable uses in their ordinances. MCV has pull together a [community toolkit](#) to help municipalities navigate the data center issue.
 - Highlights from the discussion with MCV:
 - Some of DEP's existing regulations have loopholes or vague language. Vague language gives the Department flexibility to implement the rules, how the language is interpreted varies depending on who the Governor is.
 - There are gaps in the State's current regulations: noise standards, thermal pollution (DEP allows development to impact water temps $\pm 5^{\circ}\text{F}$, which is too much from some aquatic species), and more.
 - PFAS products law doesn't go into effect until 2032, so developments don't need to comply until then. The law also includes broad exemptions that data centers could exploit.

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- “Closed loop” facilities still have some discharges and have the potential to discharge pollutants.
- Wastewater treatment facilities may require upgrades. It’s not clear who is responsible for paying for those upgrades.
- Data centers tend to drive up the cost of electricity for everyone due to their high use of electricity.
- Need to specify who is responsible for clean up or decommissioning of defunct facilities.
- The Public Utilities Commission has a case looking into data centers. CMP’s most recent rate proposal does not include planning for an increase in load from data centers, which means they’re not investing in their infrastructure. Rate payers may end up paying for at least a portion of the grid upgrades due to data center development.
- Seven municipalities have passed a data center moratorium and four others are considering it.
- [Nassau County, FL’s](#) data center moratorium included language related to salt marshes and saltwater usage.
- Maine should look at state regulations around mining and use it as a model for data center regulations.
- Questions from Committee:
 - Is there any discussion of emergency legislation to try to pass another statewide moratorium?
No. MCV is willing to reach out to legislators to encourage emergency legislation be introduced. The chance that another moratorium passes the Legislature is unlikely for several reasons.
 - Are there any positive aspects of data centers?
The Data Center Advisory Council is overall cautiously positive about data centers. Most members want to ensure the development happens in a responsible way that won’t impact the health of the environment or communities. Former brownfield sites are ideal locations for data centers (especially in economically depressed towns)
 - What is the next step for the Advisory Council?
They will continue to hold monthly meetings on specific topics. The Council needs to figure out public comment, and MCV is tracking this issue and will publicize opportunities to engage. There is a survey on the Council’s website that closes soon that hasn’t been well publicized.
 - Is there a sense of what the Council’s final report will entail? It seems like they have pre-determined the outcomes.
Public engagement and comment will be critical. Transparency in the process is also very important.
 - Are there any good data center models in other areas of the country?
Not sure. There is guidance that exists, but unknown whether any data centers have followed it. There is new technology that is starting to be used that’s supposed to be better, but not sure if there is a facility that has put all technology into practice. There are also tradeoffs in some of the new technologies. For example, closed loop systems are better in terms of water use but they use much more energy for cooling systems.
 - Is there a place where good regulation exists and a data center has been developed?
Data center developers tend to avoid areas where regulations are very strong.
- The Committee discusses how to help inform Scarborough residents of opportunities to engage on this issue.
 - Info can be shared in the Town Manager’s update at Town Council meetings.
 - Provide information in the Town’s e-newsletter and on social media.

- Council's Communication Committee may be able to support engagement.
- Scarborough's state legislators may be able to share info in their newsletters and on their social media.
- Community Facebook groups have a high engagement and may be able to share information.
- There is a group of Scarborough residents who put out signs that may be able to help get the word out.
- What additional information does the Committee need?
 - Committee should review pros and cons to data center development. What is the lifespan of a data center? Can they be developed sustainably? If the cons outweigh the pros, the Town should either set regulations or outright ban them.
 - Is there a way to address future high-input (water, energy, etc.) uses that haven't been contemplated yet?
- Key questions the Town needs to consider during the moratorium:
 - Should data centers be allowed in town at all?
 - If yes, where should they be allowed?
 - Should they be allowed by right, or only through a conditional/special use process?
 - What standards should they have to meet?
 - What information should applicants be required to provide before the town makes a decision?
 - What independent technical review does the town need?
 - Who pays for any impacts, upgrades, or additional burdens on public systems?
- Role of the Committee during the moratorium:
 - Develop list of pros and cons.
 - Suggest other guardrails if the Council decides to include data centers as an allowable use.
- **ACTION: JAMI will share the Advisory Council website and survey with the Committee. Future surveys will also be shared out.**

Updates

1. Town Council
 - The mobile food vendor ordinance was revised to allow food trucks in more locations, and mobile saunas may soon be an allowed use in Scarborough.
2. Planning Board
 - Planning Board held a public hearing on mobile saunas, reviewed plans for trail parking at a Scarborough Land Trust parcel, and considered site plan amendments in The Downs.
3. Sustainable Scarborough Day
 - Response from vendors and partners has been low this year. The Committee will discuss how to move forward at the next meeting.
4. Transportation Committee
 - A public meeting with Metro is planned to review the new transit service on 7/28 at 6:00 pm.
5. Conservation Commission
 - Conservation Commission reviewed the Low Impact Development standards and a proposed tree cutting and site clearing ordinance.

Meeting adjourned at 9:29 am.

Next Meeting: July 22, 2026 at 8:00 am.

Future Projects List:

- School Building Process
- Communications, outreach, and engagement
- Community solar / municipal solar array
- Recycling information for homeowners when houses change hands
- Composting/food waste
- Residential energy efficiency grants
- Coordination with Scarborough Public Schools
- Municipal building energy audits
- Electric school buses
- Tree preservation ordinance
- Swap shop
- Energy stretch code
- Incremental fees for trash bins
- 10-year cost-benefit analysis for building systems
- Storm drain stenciling

Data Center Pros & Cons

July 2026

Pros

1. Tax revenue
Property value of the developed parcel will likely increase.
2. Job creation (short-term)
Temporary construction jobs are likely during site development process.
3. Infrastructure investment
Developers would likely need to upgrade portions of the power grid, substations, fiberoptic networks, etc.
4. Cleaner footprint than other industrial uses
Traditional industrial uses tend to produce more air pollution and traffic than data centers.

Cons

1. Electric grid strain
Maine's aging grid may not be able to withstand additional load.
2. Higher electric rates
Electric rates are influenced by usage/load, and Maine's electric rates are some of the highest in New England. High use data centers may drive up the cost of electricity for everyone else.
3. High water use
Facilities typically use evaporative cooling, which can consume millions of gallons of water per day, and facilities that use alternative cooling methods usually consume more electricity. Maine is already experiencing periods of prolonged drought, and properties west of the Turnpike have recently had to deal with wells going dry.
4. Potential to discharge pollutants to groundwater and surface waters
The majority of water in Scarborough flows to the Scarborough Marsh. Any discharge of pollutants could impact local streams and the Marsh, which would have far-reaching impact on fisheries, recreation, and tourism.
5. Noise pollution
Data centers commonly emit continuous, low-frequency humming from cooling units and other operations.
6. Minimal long-term job creation
Data centers operate with very few employees, creating few long-term, permanent jobs.

Data Centers – Fact Sheet

Purpose of this fact sheet

This fact sheet is intended to help GPCOG member municipalities understand common data center issues and identify questions that may be appropriate during local planning, zoning, site plan, or development review. It is not intended to recommend approval or denial of any particular project. Because data centers vary widely in size, design, electric demand, water use, cooling technology, backup power, and community impact, municipalities should review each proposal based on site-specific information.

What is a data center?

A data center is a room, building, facility, or campus that houses computer servers, data-storage systems, networking equipment, and related information technology infrastructure. Data centers are used to store, process, manage, and transmit digital information. They also typically include supporting systems such as electric service, backup power, cooling equipment, fire suppression, security, telecommunications connections, and environmental controls. [1] [2]

For municipal planning purposes, a data center should be understood as specialized infrastructure, not simply an office or warehouse with computers. Depending on the scale and design of the facility, a data center may require significant electric capacity, backup generation, utility upgrades, cooling systems, security infrastructure, emergency access, and water or wastewater capacity. These impacts can vary substantially from one project to another, so municipalities should request project-specific information rather than relying on general assumptions. [2] [3] [4]

What are data centers used for?

Data centers support many ordinary and essential digital services, including email, websites, cloud storage, business software, financial transactions, health care records, online commerce, public-sector services, video calls, artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and data backup. [1] [2] [5]

Common types of data centers:

Enterprise data centers: Facilities owned or operated by a single company or institution, usually to serve that organization's internal technology needs. [1]

Artificial intelligence (AI) data centers: A relatively new type of data center that uses high-performance computing equipment, including graphics processing units, to train, deploy, and run artificial intelligence applications. These facilities may require more power, cooling, networking capacity, and floor area than traditional enterprise data centers. [6]

Colocation data centers: Facilities where multiple customers rent space for servers and related equipment within a shared building or campus. The building owner typically provides power, cooling, bandwidth, security, and building systems. [1] [5]

Cloud or hyperscale data centers: Large-scale facilities that support cloud computing platforms and very large digital workloads. Major cloud providers include Amazon Web Services, Microsoft Azure, and Google Cloud. [1] [5]

Edge data centers: Smaller, decentralized facilities located closer to users or devices to reduce latency and support real-time applications. [1] [5]



A colocation data center. Image credit: Hanwah Data Centers, reproduced through Creative Commons license CC BY-NC 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

Potential benefits

Essential services

Data centers can provide important digital infrastructure for businesses, governments, institutions, and residents. They support cloud-based services that many organizations now rely on for daily operations, cybersecurity, communications, records management, and data backup. [1] [2] [5]

Economic benefits

Data centers can also generate economic benefits, especially during construction. Recent research from Brookings found that counties receiving their first large data center

experienced a 4% to 5% increase in total private employment over five to six years, with larger gains in construction and information sector employment. The same research found wage increases of approximately 3% to 4%, although the benefits vary by facility type, local labor market, and scale of investment. ***GPCOG staff note: These statistics are emerging and should be cited with caution.*** [7]

National examples should be used carefully. Loudoun County, Virginia, is one of the most concentrated data center markets in the United States and reports substantial local revenue from data centers. That example demonstrates the potential fiscal upside of some data center development, but it should not be assumed to apply automatically to Maine communities, smaller projects, or projects with different tax, utility, or infrastructure conditions. ***Data center statistics are emerging and should be cited with caution.*** [8]

Adaptive reuse

Data centers may also present attractive adaptive reuse opportunities for large industrial sites with existing electric, water, transportation, or transmission infrastructure. However, projected benefits such as jobs, tax revenue, water use, and power demand should be independently verified during local review rather than accepted solely from developer estimates. [9]

Potential drawbacks

Electricity demand

The largest public concern is often electricity demand. The U.S. Department of Energy reported that data centers consumed approximately 4.4% of total U.S. electricity in 2023 and could consume approximately 6.7% to 12% by 2028. [3] The International Energy Agency has also identified data centers and AI as major drivers of future electricity demand. [4]

Large data center loads can raise grid planning and cost allocation questions. In June 2026, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission ordered regional grid operators to justify or reform their rules for connecting data centers and other large energy users, with the stated goal of speeding large-load integration while protecting ratepayers. [10]



AI data center in Loudon County, VA. Image credit: 3 Magazine, reproduced through Creative Commons license CC BY-NC 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

Utility coordination

For Maine municipalities, early coordination with the electric utility is important. Municipal review should distinguish between the developer's preferred power strategy and what the utility can actually serve, when service can be provided, what upgrades are required, who will pay for them, and whether any off-site infrastructure will be needed. Municipalities may also want to ask whether the project proposes on-site generation, battery storage, backup generators, or other power arrangements in addition to standard utility service.

Water consumption

Water use varies significantly by design. Some data centers use relatively little water, especially where closed-loop or air-cooling systems are used. Other facilities may use substantial water for evaporative cooling. The Environmental and Energy Study Institute reports that a medium-sized data center can consume up to roughly 110 million gallons of water per year for cooling, while larger facilities may consume millions of gallons per day. [11]

Environmental impacts

Data centers can impact air quality because they often include backup diesel generators, stationary engines, turbines, or other power equipment. EPA identifies stationary combustion turbines and stationary engines as common sources of primary or backup power for data centers, and these sources may be subject to Clean Air Act requirements. [12]

There are also noise and neighborhood compatibility issues. Data centers may include generators, transformers, substations, cooling equipment, air handlers, chillers, and other mechanical systems that operate continuously or periodically. Fairfax County, Virginia updated its zoning ordinance in 2024 to address data center concerns such as noise, building design, setbacks, screening, equipment location, and proximity to residential areas. [13]



Data Center in Ashburn, VA. Photo credit: Hugh Kenny, Piedmont Environmental Council

Costs & post-construction employment

Permanent employment benefits may be more limited than temporary construction-related jobs. Brookings found positive local employment effects but cautioned that local benefits vary, and that communities should focus on evaluating job quality, duration, and attainability for residents. [7] [14]

Public costs and incentives require scrutiny. Communities should compare projected tax revenue against potential public costs, including utility upgrades, substations, transmission infrastructure, water and wastewater capacity, road impacts, emergency response capacity, and any requested tax increment financing, tax exemptions, or other incentives. The World Resources Institute recommends stronger transparency, cost recovery, and community review as data centers expand. [15]

Maine context

In 2026, Maine considered LD 307, “An Act to Establish the Maine Data Center Coordination Council and Place a Temporary Limitation on Certain Data Centers.” The bill would have temporarily limited approvals for data centers with a load of 20 megawatts or more through November 1, 2027, and created a state Data Center Coordination Council. [16]

Governor Janet Mills vetoed LD 307 on April 24, 2026. In her veto message, she stated that she supported a temporary moratorium but would have signed the bill only if it had included an exemption process for the proposed data-center project at the former Androscoggin Mill in Jay. [17]

After the veto, Governor Mills issued an executive order establishing a 15-member Maine Data Center Advisory Council. The Council is expected to deliver recommendations to the Governor and Legislature by January 2027. [18]

GPCOG staff notes several municipal concerns relevant to Maine communities, including power supply, utility rates, water supply, environmental impacts, noise, air quality, water pollution, and general cultural pushback against AI. [9]

What should municipalities ask for during review?

Municipal review should require enough information to evaluate the actual local impact of a proposed facility. The following questions may be useful for planning boards, code officers, municipal staff, and elected officials. Not every question will apply to every project, but larger or more complex proposals should generally require more detailed information.

1. Projected peak electric demand, including phased demand if the project will be built over time.
2. Confirmation from the electric utility regarding available capacity, required upgrades, cost responsibility, and timeline.
3. Description of backup power systems, including generators, batteries, fuel storage, testing schedule, and applicable air permits.

4. Estimated water demand, including peak daily demand, annual demand, source of water, cooling technology, and whether potable, non-potable, reclaimed, or closed-loop systems will be used.
5. Wastewater and stormwater impacts.
6. Noise study addressing generators, cooling equipment, transformers, substations, chillers, air handlers, and other mechanical systems.
7. Air quality analysis and documentation of applicable Clean Air Act requirements.
8. Site design, setbacks, screening, lighting, emergency access, fire suppression, and security measures.
9. Fiscal impact analysis comparing projected tax revenue against public infrastructure costs, utility costs, emergency service needs, and requested incentives (pair with independent review).
10. Decommissioning or adaptive reuse plan if the facility is abandoned, partially built, or no longer used as a data center.

This type of review is consistent with current federal concerns about large-load interconnection, EPA guidance on air permitting, and zoning approaches used in communities such as Fairfax County. [10] [12] [13]

Bottom line for municipalities

Data centers can provide important digital infrastructure and may create local fiscal or redevelopment opportunities, but they can also raise significant concerns. Municipalities do not need to resolve every statewide policy question before acting locally. A practical first step is to ensure that local ordinances define data centers clearly and require enough information to evaluate site-specific impacts.

Citations

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- [7] Brookings Institution. "New Evidence on Data Center Employment Effects." May 4, 2026.
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/new-evidence-on-data-center-employment-effects/>
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[11] Environmental and Energy Study Institute. "Data Centers and Water Consumption." June 25, 2025.

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[13] Fairfax County, Virginia. "Board of Supervisors Approves New Data Center Zoning Ordinance Amendment." September 11, 2024.

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news/board-supervisors-approve-new-data-center-zoning-ordinance-amendment>