# Data Center Legislation Discussions: Environmental Protections and Neighborhood Infrastructure

October 19, 2026 | Session Two

**Discussion recap**

The October 19th P&Z Committee discussion focused on water, air quality, utility infrastructure and neighborhood protections. Presenters included Dr. Brian Waldron of UofM CAESER, Ursula Madden of MLGW (VP of Communications), and Shelby County Health Department representatives Deputy Director Alexander and Dr. Bruce Randolph. The session provided information for Council's legislative review.

**Key discussion points**

Aquifer protection requires monitoring as well as conservation. Dr. Waldron distinguished water quantity from water quality and recommended baseline and sentinel monitoring to detect changes. Members discussed naturally occurring gaps in the clay layer, potential contamination pathways, private-well data and research access near data centers.

Alternative water sources and cooling methods remain important. Discussion covered recycled wastewater, riverbank filtration and cooling systems. VP Madden and Spinosa referenced a SPACEXAI's commitment to resume work on a water recycling plant by January 2027. Dr. Waldron urged study before heated water is returned to the aquifer. These were reported plans and research needs.

Utility review includes capacity studies and customer-funded upgrades. VP Madden described MLGW and TVA studies for large power requests and said requesting customers pay for needed infrastructure upgrades. She also described a forthcoming proposal for a separate data center water customer class and power-curtailment arrangements. The usage threshold for those arrangements remained unanswered.

Well permits involve more than permission to drill. Health Department representatives explained site and environmental review, consideration of available utility service, and appeals to the Groundwater Quality Control Board.

Countywide air monitoring and facility inspections serve different purposes. The Health Department described six monitoring stations, including the newer Riverview station, alongside permit reporting and inspections. Members asked how monitoring captures nearby residents' concerns and identifies particular sources. Officials noted limited historical data at Riverview and the difficulty of separating multiple industrial sources.

Neighborhood health disparities were a central concern. Dr. Randolph presented asthma emergency-department visit data by ZIP code and information on industrial emissions. He highlighted disparities between communities. Members discussed cumulative exposure and the

need for stronger residential protections; the presentation did not establish that a particular data center caused the reported health outcomes.

Noise standards and zoning need continued work. Members raised zoning protections near homes and asked about industrial noise enforcement. Dr. Randolph identified a need to examine applicable provisions and obtain measurement equipment. No definitive noise limit or new requirement was established during the session.

**Follow-ups raised during the discussion**

These items reflect requests and issues raised:

| Issue | Follow-up identified |
|---|---|
| **Groundwater data and access** | Explore CAESER–Health Department collaboration on private-well records and sampling. Consider research access to MLGW wells near facilities; Confirm the number of wells in Whitehaven. |
| **Utility and legal questions** | Seek TVA participation in a later discussion. Clarify the threshold for power-curtailment agreements and whether related provisions can be included in local legislation with legal counsel's guidance. |
| **Air quality and public information** | Continue evaluating Riverview location data. Use facility-specific reporting and inspections alongside regional monitoring when examining emissions concerns. The Health Department offered to share requested environmental data. |
| **Noise and neighborhood protections** | Examine how existing noise provisions apply to industrial sites, measurement needs and zoning protections around homes. Spinosa also raised possible coordination with the County on testing requirements. |
| **Presentation and legislative review** | Continue examining overlapping proposals, moratorium questions and community-benefit concepts through the legislative process. |

**Remaining sessions**

*All sessions are scheduled for 1:00–3:00 p.m. Central in the Council Committee Room, 5th Floor, City Hall.*

| Date in 2026 | Focus |
|---|---|
| **Monday, October 26** | Community Voices and Public Engagement — community questions, concerns and feedback. |
| **Thursday, October 29** | Community Benefits, Final Review, and Next Steps — proposed benefits resolutions and ordinances, community priorities for benefits, and continuing responses to public and Council questions. |
| **Monday, November 2** | ***Tentative*** |

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