COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

Before the County Says Yes

A public test for hyperscale proposals. Protect farmland, public lands and the people who already live here.

JEFF A PIERSON / NOVEMBER 2026



Cornfield in Middleton, Idaho

Kirsten Strough / USDA / Public domain / Cropped

What is the company building for?

01	Public and direct consumer services	Recognize the case for 911, hospitals, banks, forecasting, national labs, defense and ordinary cloud services.
02	Commercial tracking and speculative demand	Identify ad targeting, behavioral data harvesting, mass surveillance, mining and AI capacity without a committed customer.
03	Proof of demand	Disclose the operator, known direct tenants, workload categories, signed commitments, and the uncontracted portion of each phase.

The applicant must show why this workload needs this site, at this scale, now.

Public land and farmland stay off the table

No hyperscale development on public land. No conversion of farmland. Screen already disturbed private industrial land first.

Document irrigation, wildlife habitat, historic and cultural resources, neighboring homes, and emergency access.



Farmland in Middleton, Idaho

Kirsten Strough / USDA / Public domain / Cropped

The entire campus counts

01	Up to 5 MW	Designated commercial or industrial district only.
02	Above 5 through 20 MW	Designated industrial or heavy industrial district only.
03	Above 20 through 250 MW	Designated heavy industrial district only. The model bars campuses above 250 MW.

Conditional review for every principal facility. Count related buildings and phases at full buildout.

The company pays the full bill

01	Tax relief	No special sales-tax exemptions, property-tax abatements, rebates, credits or grants.
02	Infrastructure	No public financing for project-driven substations, transmission, generation, water systems or roads.
03	Utility service	No subsidized power or gas rates. Recover the project’s costs and secure payment if demand drops or the tenant walks away.

Before the vote, disclose the dollar amount, who pays, and what the public can recover.

A cooling claim needs a water and power budget

No groundwater or surface water for cooling. Require the applicant to account for initial fill, makeup, losses and backup modes.

Compare peak-day demand and annual use. Low-water cooling can draw more power in some designs and climates.



Data center rooftop cooling equipment

Rsparks3 / CC0 / Cropped

The utility docket decides who pays

01	Capacity markets	Some regions pay resources to be available at times of system stress. Large loads can increase the capacity requirement.
02	Rate cases and special contracts	The regulator reviews how the utility plans to recover costs. Demand an explanation of any share allocated to other customers.
03	Financial protection	Require deposits or guarantees, minimum bills and exit charges sized to cover project costs even if the site opens late, downsizes or closes.

Ohio’s AEP tariff offers one real example. Idaho Power’s special-contract process is separate.

A hearing while the decision is still open

Mail notice, post the application online and on site, and give residents time to inspect the evidence and respond. Put water and power use on the public record.

No nondisclosure agreements that hide project impacts or public obligations.



Public comment at Seattle City Council

Seattle City Council / CC0 / Cropped

A bond before the first shovel

150%

of independent closure cost

3 years

maximum between estimate reviews

Under the model, adjust the bond annually for inflation. Recheck after material changes. Keep it in force through verified restoration.

The estimate covers removal, contaminated materials and site restoration. Assume no speculative salvage value.

What should be on the record

01	A public site and workload file	Identify the owner, purpose, committed demand, full-buildout impacts, lawful site and cooling design.
02	A full-cost agreement	Publish tax and infrastructure terms, who bears cost overruns, and who pays if the customer cancels.
03	An enforceable permit	Record measurable limits, monitoring, complaint response, reopening for material changes and the closure bond.

Withhold approval when the applicant fails to demonstrate that the site and terms protect the community.

READING AND VERIFICATION

Policy documents and public sources

- Data center policy position
- Model zoning ordinance
- Public article on data center subsidies
- Idaho data center sales tax exemption
- Idaho county property-tax relief
- Idaho Power’s special-contract approach
- Ohio’s large-load tariff example
- IEA grid policy review, October 2026

Slide-specific references and links are also in the speaker notes.