

Rural Peer Group Meeting Notes

July 29, 2026

Attendees:

Nicole Card, Oakland County
Ed Clemente, MEDC
Chris Girdwood, Detroit Region Aerotropolis
Zach Hayward, Congresswoman Dingell's Office
Sarah Cook-Maylen, Oakland County Park & Recreation
Shannon McGovern, Huron Township
Chris Olzem, Oakland County
Lonnie Scott, Dexter Township
Kelly Trombly, Huron Township
Jeff Yaroch, Village of New Haven

Legislative Input Discussion:

- It seems we have incentives that are encouraging data centers to go into virgin land.
- We need to review our economic incentives and encourage data centers to take over brownfield sites.
 - Brownfield sites already have power and infrastructure.
 - So much of the infrastructure around brownfield sites is unused.
 - Zoning around these sites already accommodates data centers.
 - Multi-storage centers
- Jean Hardy from the Quello Center at MSU will be on an upcoming podcast to discuss data centers and how communities can prepare.
- Jean Hardy has also been convening a statewide working group to collaborate on issues related to data centers, including utilities/decommissioning, regulatory/legal issues, and community engagement/community benefits.

Open Discussion/General Issues:

- Auto companies and other industries have expressed a need for data centers – do data centers talk about that or other information with the public?
 - Huron Township held a public education workshop to talk about planning and zoning in general. The topic of data centers dominated the workshop and many people brought up the negatives of data centers. They haven't been approached by a data center company.
- New Haven/Lenox Township: There is an enormous amount of outside pressure and debate surrounding data centers.

- Oakland County is working on climate resilience and adaptation connected to the county's hazard mitigation plan. How can we engage rural communities that don't have a lot of capacity and have a small staff who are wearing many hats?
 - Dexter Township is working with Washtenaw County on the hazard mitigation planning process. Trustee Karen Sikkenga from the township is the point person working with the county.

References:

[Data Center Resources for Local Governments - SEMCOG](#)

[SEMCOG Universities and Webinars - SEMCOG](#)

[Experience Southeast Michigan - SEMCOG](#)

[Federal and State Legislative Update](#)

[Emerging Digital Infrastructures | Quello Center | Michigan State University](#)

[The Michigan Opportunity Podcast](#)