Outlook

FW: [EXTERNAL] Ministerial vs. Discretionary Development Approval — Data Center Development and Protection of County Interests

From terry suggs <terry.suggs@putnam-fl.gov>
Date Tue 9/8/2026 11:28 AM
To terry suggs <terry.suggs@putnam-fl.gov>
Cc james richie <james.richie@putnam-fl.gov>

Good morning,

Per policy enacted by the BoCC during the July 14, 2026 meeting, I have forwarding the email received regarding Data Centers. Mr. Richie, please ensure this information is posted as directed by the BoCC.

Respectfully,

Terry K. Suggs, MPA, ICMA-CM
County Administrator
Putnam County Board of Commissioners
2509 Crill Avenue, Suite 200
Palatka, FL 32177
386-329-0205
Sent from my iPhone

From: joshua alexander <joshua.alexander@putnam-fl.gov>
Sent: Saturday, September 5, 2026 6:44 AM
To: terry suggs <terry.suggs@putnam-fl.gov>
Subject: Fw: [EXTERNAL] Ministerial vs. Discretionary Development Approval — Data Center Development and Protection of County Interests

Joshua J Alexander
Putnam County Commissioner
District 3
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From: Jessica Finch <jessica@stjohnsriverkeeper.org>
Sent: Friday, 04 September 2026 16:49:22
To: Jessica Finch <jessica@stjohnsriverkeeper.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Ministerial vs. Discretionary Development Approval — Data Center Development and Protection of County Interests

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Dear Chairwoman and Members of the Putnam County Board of County Commissioners:

Thank you for your efforts to address the growing concerns regarding the negative impact of Data Centers to Putnam County and for the DRAFT Moratorium on Data Center Development.

We are concerned that the existing language may have unintended consequences that we all would like to avoid including creating a scenario that Putnam County is less protected than our neighboring counties.

The moratorium's current language reads as follows:

> "SECTION 5. Temporary Planning Moratorium. Effective September 1, 2026, the County shall not accept, deem complete, process, review, schedule for public hearing, approve, or issue ***any discretionary development approval*** for a Large-Scale Data Center Project. The moratorium applies to applications including Comprehensive Plan Amendments, Rezonings, Planned Unit Developments, Special Use Permits, Major Modifications, Site Plans, Development Permits, Development Orders, Building Permits ***requiring prior discretionary development approval, and any substantially similar discretionary approval*** (emphasis added)."

We appreciate the addition of Medium-sized Data Centers to Large-Scale Data Centers.

We are concerned that the exclusion of "ministerial approval" could allow a very large or unusually intensive data center to proceed through an administrative / ministerial pathway merely because the underlying parcel is already zoned for industrial or commercial use.

A ***ministerial*** approval is an administrative process. If the project satisfies every objective rule explicitly written in the Putnam County Land Development Code, county staff **must** approve it. Staff members act as reviewers following a strict checklist; they have no legal authority to deny the project or impose personal preferences.

A ***discretionary*** approval applies to projects that do not naturally fit within the standard code, or land uses that could heavily impact the surrounding community. Because these decisions require human judgment and deliberation to balance private property rights with public well-being, they cannot be handled over the counter by staff.

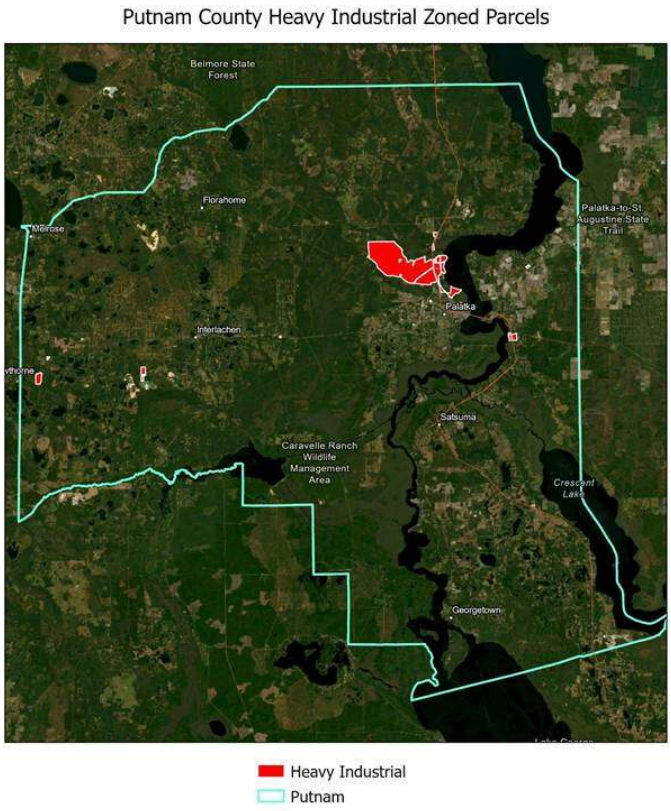
According to the **Putnam County Zoning District Map**, Heavy Industrial Zoning encompasses approximately 4,565 acres of Putnam County. These areas have been highlighted in the map below.

Under the current DRAFT Moratorium language, these areas of land would remain open and vulnerable to Data Center development. If a data center can be approved administratively, the public has little to no opportunity to raise concerns before the development order becomes final.

We do not believe it is the intent of the Putnam County BOCC to allow this.

As such, we respectfully ask the BOCC to consider the friendly amendment[1] DRAFT language to read as follows:

“SECTION 5. Temporary Planning Moratorium. Effective September 1, 2026, the County shall not accept, deem complete, process, review, schedule for public hearing, approve, or issue ***any approval, whether ministerial or discretionary,*** for a Large-Scale Data Center Project. The moratorium applies to applications including Comprehensive Plan Amendments, Rezonings, Planned Unit Developments, Special Use Permits, Major Modifications, Site Plans, Development Permits, Development Orders, or Building Permits for Large-Scale Data Center Projects that ***require prior ministerial or discretionary development approval, and any substantially similar discretionary approval*** (emphasis added).”



With kind regards,

Jessica Finch

Putnam County Community Engagement Coordinator

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“If I could have, to hold forever, one brief place of time and beauty, I think I might choose the night on that high lonely bank above the St. Johns River.”
-Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings