Beltline Energy
154 Krog Street
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Community FAQ

Beltline Energy Data Center — Pottawatomie County

Answers to Common Questions About the Proposed Data Center

Date: May 27, 2026 |

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About the Project

What is Beltline Energy proposing?

Beltline Energy is proposing a 1.2-gigawatt (GW) data center campus adjacent to the Jeffrey Energy Center (JEC) in Emmett Township, Pottawatomie County, Kansas. Data centers are facilities that house computer servers used for cloud computing, data storage, and technology services.

Why this location?

The JEC site offers existing electrical infrastructure, sufficient acreage to observe appropriate setbacks and firebreaks, access to a skilled regional workforce, and proximity to transmission capacity — all of which are important for responsible data center development.

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Water Questions

Will the data center use our drinking water?

No. As stated by Beltline Energy at the May 6, 2026 community meeting: "We don't want to drill a well. We don't want your community water. We don't want your ground water." The project is designed to use non-potable surface water from existing infrastructure, not drinking water from St. Marys or any community water supply.

Will the data center drill new wells?

No. The project does not rely on groundwater wells for its cooling water needs.

Where will the water come from?

The project is evaluating non-potable surface water options, including water from the existing JEC reservoir system (which is fed by the Kansas River). The specific water source will be determined during the permitting process. Any water use requires a permit from the Kansas Division of Water Resources (DWR).

Could the data center take water away from St. Marys during a drought?

No. Kansas operates under the "first in time, first in right" water law. Any new water right for the data center would be junior to St. Marys' existing rights. During a drought, the data center would be required to reduce or stop using water before any impact to existing water users. This rule protects senior water-right holders, including the City of St. Marys.

How does the cooling system work?

The facility will use a recirculating cooling system that continuously reuses water. Several cooling technologies are available; the final choice will be made during the design and permitting phase. In most closed-loop cooling systems, a small amount of water is lost to evaporation and must be replaced (called "makeup water"), and a small amount of concentrated water is periodically discharged and replaced (called "blowdown"). The system includes dedicated intake and return infrastructure with on-site treatment and monitoring.

What happens to the wastewater?

All water discharged from the facility must meet strict federal standards. Depending on the discharge pathway chosen during engineering design, the water will either go through a

federally permitted direct discharge to surface water (NPDES permit), through an agreement with the local wastewater treatment facility with pretreatment requirements, or may be trucked off-site by specialized haulers for treatment. No untreated or unmonitored discharge will occur.

How would water intake and discharge work if the project uses the Jeffrey Energy Center water supply? Would water be discharged back into the JEC lake or another location?

The project is designed with dedicated intake and return infrastructure — meaning controlled water pathways from source through use, treatment, and return. No agreements or commitments have been made by Jeffrey Energy Center to this data center project for access to water. This hyperscale data facility is not dependent on access to the JEC reservoir water to be developed successfully.

Beltline is exploring a possible water partnership with JEC because it could create shared efficiencies. If the JEC reservoir is used as the water source, the facility would draw non-potable water from the reservoir, filter and treat it on-site upon arrival, cycle it through the cooling system, and then treat the return water on-site before sending it back to the reservoir.

The JEC reservoir functions as a large mixing zone — the facility's return flow would represent a small fraction of the reservoir's total volume across more than 600 acres.

JEC currently operates its own cooling water cycle: water is drawn from the Kansas River into the reservoir, used for power plant cooling, and returned. This has been in operation since the late 1970s. The data center's water cycle would be a similar arrangement, with modern treatment controls added.

Any water arrangement involving JEC infrastructure requires authorization from the Kansas Division of Water Resources (DWR), whether through a new water appropriation permit, a change application to an existing right, or another form of authorization. Beltline Energy commits to providing detailed flow diagrams showing the complete water management system — from intake through treatment, use, monitoring, and return — as part of the engineering submittals during the permitting phase.

Does the data center need permits to use water?

Yes. Kansas law requires a permit from the Division of Water Resources (DWR) for any water use beyond household purposes. DWR will independently evaluate whether the proposed

water use would harm existing water rights or the public interest before any permit is issued. If a new water permit application is found to cause harm, the permit will be denied.

What environmental permits are required?

The project requires multiple permits including water appropriation (DWR), wastewater discharge (NPDES or pretreatment), air quality (KDHE), and construction stormwater permits. Each permit process includes public notice and opportunities for public comment.

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Cooling & Technology

Can you provide additional details on the proposed cooling systems, including whether they will use closed-loop systems and estimated water usage?

The facility is designed to use either a recirculating evaporative cooling system or a closed-loop cooling system — the standard approaches for modern hyperscale data centers. In plain terms, water circulates continuously within the cooling system, absorbing heat from the servers and releasing that heat through evaporation. The water is reused many times before a small portion is drained and replaced.

A few key technical points in accessible terms:

Water efficiency is measured using a metric called Water Usage Effectiveness (WUE), defined by the international standard ISO/IEC 30134-9 as liters of water used per kilowatt-hour of computing energy. The national average for U.S. data centers is 0.36 L/kWh. Best-in-class operators have achieved 0.15 L/kWh. Beltline Energy is targeting WUE performance in the top tier nationally for this facility.

The system is designed to operate at high "cycles of concentration" (CoC) — a measure of how many times water is reused before it needs to be replaced. Industry best practice targets 6 to 10 cycles for cooling tower systems. Higher cycles mean less water is consumed per unit of cooling delivered.

These design targets are informed by guidance from ASHRAE Technical Committee 9.9 (the leading engineering authority for data center thermal management) and the Water Environment Federation's AI Nexus framework for responsible data center water use.

Detailed engineering specifications — including projected water intake volumes, evaporation rates, blowdown volumes, and chemical treatment protocols — will be developed during the design phase and provided as part of the permitting process. Conceptual drawings and diagrams of the cooling system will be included in those engineering submittals and made available to the county and the public.

Will the backup generators be diesel-powered or natural gas-powered?

The industry standard for data center emergency backup generators is diesel, primarily because diesel generators meet the reliability requirements of NFPA 110 (the national standard for emergency and standby power systems). Diesel generators start faster and more reliably in

emergency conditions than most alternatives, which is critical for a facility that cannot tolerate power interruptions.

Generator use at a hyperscale data center is very limited. Backup generators are exactly that — backup. They run only when grid power is unavailable and during required maintenance testing. Typical runtime is less than 100 hours per year, and most of that is scheduled testing — not actual emergency operation.

Generator emissions are regulated by the EPA under New Source Performance Standards (NSPS) Subpart IIII, which sets emission limits for stationary compression ignition engines. Under the proposed Pottawatomie County overlay regulations, routine generator testing would be restricted to weekday business hours (9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday), minimizing any noise or emissions impact on surrounding properties.

Natural gas generators are an alternative that some data center operators are exploring, and the technology continues to evolve. The final generator specification will be determined during the engineering design phase and documented in the air quality permit application submitted to KDHE.

What are the anticipated noise levels during normal operations and generator testing?

The proposed Pottawatomie County Data Center Overlay regulations (Section 9.5.3) set a maximum noise level of 65 decibels (dB) at the property line during normal operations. For reference, 65 dB is roughly the level of a normal conversation — noticeably quieter than a typical lawnmower or leaf blower.

During routine generator testing, noise levels may be temporarily higher at the source, but the proposed overlay restricts testing to weekday business hours (9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday), limiting any temporary increase to daytime hours only.

Several design features help keep noise levels well within limits. The proposed overlay requires robust setbacks from property lines, and sound diminishes significantly with distance — noise from a source measuring 80 dB at close range typically drops by roughly 20 dB at 200 feet. Modern data center facilities also incorporate sound-attenuating enclosures around generators and mechanical equipment.

ASHRAE Technical Committee 9.9 documents that interior noise levels in data center mechanical rooms can reach approximately 80 dBA, but that measurement is inside the building — not at the property line where the community would experience it. The combination

of building enclosure, distance-based attenuation from setbacks, and sound barriers means the noise experienced by neighbors will be minimal.

Noise will be measured using the international ISO 1996 standard for environmental noise. Meeting the overlay's noise limits is a binding condition of operation.

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Jobs & Economy

What are the estimated long-term employment numbers once facilities are operational?

At full build-out (1,200 MW across 17 buildings), the project is projected to support approximately 510 permanent operational jobs, with an average annual wage of approximately $128,000. That wage level is 2.7 times the current average annual wage in the Manhattan, Kansas metropolitan statistical area (approximately $47,300).

Employment ramps up with each phase of construction:

- Phase 1 (200 MW, 3 buildings, expected 2029): approximately 90 permanent employees
- Phase 2 (400 MW, 6 buildings, expected 2030): approximately 180 permanent employees
- Phase 3 (600 MW, 8 buildings, expected 2031): approximately 240 permanent employees
- Phase 4 (800 MW, 11 buildings, expected 2032): approximately 330 permanent employees
- Phase 5 (1,000 MW, 14 buildings, expected 2033): approximately 420 permanent employees
- Full build-out (1,200 MW, 17 buildings, expected 2034): approximately 510 permanent employees

During construction, the project is expected to support an average of approximately 1,700 construction jobs per year over the build-out period, with peak construction employment reaching approximately 2,700 jobs. Total construction employment across all phases is projected at approximately 15,300 job-years.

These projections are based on the project's economic impact study and standard industry staffing ratios of approximately 30 permanent operational employees per 72 MW data center building.

Would the company be open to workforce training partnerships for local residents?

Yes. Beltline Energy is committed to supporting local workforce development and would welcome partnerships aimed at preparing Pottawatomie County residents for the jobs this project will create.

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Data center operational positions pay an average of $128,000 per year — 2.7 times the regional average wage in the Manhattan, Kansas metro area. These are skilled technical positions in areas like electrical systems, mechanical systems, network operations, and facility management. Creating pathways for local residents to access these careers is good for the community and good for the project.

Beltline Energy is open to working with the county, local educational institutions, and workforce development organizations to structure apprenticeship programs, technical training initiatives, or other workforce preparation efforts. The specifics of any workforce training commitment can be formalized through the development agreement process, ensuring that the commitment is binding and measurable.

The Manhattan metropolitan statistical area and the surrounding workforce corridor already have a foundation of technical education and skilled trades training. Beltline Energy's goal is to build on that foundation so that as many of the 510 permanent positions as possible are filled by people who already live in or near Pottawatomie County.

Can you confirm whether the project is requesting any incentives, tax abatements, or other forms of public support beyond a negotiated property tax agreement?

The project qualifies for the Kansas SB 98 sales tax exemption, which applies to equipment and construction materials for qualifying data center projects. This is a state-level exemption established by the Kansas Legislature — it is not a local incentive or something the county grants or negotiates.

Regarding property taxes, negotiated property tax agreements are standard practice for large-scale industrial developments across Kansas and the United States. These agreements provide predictability for both the developer and the taxing jurisdictions over the life of the project. No specific terms have been proposed or agreed to at this stage — any property tax discussion would take place after zoning entitlement, as part of the development agreement process with the county.

To put the fiscal impact in context: the project represents approximately $17 billion in initial capital investment across 17 buildings. Beltline Energy does not request grants, direct subsidies, free land, or other forms of public financial support. The project's economic model is based on private investment, not public funding.

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You mentioned at the community meeting that a typical project of this size can range from $20M to $30M. Is that a one-time payment or annual? And is it per building or for the entire project?

The $20 million to $30 million range discussed at the community meeting refers to an annual payment for the full campus at build-out, not a one-time payment and not a per-building figure. The exact amount won't be determined until the project's final size is confirmed with the utility; that range is a reasonable starting point for discussion, and any specific terms would be set through the development agreement process with the county after zoning entitlement.

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Community Impact

Does the Data Center Overlay change our zoning rights?

The overlay is a land-use tool that adds data center development as a permitted use on top of existing zoning classifications. It does not change water rights — those are managed entirely by the state Division of Water Resources. Beltline Energy supports the County obtaining a written legal opinion from the County Attorney on the overlay's classification under Kansas law. Overlay districts are a well-established land-use tool in Kansas.

Will this project benefit the community?

The project represents approximately $17 billion in total capital investment in Pottawatomie County. At full build-out, the project is projected to support 510 permanent jobs at an average wage of $128,000 and to create approximately 1,700 construction jobs per year during the build-out period. Specific community benefit commitments will be part of the development agreement process.

How can I stay informed and participate?

All major permits required for this project involve public notice and comment periods. The zoning process includes public hearings before the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners. Beltline Energy is committed to providing engineering specifications and monitoring reports to the county and making them available to the public.

Who do I contact with additional questions?

Zoning questions can be directed to the Pottawatomie County Planning and Zoning office.

Water rights and permitting questions can be directed to the Kansas Division of Water Resources within the Kansas Department of Agriculture.

Data-center-related questions can be directed to Beltline Energy at info@beltlineenergy.com.