DATA CENTER OPPOSITION TALKING POINTS

Here are several strong, evidence-based talking points tailored for a zoning and permit discussion, designed to highlight the negative impacts of data centers on local communities.

Environmental & Public Health Impacts

- **Severe Water Consumption:** Large AI data centers require massive amounts of water to cool their servers, consuming up to 5 million gallons of water daily. Approving these permits puts a severe strain on local freshwater supplies and municipal wastewater facilities, effectively prioritizing corporate cooling needs over community water security during drought conditions.
- **Air Pollution & Backup Generators:** Data centers rely heavily on massive backup diesel or gas generators to prevent downtime. These generators emit high levels of smog-forming nitrogen oxides (NOx) and fine particulate matter, degrading local air quality and increasing respiratory hazards for nearby residents.
- **Debilitating Noise Pollution:** The cooling systems, HVAC units, and turbines required for these facilities generate a constant, low-frequency hum. Facilities in other states have been recorded emitting constant noise at 55 to 65 decibels, penetrating nearby homes and leading to severe sleep disruption and diminished quality of life.

Zoning, Land Use, & Regulatory Concerns

- **Exploitation of Industrial Zoning:** Developers often try to fast-track permits by targeting existing industrial zones, such as former power facilities or Superfund sites (like the former Pacific Oroville Power site or Koppers site). However, the unique environmental footprint of an AI data center requires rigorous, entirely new environmental impact assessments and public benefits agreements before any zoning variances or permits are granted.
- **Misallocation of Land Resources:** Data centers require massive footprints of land and enormous infrastructure investments. However, unlike traditional manufacturing or industrial facilities, they are highly automated and produce very few permanent, long-term jobs for the local community.
- **Lack of Regulatory Protections:** Before granting any permits, local governments must establish strict moratoriums or conditional use permits that require developers to prove they will not overwhelm the local grid, drain water resources, or exceed specific, enforceable noise and emission limits.

Economic Burden on Local Ratepayers

- **Socialized Grid Upgrades:** AI data centers are massive energy hogs, often requiring the construction of new transmission lines and substations. The multimillion-dollar costs for these infrastructure upgrades are frequently passed down to everyday residential and business ratepayers, resulting in higher monthly utility bills for the community.
- **Strain on the Local Power Grid:** The unrestricted build-out of these facilities threatens local grid reliability. By drawing enormous amounts of power, data centers can force utilities to keep older, dirtier fossil-fuel power plants online longer than planned just to meet the new corporate demand.

If you are drafting a response or statement for the Dioxin Education Committee regarding the proposed AI Data Center permit meeting, you might consider how the energy demands of such a facility could accelerate the push for these local biomass projects, linking the two issues together.

While there is no definitive public record naming a specific data center company setting up shop in Oroville, the recent shift in the city's energy strategy heavily suggests that the OroVerde Energy

Initiative is being retooled to accommodate a massive, off-grid industrial project, which aligns perfectly with the requirements of a modern AI data center.

Here is the connection between the OroVerde Energy Initiative, greenfield development, and the potential for a biomass-powered data center:

1. The Shift to "Greenfield" Development

The July 2026 Oroville City Council update revealed a significant pivot. The original plan for the OroVerde public utility—supplying power to existing residential customers using PG&E infrastructure—was deemed "not financially feasible."

Instead, the city stated they are shifting focus to a "developer-led greenfield project" using an "off-grid energy system" to serve new industrial development.

- **Greenfield Development** means building on previously undeveloped land, rather than retrofitting an existing site.
- **Off-Grid Energy Systems** mean the facility will generate its own power independently, bypassing the need for immediate, costly upgrades to the state's broader electrical grid (a major bottleneck for data centers in California).

2. The Link to Butte Renewable Energy Inc. (BREI)

Butte Renewable Energy Inc. (BREI) is the primary private partner developing energy infrastructure for the city's Oro Verde Public Utility District.

BREI's stated mission is to build "scalable, renewable generation and microgrid infrastructure to serve Oroville's industrial energy needs." Their long-term roadmap explicitly includes the following sequence:

1. **Phase 1 (2027):** Building a ~16 MW solar farm.
2. **Future Phases:** Expanding capacity to ~37 MW by adding **biomass power generation**, carbon capture, and dispatchable (on-demand) energy resources to create an independent microgrid.

3. Connecting the Dots: Biomass and Data Centers

An AI data center requires an immense, constant, and uninterrupted power supply (often hundreds of megawatts). Solar power is intermittent and cannot run a data center 24/7 without massive, expensive battery storage.

To run an "off-grid" data center, developers need "firm" or "dispatchable" generation—power that can be turned on and off exactly when needed. BREI's plan to build a biomass gasification plant provides exactly this type of constant, on-demand baseload power required by a data center.

Summary for the Dioxin Education Committee

The current strategy implies a symbiotic relationship: **A massive data center needs a dedicated, off-grid power plant, and a biomass developer needs a massive, guaranteed energy buyer to fund their facility.**

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The City of Oroville's pivot toward an "off-grid greenfield development" strongly implies they are paving the regulatory path for a high-energy user (like a data center) to be powered by BREI's planned solar and biomass microgrid.