

NEWS

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS? Contact Jason Jump at (620) 886-5654 or email ghp@gyphillpremiere.com

GOOGLE

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(land) and I've had this (land) since 1991," he said. "I grew up farming that ground, and it's on solid rock."

Ricke said the proposed data center will not only not impact the Sharon water supply, he said it will actually help it, because the ground, which is currently used for farming, will no longer be in production, meaning less chemical run off from the farming process.

For every concern that was raised Tuesday night, Google had an answer from health concerns to environmental impacts to impact on local taxes, as well as contributions to the county and local communities.

Google Addresses Health Concerns

Dr. Chris Ollson gave a presentation regarding "common concerns" such as noise, air pollution, electromagnetic fields (EMF), water use and groundwater pollution before answering specific questions from residents.

Residents brought up several different studies regarding the negative impacts on human health, as well as environmental impacts. Dr. Ollson admitted that some data centers built in the past could have helped contribute to those concerns, but he assured everyone in attendance that the project proposed for Barber County not only has but will continue to address those concerns through both engineering, as well as the types of products Google purchases from vendors for use at the Project Helium facility.

Dr. Ollson said the project would have no impact on groundwater in Barber County, because groundwater will not be utilized by the facility nor will any water be sent back underground within the county. He said the facility will be air-cooled, and the only water use will be in normal, every-day human activities such as restroom facilities and kitchen facilities.

One resident asked if water was used within the "closed loop" system and what happens to that water when the system needs to be "flushed."

Several different Google reps spoke to that concern. The hope was the system would not have to be flushed. The site manager of the Pryor, Okla. data center JT Tolliver said the two sites he has been involved with alongside Google have not needed to be flushed with more than a decade of use.

Kiran Udayakumar, a water supply and infrastructure tech, said if the system does have to be flushed the

water will not be disposed of in Barber County. It will be placed in a container and shipped to a facility that is able to handle such wastewater disposal.

Dr. Ollson did commit to making the company's sound study available for the public to review once it was completed. He addressed a number of concerns regarding noise from decibels to infrasound impacts.

Sue Hall, who said she is actually one of the residents that is directly impacted by the site's location asked Google what "binding" assurances the company was going to give local residents when it came to health concerns.

Dr. Ollson said Google has addressed and is addressing all of the concerns in the site's ongoing design, essentially saying there were not going to be any health concerns to worry about with this data center project.

"There's nothing coming from the facility," he said. "It doesn't have a natural gas plant. We're not pulling from the ground water."

Hall said anyone can say whatever they want, but when push comes to shove, "what are my protections I can fall back on?"

Dr. Ollson gave way to legal representative Alan Anderson, with Polsinelli Law Firm in Kansas City. Anderson said the assurances for Barber County residents is Google and Project Helium are subject to Kansas state law.

"So the good news is, just like any other large infrastructure or building or anything else, we have to follow all the laws," he said. "So we can't, as you heard, whether it's KDHE – whether it's all the other agencies that govern chemicals, toxicity, air quality, all of those things – we have laws that make sure that's your guarantee, and that's what we want."

He said the project by law can't cause harm to local residents.

"Those protections are in place already whether it be us or any other kind of infrastructure project," Anderson said.

The lawyer said without the factors that could have potentially led to health concerns with other projects being absent from the Project Helium "prevents those things from being an issue."

Abatement Questions

One life-long resident of Barber County came out and directly asked if Google was going to seek a property tax abatement from the county commissioners.

Kevin Lee, an attorney with Polsinelli Law Firm, said it is not unusual for a company making an investment of this size to seek incentives.

"On a project of this magnitude, while terms are still being discussed, I can tell you that any project with this level of investment is going to necessitate that there be an incentive component, so I'm not going to stand up here today and say we're not requesting an abatement, but I will say that those terms are still being worked out," Lee said.

The attorney said the potential property tax revenue of \$2 to \$10 million were derived with an abatement figured into the calculation. Those numbers were significantly less than the \$13 million estimate the county commissioners came up with on Monday.

Barber County Commissioner Adam Mills said after the meeting that he didn't feel like enough information was given by Google when the representative referenced potential property tax figures.

"I don't feel they gave us the scope of the size of this thing adequately to make those figures," he said. "We used numbers just shooting from the hip, and I just don't think there was enough information here."

Chairman Bryan Quick, who represents District 2 where the proposed project could be built, said he was disappointed with the lack of communication between Google and the commissioners – especially.

"Those conversations may be happening, but they're not happening in the board room where you can understand and asks questions," he said. "So, where they came up with their number, I really don't know."

Quick said there have been "a couple of meetings" but not with the "entire board" when it comes to potential abatements.

"Obviously any company that wants to come in (to the county) of that size, they're going to ask for those things," he said. "And right now, I would say my response is, and I think the board feels the same way, we don't even have a jumping off number to see where we're at."

"I'm sure that they will ask (for an abatement). I don't know that that has anything to do with where we're at or having that conversation, but that was part of the original stuff that they had talked about. They would like to be there, but I don't know that we're close."

Quick said those negotiations would likely take place in executive session once the entire board is a part of the conversation. The vote would take place in open session, and Quick said there might be an opportunity for questions to be answered in an open meeting at some point.

"Obviously there are some concerns with abatements, and I definitely think that's something we have to take a look at," the commissioner said.

Saddler Addresses Trust

Barber County resident Dee Saddler addressed those gather Tuesday night, saying she didn't want to address the normal concerns, but wanted to talk about trust.

Saddler said she studies people and trends.

"This is what I don't understand – I look at you and I see a lot of professional people. You have this great presentation. I know you want to do good in this community, but what I don't understand is your relationship with us," she said.

Saddler said the company came in early without communication and they "find an influencer" who in turn talks to local landowners, who then wines and dines them before making them sign non-disclosure agreements, giving them 24 hours to make a decision.

"And you know what you do when you do that – you create division amongst us," she said as people whistled and applauded.

Saddler said after the landowners are in place Google razzled and dazzled the county commissioners with all that the big tech giant could offer "because we're a poor county."

"We have a livelihood here as farmers. That's our history. We love our history. We love our land, and you're here to destroy it," she said. "I don't want this damn thing. It's less than a mile from me."

Saddler said she didn't trust Google.

Landwehr touched on trust as well when he talked about the location of the facility.

"If the majority of the people here would be more comfortable with this (project) being moved at least two miles away up to three miles away and you guys aren't even going to consider doing that, I don't see how you're going to be a good partner to this county," he said. "I think most of us could accept it at that range."

One of the final residents that spoke Tuesday night said he had been in the community for 40 years, although he was not a native. He said the town hall meeting Google was hosting Tuesday night should have been conducted from the very beginning.

"You should have come here and said we're thinking about doing this – where would be the best place," he said. "You should have come here and asked us."

Svaty said the timing of the town hall meeting was unprecedented in his opinion.

PUBLIC NOTICE

(Published in The Gyp Hill Premiere on Thursday, March 26, 2026) It

STATE OF DISASTER EMERGENCY PROCLAMATION BARBER COUNTY KANSAS NATURE OF THE IMMINENT THREAT OF DISASTER

Extremely dry, hot, and windy weather conditions with temperatures above normal have created an extreme fire hazard in the grassland and crop-land of Kansas. The fire danger is "extreme" in this county. The dry conditions, above normal temperatures and fire danger will continue unabated until sufficient rainfall occurs across the area.

DUE TO THE ABOVE AND FOREGOING:

It is hereby proclaimed, directed and ordered by the Board of County Commissioners of Barber County, Kansas, that the following acts are prohibited within the boundaries of the County and by all citizens and visitors:

1. Careless use of smoking materials, including cigarettes, cigars and smoking pipes. Discard shall be in a manner to preclude threat from smoldering remains.

2. Building, maintaining, attending or using any open fire or camp fires except in permanent stoves or fireplaces or barbecue grills in developed recreational sites or residential lawns.

3. Prescribed burning of all fence rows, fields, wildlands, ravines, trash, and debris. Prescribed burning may be exempted from this order where such burning is necessary for crop survival and has been specifically approved in writing by the Fire Chief (or other appropriate officer) of the County. Crop survival is defined as stubble burning in preparation for second crop planting.

The knowing and willful violation of this order shall constitute a Class A Misdemeanor and any person convicted of such violation shall be punished as provided by law. (K.S.A. 48-939)

This proclamation shall be in full force and effect on 3/23/26 and will end on 3/30/26.

Bryan Quick, Chairman: _____
Adams Mills, Commissioner: _____
Mike Roe, Commissioner: _____
Witness my hand and seal this 23rd day of March, 2026
Amy Sill, County Clerk: _____

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GOT NEWS?

Email news tips to ghp@gyphillpremiere.com

MLHS

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would just try to pick someone who hadn't won it yet."

They also had a business sponsor \$5 for every 3-pointer made at away and home games over the season and that totaled \$1,200 in donations. Cunningham used that money to give the basketball teams, cheerleaders and ju-

nior and senior high students who participated in the pep section an ice cream social and put the remainder of the money into the pep club account to use those funds to cover entry fees for students to attend games, pep busses to transport students to away games, as well as posters or anything else used to promote school spirit.

"I want to say how much

we appreciate how giving our community is to our kids," Cunningham said. "We never have any trouble getting people to donate to that or to entry fees and I just love how our community is so giving to our kids."

This program was used at football, volleyball and basketball games this year, and they gave out approximately \$1,500 worth of gift cards

over those three sports seasons, and Cunningham hopes to continue the program each year and expand the program to not only include the \$5 for every 3-pointer but also to have something for every touchdown at football games.

If you are interested in more information, email Cunningham at karen.cunningham@usd254.org.

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