

KERSHAW.GG · INTERNAL · V3 · 2026-07-16

Talking Points — Connell Meeting, Cross-Referenced

v2 not deleted, kept at its original location/name. This version folds in two things from the same-day internal Meridian strategy call transcript (7/16/26, 08:21) that weren't in v2.

Changed in v3: (1) the executive-session timeline entry now carries Connell's actual sequencing logic, confirmed on today's internal call — not "let council cool off," but private one-on-one soundings first, then let public attention fade. (2) Property values is now an explicit open item, not just a "not covered" flag — today's internal call shows the team already discussing it internally ("all the research is the opposite"), but with no source named, so it can't be used externally yet.

Cross-reference analysis

What the existing Ground Game record confirms, what it exposes as a real gap, and what's now an explicit open item.

CONFIRMS Point 2 ("not affiliated with Ballast") is exactly Connell's own stated concern

Connell's council_assessments record names his principal concern verbatim: *"Proximity to Ballast — risk of being perceived as 'in cahoots' given how close the sites are."* Point 2 is a direct answer to that — worth leading with, not burying second. Today's internal call adds his own words on it: cautious "just because of everything they just went through with the natgas... it's just the circumstance of us being right next to them, and everyone thinking that means [we're in cahoots]."

GAP Point 3's "addresses the FILOT complaints" claim outruns what's actually locked down

The live claim-response matrix tracks the same 4 concerns Stephen's point 3 references, with gaps that aren't resolved yet:

CONCERN	OUR RESPONSE	REMAINING GAP (PER THE MATRIX, TODAY)
Water consumption	Cooling design and water budget	Final design not frozen
Noise	Modeled boundary levels	Equipment configuration
Gas-plant affiliation	No ownership/contractual/generation/interconnection dependency	Concise proof package not yet prepared
Bait and switch	Development scope restricted by CUP	Counsel confirmation not yet obtained

If Connell or anyone probes past the headline claim on any of these four, the honest answer today is "not fully locked down yet."

OPEN ITEM Property values — raised internally today, not yet sourced

"Property Value & Financial Exposure" is a macro theme from the 7/14 sentiment taxonomy and doesn't map to any of Stephen's 4 talking points. Today's internal strategy call shows this is already live in the team's own thinking — the assertion made was "all the research is the opposite" of the community's fear that values decline. **No study or source was named on the call.** Treat this exactly like the health-study claims already fact-checked in the Thursday Connell Briefing: don't repeat "all the research is the opposite" externally until an actual source is attached to it. Until then, this stays an internal working assumption, not a talking point.

CONTEXT The "not affiliated" message is addressing a real, measured signal

The Contagion Monitor counts 9 unique speakers who used "data center" phrasing in captured Ballast-hearing statements — a real "Elevated" risk-tier reading, not a guess.

Talking points as sent

Stephen's own outline (7/15/26 email), unedited in substance.

1. MGW's development strategy focuses on community wellbeing

- MGW practices responsible development with a focus on community wellbeing
- Illustrated by our development of the text amendment as our chosen permitting path
- The text amendment represents a year's worth of research into data center industry best practices, academic resources on county ordinances/rules nationwide, and working directly with County Staff

2. Not affiliated with Beaufort Rosemary — see cross-reference above

- Prior permitted solar site + Stephen's involvement — longer history with the County
- Different generation technology (Fuel Cells vs. Ballast's gas)
- Independent load-application research, never assumed/incorporated BR
- Site materially further from residential areas than BR

3. Text Amendment addresses Ballast-FILOT-era complaints — see cross-reference above for what's actually locked down vs. still open

- Emissions/water/energy/traffic/noise reports required for data center CUP
- SC Senate Bill water standard, closed-loop preference, drought-monitoring cooperation
- No bait-and-switch to residential/other use
- Setbacks + vegetative screening from the solar CUP
- Community engagement meeting baked in

4. Partner, not just taxpayer

- Significant new taxpayer
- Partner in emergency services infrastructure and job training

Debrief — Stephen's call with Connell

CAUTION Connell is cautious specifically because of Ballast proximity — risk of being seen as "in cahoots."

ATTENDEES Sarah Spruill and Will Johnson were on the call with Stephen.

STRATEGY Hold off on Danny Catoe — let him work out his own special revenue credit ask for his district/town; council already educated on it.

STRATEGY Broad community education still needed, worth the effort.

Call focused mostly on FILOT and where the money goes.

Connell will personally carry the text amendment talking points.

TIMELINE Executive session moves Aug 11 → September. **Sequencing, confirmed on today's internal call:** this is not about letting council "cool off" (an early guess that got corrected on the call). Connell's actual approach is to sound out council members privately first, then let public attention on the 7/14 hearing fade before anything goes in front of them publicly. If Planning & Zoning is also required after executive session, that could push to October, with the text amendment itself potentially done by December.

TIMELINE Load application answer still tracking Q1 next year at earliest — remains the long-lead item, not overtaken by the text-amendment timeline shift above.

3rd reading expected most contentious, emotion still present. *"He'd like it" — still ambiguous, not resolved by today's call either. Flag for Stephen to clarify directly.*

FRAMING Connell, pro-business: "ten fingers plugging holes in the Bethune budget."

OPPORTUNITY Fiber/cable provider intro offered (name still uncertain even to Stephen — "Starlight" or similar).

Open follow-ups

Property values — find an actual source before using "all the research is the opposite" as an external talking point. Currently an internal assumption only.

Get the gas-plant-affiliation proof package prepared and counsel confirmation on the bait-and-switch language — both cited as open gaps in the live claim-response matrix.

Confirm the fiber/cable provider's actual name.

Track the new September exec session date once set; watch for a possible October Planning & Zoning step.

Clarify "he'd like it" with Stephen directly.

Revisit Danny Catoe once his ask has taken shape.

v2 not deleted, kept at its original name/location. Sources: Stephen Harrington email 2026-07-15; Stephen's verbal debrief of the 2026-07-16 Connell call; "MERIDIAN DAILY 7-16 Project Approval Strategy Meeting" internal transcript (2026-07-16, 08:21); mrx_bethune.claim_response_matrix; mrx_bethune.council_assessments; Ground Game Contagion Monitor. Local copy: KERSHAW.GG.talking-points.071626.v3.html.