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NEWS, 4A

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‘Increasing access to essential services’



The ribbon is cut to celebrate the completion of the Union Mission’s Emmaus House Resource Center on June 12. RICHARD BURKHART/SAVANNAH MORNING NEWS

New Savannah resource center expands homeless services

Ansley Franco
Savannah Morning News
USA TODAY NETWORK

Union Mission officially opened the Emmaus House Resource Center on Friday, unveiling a renovated downtown facility designed to serve more than 200 individuals daily through housing assistance, medical care, meals, job readiness programs and other support services.

The center, located on 127 Fahm St., consolidates multiple services under one roof with the goal of creating a more streamlined pathway for people experi-

encing homelessness to access resources and move toward permanent housing.

Union Mission President and CEO Mike Trainer said on Friday at the ribbon cutting that the facility was developed in response to increasing demand for services across the region.

Over the last two years, daily attendance at Union Mission’s day center increased by more than 167%, rising from an average of 88 people per day to 133. The organization also recorded a recent peak of 178 visitors in a single day this week. Meanwhile, Emmaus House served 468 unduplicated individuals

during the past year.

“This new, comprehensive, one stop hub is the next step in significantly increasing access to essential services, coordinated care and long term pathways to housing and stability for our communities and most vulnerable neighbors,” Trainer said.

The resource center will operate Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturdays from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Services available at the facility include warm meals served from a

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PORT WENTWORTH

Residents seek pause on data centers

Destini Ambus
Savannah Morning News
USA TODAY NETWORK

About six months after the City of Port Wentworth rushed through approving language adding data centers as an allowable use to its zoning ordinances, residents are still pushing for the city to keep reviewing the ordinance.

Wednesday evening 30 Port Wentworth residents gathered downtown with a petition for council to place a 180 day moratorium on data centers while language is further ironed out. Right now, they have about 300 signatures, but the goal is to get between 2,000 and 5,000.

“This is the point where we need to take control,” said Patrick Donovan, a resident who is spearheading the charge. “We need people to go and however you can, get people to sign. I’m walking and knocking on doors, and that may not be for everybody, but anything you can do, that’s what we need.”

During a Nov. 20, 2025 meeting, then-Mayor Gary North, plus three gathered city councilmembers, voted to add a last-minute item regarding

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Chatham’s ‘fugitive’ bound over to Superior Court

Ansley Franco
Savannah Morning News
USA TODAY NETWORK

Once dubbed the “most wanted fugitive” by Chatham County Sheriff Richard Coleman, Meshawn Richardson saw his first day in court on Thursday.

Followers of the Chatham County Sheriff’s Office Facebook page may recognize Richardson’s name from previous posts. In a since-deleted Facebook Live video, the sheriff said deputies traveled to Jacksonville, Fla. in April to search for the fugitive, but he evaded capture by using a disguise. During the Live, Coleman briefly stepped out of frame and returned wearing a blonde bob wig, oversized sunglasses and a hat to illustrate the disguise authorities said Richardson used.

A few days later, Richardson posted a video on social media showing himself dancing while holding a can of beer. His time on the run was short-lived, however. Richardson was

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Army investigates death of Fort Stewart soldier

Ansley Franco
Savannah Morning News
USA TODAY NETWORK

A 29-year-old soldier stationed at Fort Stewart has died after a training exercise on Wednesday, according to a military official.

Spc. Adrian Bonsey was struck by an M2 Bradley during a training exercise at approximately 4:30 a.m. on June 10 at the National Training Center. A press release said he was performing his duties on foot in the training area during hours of limited visibility when the incident occurred.

“This is a devastating loss for our entire division,” Maj. Gen. John Lubas, the 3rd ID commanding general, said in a press release. “Adrian was an exceptional Soldier who was committed to our mission and proudly serving our Nation. We

are heartbroken and will wrap our arms around his family, loved ones and fellow Soldiers during this difficult time.”

Bonsey is originally from New York, and joined the Army in 2023. He was a combat engineer with the 9th Engineer Battalion, 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division.

Before arriving at Fort Stewart two months ago, he previously served at Fort Carson, Colorado and deployed to Poland in 2024. Bonsey has also received two Army Achievement Medals.

The U.S. Army’s Combat Readiness Center, the Department of the Army Criminal Investigation Division and the U.S. Army Transformation and Training Command are investigating the incident.

Ansley Franco is a reporter with the Savannah Morning News, covering public safety and general assignments. You can reach her at AFRanco@gannett.com.



Spc. Adrian Bonsey was struck by an M2 Bradley during a training exercise on June 10. PROVIDE BY FORT STEWART

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Residents

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data centers and zoning to the agenda and held the first reading. Less than a month later, the ordinance had been amended three times, each time adding more guardrails, before being approved 4-1 by the council on Dec. 18.

Donovan, a member of Port Wentworth's Planning & Zoning Commission, recommended denial of the ordinance just two days before the council voted to approve it. Since then, Donovan, who has a YouTube Channel Savannah's Nooks & Cranies, sharing real estate insights and spotlighting local food and businesses, has had several Port Wentworth officials on to talk about data centers.

"I talked to city council members, like Shawn Randerwala, Thomas Barbee, Mark Stephens," Donovan said. "And asked them specifically on my show about it, and they said they would change it if there's language to protect the people. They said they would look into it, so I backed off."

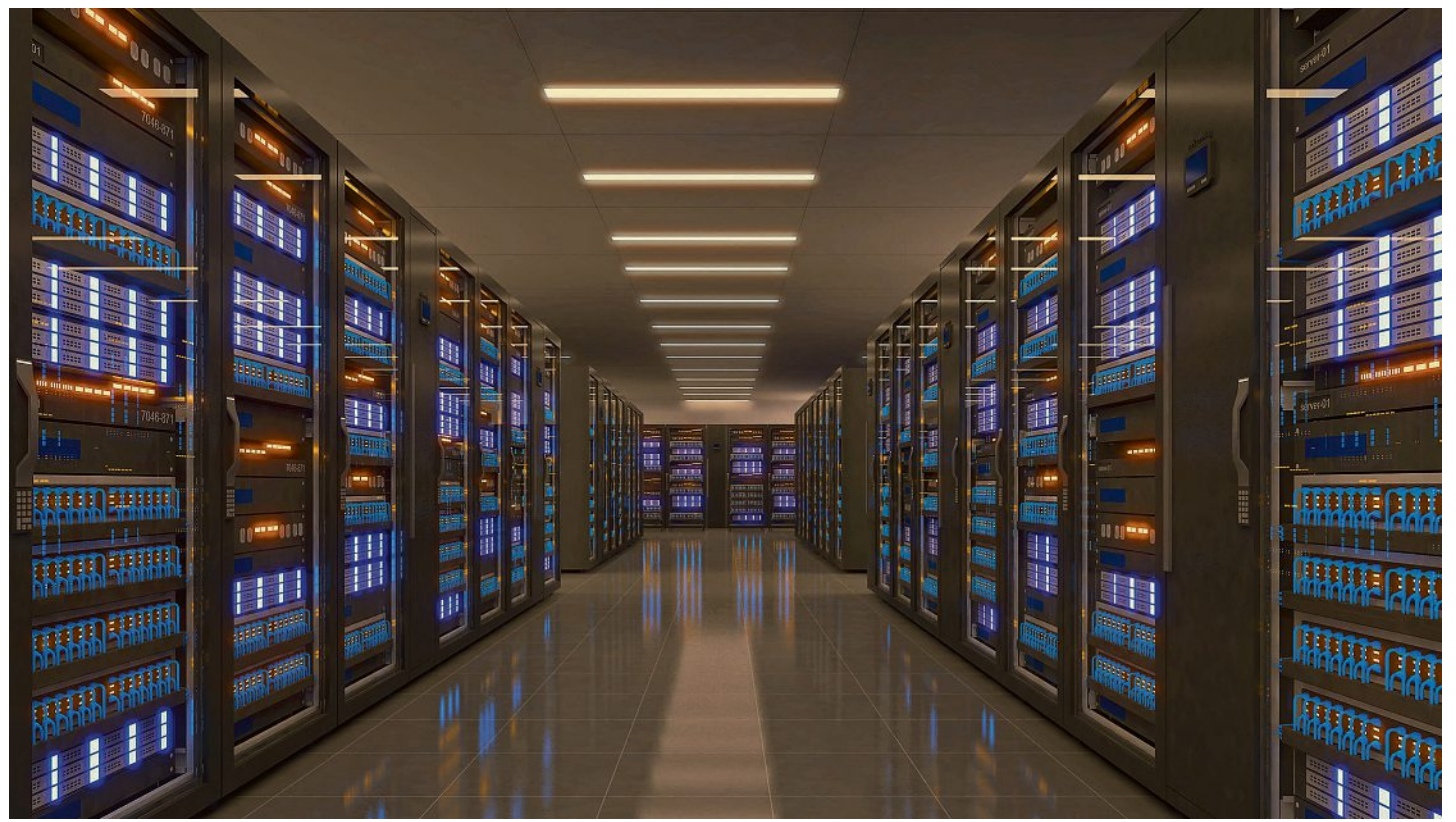
After two months passed, Donovan said, he again went looking for answers. Just to be told, by Port Wentworth Mayor Tracy Saunders, that they weren't looking into it.

"She said, you guys made the big ruckus," Donovan said. "And then no one said anything else...so it's over. That's why we need to start this petition."

'You can't just wave off our concerns.'

There are more than 100 data centers in use, in progress, or announced, according to Science for Georgia, but none of any appreciable scale are active in Coastal Georgia, according to North Coast Advocate for One Hundred Miles, Jeff Beauvais. Most of them are clustered around the Atlanta metro area, or in the central part of the state in the Macon area.

But they are coming to the area, said City Manager Steve Davis at the Decem-



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ber meeting, and all the big companies are looking—Google, Meta, OpenAI, Microsoft, Amazon.

"What I've been told...there's five places they're looking at," Donovan said. "One is in Port Wentworth, in the industrial park across from Rice Hope, and Rice Creek, and there's another maybe a quarter mile in Rincon. Then three others in Effingham that they're talking about, which is scary."

Donovan and Beauvais say they understand the arguments for them: Davis mentioned that having a data center could lower property taxes and likely increase property values.

But they don't really think the benefits outweigh the costs, with Beauvais citing the already existing issues with flooding and water usage. Donovan is a real estate professional and says most of his concern comes from that arena.

"I sell a lot of homes in Rice Hope,"

Donovan said. "I show the amenities and how your property values are rising. But what happens when they put a data center there? Then all those people lose value in their homes. I show homes every week, and people will dismiss houses based on little things like noise. We're talking about a massive industry that could drain your water and increase your bills."

At the meeting Wednesday night, in addition to discussing the petition, the residents gathered there started tinkering with plans on how to spread the word to get more signatures like standing outside of grocery or convenience stores. Ginny Hines, who was there, also attempted to start organizing in January after the ordinance was passed, but commented on the difficulty of trying to do that in Port Wentworth, where there are few community gathering spaces.

"There's nothing that people can

really rally around," Hines said in January. "And some of the more vocal ones don't have an understanding of municipal government and how to direct their energy."

But, said Donovan's wife, Lindsay, there are ways people can organize, just by spreading the word in their own neighborhoods. Donovan himself plans to attend every city council meeting, present the petition and read the suggested amendments to the data centers ordinances.

"We have a voice," Donovan said. "You can't just wave off our concerns."

Destini Ambus is the general assignment reporter for the Savannah Morning News, covering the municipalities, and community and cultural programs. You can reach her at DAmbus@usatodayco.com

Fugitive

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apprehended by the U.S. Marshals Service on May 13.

In another Facebook Live video posted after his arrest, Richardson is seen sitting in the back of a patrol vehicle with his hands and feet restrained. Several minutes into the Live, the sheriff approaches him Richardson laughed and call him a "fool."

"But what he was really saying in that is, 'You're different. Things are different now in Chatham County,'" Coleman said in a Facebook Live posted the following day. "When we got Meshawn last night, it's something about that that was different. I felt something that I've never felt before when apprehending somebody. As a law man, I did my job. I brought Meshawn to justice with the help of these agencies."

In court on Thursday, a Savannah Police Department (SPD) detective detailed the three burglaries Richardson is charged with committing. He presented his findings to Chief Judge for the Municipal Court of Thunderbolt, Willie Yancey, who was standing in for Chatham County Records Court Judge Crystal Harmon.

Detective Odell Thomas said the first burglary occurred on Aug. 5, 2025, at a residence on Atlanta Street in south Savannah. Richardson was allegedly captured on camera entering the home through a back window. Thomas did not say what he is accused of taking from the residence, but noted the victim did

not know Richardson.

The next incident was said to have occurred on Sept. 8, 2025, when Richardson allegedly used a car his cousin rented for him to burgle another residence. This time, Thomas said Richardson stole a PlayStation and other electronics from the home.

On Feb. 19, Richardson is accused of using another rented vehicle and illegally entering a home on East 39th Street with an accomplice. Surveillance footage from a nearby business captured the two leaving the residence, Thomas said. The homeowner later reported that a weapon and other items had been stolen.

Investigators did not collect forensic evidence from either the vehicles or the homes.

Thomas testified that he spoke with Richardson's girlfriend during the investigation, who said the two were driving to Atlanta when she saw a social media post seeking help identifying him. She said she did not tell Richardson about the post because she did not want to upset him. Later that evening, Richardson saw the post himself and began to cry, according to her account as relayed by Thomas in court.

Richardson's girlfriend said he dumped the car they were driving that night in a neighborhood and he went on the run.

SPD enlisted the help of the U.S. Marshals Service, which later apprehended Richardson. Thomas said he was unaware of the location where Richardson was found.

Judge Yancey found there to be enough evidence to send the case to Superior Court.

perior Court.

Ansley Franco is a reporter with the Savannah Morning News, covering

public safety and general assignments. You can reach her at AFranco@gannett.com.

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS AND BUDGET ADOPTION

Notice is hereby given that public hearings will be held by the Chatham Area Transit Authority for the FY 2027 Operating Budget & 5-Year Capital Plan

The First and Second Budget Hearings and Readings regarding the Chatham Area Transit Authority's Fiscal Year 2027 Proposed Operating Budget and 5-Year Capital Plan will be held in June 2026. At which time any persons wishing to be heard on the budget may appear.

The FY 2027 Proposed Operating Budget & 5-Year Capital Plan can be reviewed by the public at the following locations beginning Thursday, June 11, 2026:

- CAT Central Office, **900 East Gwinnett Street**, Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.
- Joe Murray Rivers Intermodal Transit Center, Ticket Window, **610 West Oglethorpe Avenue**, Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m.
- Live Oak Public Libraries:
 - o Bull Street Library, **2002 Bull Street**
 - o Southwest Chatham Library, **14097 Abercorn Street**
- Chatham Area Transit's website: [Transparency - Chatham Area Transit \(CAT\)](https://www.transparency-chatham.org)

The first reading will be held in a hybrid format:

- In person: Tuesday, June 23, 2026, at 4:00 p.m., CAT Central, 900 E. Gwinnett St.
- To Join Virtually: <https://www.youtube.com/ChathamAreaTransit>

A second reading will also be held in a hybrid format:

- In person: Tuesday, June 30, 2026, at 4:00 p.m., CAT Central, 900 E. Gwinnett St.
- To Join Virtually: <https://www.youtube.com/ChathamAreaTransit>

The Board of Directors will consider adopting the proposed FY 2027 Operating Budget and 5-Year Capital Plan at its regular meeting on Tuesday, June 30, 2026, following the second hearing.

Public comments will be taken into consideration prior to the adoption of the proposed FY 2027 Budget and Capital Program of Projects.

Persons wishing to make comments on the Operating/Capital Budget or Capital Program of Projects can do so in any of the following ways:

- **In person**, CAT Central, Multipurpose Room, 900 E. Gwinnett Street, Savannah, GA 31401
- **By US Mail**, CAT Board Office, 900 E. Gwinnett Street, Savannah, GA 31401
- **By drop off** at CAT Central, 900 East Gwinnett Street, or the ITC, 610 W. Oglethorpe Ave, 31401
- **By email** at meetings@catcatchacat.org, **accepted until 2:00 p.m. on the date of the applicable meeting**
- **By YouTube Chat** box during the public hearing

All interested citizens will have the opportunity to give written and oral comments.

For more information, please contact CAT's Public Information Officer at (912) 433-5191 or Ariel.Johnson@catcatchacat.org

In the event of cancellation, CAT will post information about a new hearing date on [catcatchacat.org](https://www.catcatchacat.org).

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