

MINUTES
GREATER LOWNDES PLANNING COMMISSION SPECIAL CALLED MEETING
LOWNDES COUNTY SOUTH HEALTH DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
325 WEST SAVANNAH AVENUE

January 5, 2016
5:30 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jody Hall
Brad Folsom
Ted Raker
Celine Gladwin
Gerald McClendon
Chip Wildes
Franklin Bailey, Chairman
Johnny Ball, III

MEMBERS ABSENT:

-Dasher representative-
Tommy Willis
W. Keith Sandlin

STAFF PRESENT:

Jason Davenport, County Planner
Carmella Braswell, Recording Secretary
Matt Martin, City Planning & Zoning Adm.

VISITORS PRESENT:

(See Attached Sign-In Sheet)

CALL TO ORDER, INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Bailey called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Chairman Bailey welcomed everyone to the GLPC meeting, and thanked staff for their efforts for arranging the special called meeting. Chairman Bailey explained that the Planning Commission serves as an advisory body to the local member governments regarding land use requests. Chairman Bailey explained that the Planning Commission is a recommending body only, and the final determination of the requests presented will be made by the applicable local governments. Chairman Bailey explained the meeting procedures and stated that handouts were available for review by the public for the conducting of the public hearing, to include the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Powers that will be used as part of their determination for the cases on the agenda. Chairman Bailey announced the date of the public hearing for the member governments as listed on the agenda.

Chairman Bailey asked Commissioner McClendon to give the Invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA ITEM #1:

REZ-2016-01, Valdosta Lowndes Development Authority, Rocky Ford Road, Valdosta, Georgia

Nature of Request: Mr. Davenport stated a recommendation is needed on property consisting of 123 acres off of Rocky Ford Road, just south of the Dupont manufacturing facility. The County was approached and has been in negotiation with the Development Authority for a project that will be a container manufacturing facility. The project has very specific locational and infrastructure needs such as rail, water, and sewer. The project has a very large footprint. Staff's recommendation was published this morning. Staff attempted to share details about the project as it became available and its potential impact. Each division of the TRC recommendation is reflected in the staff report. There was some contact made to the office about the case. Staff advertised the public notice in the Dec 27th edition of the local paper. Upon the GLPC's recommendation, this request will move to County Commission meeting scheduled for next week. Representatives of the Development Authority is present to answer questions.

Chairman Bailey asked staff to clarify the differing acreages - 123 acres as reflected in the staff report versus 134 acres as reflected on the agenda.

Mrs. Braswell stated initially the acreage was 134 but subsequently a survey was performed and confirmed 123 acres.

Chairman Bailey asked staff to clarify the recommendation for split zoning.

Mr. Davenport stated with all the various uses that are allowed in M-2 zoning, staff attempted to try and maintain some consistency, while rezoning what they need to operate effectively. Regarding the second condition, 123 acres is a large amount of M-2 zoning. Staff attempted to confirm how much do this project really need. If the first phase – at approximately 74 acres - is developed, staff would like to work with them and make sure the project is successful. Regarding the remnant property, staff has reservations for M-2 zoning and will entertain a rezoning request at a later date.

Commissioner Gladwin asked what was zoning's bases for denial.

Mr. Davenport stated he felt that the County's Future Development Map did not support the request, and concerns with the location and amount of M-2 zoning.

Commissioner Folsom asked staff to clarify what he meant by "location".

Mr. Davenport stated there is M-2 zoning adjacent to the subject property that helps the request; however, the Future Development Map is unsupportive of industrial property and is not consistent. The Zoning Administrator felt the request was too far.

Commissioner Gladwin asked if the initial phase consisted of 66 acres in a rectangular-shaped lot, then another 66 acres for future expansion.

Mr. Davenport stated yes.

Commissioner Gladwin asked if the Board of Health give a recommendation prior to the Board of Commissioners meeting.

Mr. Davenport stated he didn't think they will have a substantial opposition.

Commissioner Gladwin asked if there were any environment assessments performed.

Mr. Davenport stated the information in the staff report is what was submitted.

Commissioner Gladwin asked if there were concerns by the Development Authority for the recommendation.

Mr. Davenport stated he believed they were ok with the first condition, and would like to drop the second condition.

Commissioner Folsom asked if there were any historical precedence for placing conditions as proposed on other projects.

Mr. Davenport stated the most recent rezoning case he recalls is the industrial park just north of the subject property and east of the landfill. The request was for industrial zoning and there were some conditions placed

on the rezoning as the project was located next to a neighborhood – staff was able to negotiate a compromise to go from industrial zoning to a planned development. If the Board of Commissioners chose that direction, staff will work with the applicant for where that boundary will be located.

Commissioner Folsom asked if this is proposed as a conditional zoning.

Mr. Davenport stated it is appropriate to limit the uses; however, staff do not feel comfortable limiting the zoning to the specific project. To say that the requested zoning is contingent on the progress/negotiation of the land purchase raises some concerns. If, for some reason, this project is not successful, an application needs to be submitted to rezone the property back to E-A (Estate Agriculture) or some other zoning that is appropriate.

There being no further questions, Chairman Bailey called for those wishing to speak in favor of the request.

Ms. Andrea Schruijer, 103 Roosevelt Drive, stated she is the Executive Director of the Valdosta Lowndes Development Authority. Timing is the reason for the requested rezoning. Lowndes County was once eliminated from the project in December; however, the prospects continued to be interested in this area. The project requires rail, the project requires a close proximity to both I-75 and a 4-lane highway. The project will yield 200 high paying jobs that are highly skilled i.e. engineers and management experience. The project will be utilizing sustainable technology, and only steam will be emitted from the use of natural gas. The industry is dedicated to sustainable technology and is a container industry. When looking at this site, there is a demand for inland port. In order for a community to have inland port, there is a significant need for a manufacturing base. Not only are you bringing in products, you are also shipping out products. They are asking to rezone entire site to M-2 because of the project's moving forward and future growth plans. It is their desire to be business friendly. This will be their first phase and they are anticipating an additional phase.

Chairman Bailey asked how many jobs and the minimum salary.

Ms. Schruijer stated they will employ 204 jobs and the minimum manufacturing wage will be between \$15-\$16 per hour; the wage for the engineers and management level positions will be higher.

Chairman Bailey stated the fact of the prospects reaching back to the development authority is a good indicator and asked were there other prospective locations in Georgia.

Ms. Schruijer stated not to their knowledge; however, there is one site in the state of Florida.

Commissioner Raker stated the M-2 zoning has a broad spectrum of uses and that is the concern for any additional phases.

Chairman Bailey asked if the proposed recommendation goes forth will that be detrimental to the project.

Ms. Schruijer stated anything we can do to remove any negative perception for doing business will be in the best interest of the project.

Commissioner McClendon asked how many entry level jobs are being proposed.

Ms. Schruijer stated 10% will be the engineering positions and 50-60% of entry level positions. Chairman Bailey called for those in favor of the request.

Mr. Jeff Lovell, Inner Perimeter Road, stated they are in the process of performing the environmental studies – they are flagging wetlands and performing soil borings. This company has collected air samples as well. The

site is in proximity to high pressure gas, and its proximity to rail makes it very conducive. The prospect has a support facility that they are looking to bring in the near future which would take up the rest of the space. The results of the soil borings is very important to support the weight of the equipment. The proposed facility is 11 acres in size.

Commissioner Folsom asked who would be acquiring party – the development authority.

Ms. Schruijer stated the development authority.

Chairman Bailey asked if they will recycled water.

Mr. Lovell stated their process is a very efficient use.

Chairman Bailey made one last call for those wishing to speak in favor of the request.

Mr. Tom Call, 1108 Gornto Road, stated he is the Chairman of the Valdosta Lowndes Development Authority representing each of you and himself. As a Board, they have been very closely involved in this process. He understands that the timing of this meeting has been called into question. The prospect is a very clean company and will probably be the #1 corporate facility in Valdosta.

Commissioner Raker stated trust is a concern among the public.

Mr. Call stated the state brought this project to the development authority. A lot has to go right to land this project of this magnitude. He can say that Phase 2 will be an exact replica of Phase 1 which was relayed to the development authority. With much speculation, the success of this project will send a message that we are business friendly and welcome sustainable technology.

Commissioner Gladwin asked for clarification for calling a special meeting.

Mr. Call stated the prospect's site selector informed them that we were 1 of 3 potential sites in Georgia for consideration. Because there were quality control issues with a neighboring industry, we were given another chance. The prospect also have timelines in order to be operational.

Ms. Schruijer stated there were originally 3 sites in State of Georgia with Valdosta being selected as the final site.

Chairman Bailey asked if they were getting support from the state.

Ms. Schruijer stated yes, the Georgia Department of Economic Development.

There being no further questions, Chairman Bailey asked if anyone was present wishing to speak in opposition to the request.

Mrs. Gretchen Quarterman, 6565 Quarterman Road, stated she had a question. She is excited about the potential for a clean manufacturing company locating here; however, she has concerns with the long range zoning land use plans, the water usage, the proposed paving and parking, and what happens to the water run-off.

There being no further opponents to the request, Chairman Bailey closed the public participation and entertained further discussion among the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Hall stated since the development authority is buying property they maintain control over the use of it. If the subject property is not selected, it is hopeful that the development authority will seek to rezone the property back to its current E-A zoning. It is apparent that this company wants to locate here.

Chairman Bailey stated that the development authority will not acquire the subject property if the arrangement is not successful. Perhaps additional language could be added to the recommendation.

Commissioner Gladwin stated regarding the zoning map, there is an adjacent area that is currently zoned M-2 – this request will increase an already M-2 zoned area.

Commissioner Raker stated he does not have a problem with the project, but has concerns with the process.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Bailey called for a motion.

Commissioner Folsom made a motion to recommend approval of M-2 zoning for the entire property with the following two (2) conditions: 1) the use of the subject property shall be limited to the primary and accessory uses associated with a container manufacturing facility; 2) the zoning shall change to M-2 simultaneous with acquisition of the property to be rezoned by the Valdosta Lowndes Development Authority for purposes of Project Max; should said acquisition not occur or should Project Max not occur as currently proposed, the zoning of the property shall remain E-A until further application for rezoning. Commissioner Wildes seconded the motion.

Chairman Bailey called for questions and discussion concerning the stated motion.

There being none, Chairman Bailey called the motion and it was carried unanimously. (Vote 7-0)

There being no further business, Chairman Bailey thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the meeting. (6:18 p.m.)

Franklin Bailey, Chairman
Greater Lowndes Planning Commission

Date

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