

GREATER LOWNDES PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
325 WEST SAVANNAH AVENUE
Monday, March 29, 2021 – 5:30 PM

GLPC Commission Members Present: Franklin Bailey, Vicky Biles, Calvin Graham, Lou McClendon, Steve Miller, Vicki Rountree (Chairperson), Debbie Sauls, Chris Webb, Chip Wildes, Tommy Willis

GLPC Commission Members Absent: Johnny Ball, Ed Hightower

Staff: Matt Martin, City of Valdosta/Hahira Planning & Zoning Administrator; JD Dillard, Planning & Zoning Director; Trinni Amiot, Lowndes County Planner (Clerk)

VISITORS PRESENT:

(Sign-In sheet available in file)

CALL TO ORDER, INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairperson Rountree called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the GLPC meeting. Chairperson Rountree explained that the Planning Commission serves as an advisory (recommending) body to the local member governments regarding land use requests, and the final determination of the requests presented at this meeting will be made by the applicable local governments. Chairperson Rountree explained the meeting procedures and announced the dates of the public hearing for the local member government, as listed on the agenda.

Chairperson Rountree asked Commissioner Bailey to lead the Pledge of Allegiance followed by the Invocation.

Agenda Item #2

Approval of the Meeting Minutes: February 22, 2021

Chairperson Rountree called for additions, questions, and corrections of the February 22, 2021, GLPC meeting minutes. There being none, Chairperson Rountree called for a motion. Commissioner Bailey made a motion to approve the February 22, 2021, meeting minutes as presented. Commissioner Wildes second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Agenda Item #3

VA-2021-01 Inman Solar, Inc. Property size/location: about 37 acres along the east side of Ulmer Avenue, between New Statenville Highway and South Patterson Street Amendment to the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan, to change the Character Area from NAC to IAC

Inman Solar, Inc. is requesting to amend the Future Development Map (FDM) of the Greater Lowndes Comprehensive Plan by changing the Character Area designation of approximately 30 acres of land from Neighborhood Activity Center (NAC) to Industrial Activity Center (IAC). The subject properties are currently vacant and located along the east side of Ulmer Avenue,

between New Statenville Highway and South Patterson Street. The properties are currently zoned Residential Professional (R-P). The applicant is requesting this amendment in order to make these properties eligible for industrial (M-1 or M-2) zoning, which is necessary for the applicant's proposed development. The applicant is ultimately proposing to lease this property and construct a large solar array consisting of more than 20 acres, plus access roads, equipment, and buffer areas.

If the FDM Character Area amendment is approved by City Council, then the applicant's next step would be to seek rezoning of the property to either M-1 or M-2, which is required for the array but would allow for other industrial uses as well. It should be pointed out that this property is part of the proposed pathway for the South Valdosta truck bypass route, which will connect Gil Harbin Industrial Blvd with Clay Road and Howell Road. The final approved alignment of this route will likely affect the applicant's final proposed development.

There have been numerous discussions between staff and the applicant regarding this proposed array, as well as the proposed truck bypass. The applicant has gone to great lengths to incorporate some flexibility in their design, as well as leave open a 200' wide pathway traversing the eastern parts of the property for this truck bypass – although this is not necessarily the final pathway that will be chosen by GDOT. The applicant has also indicated they are willing to leave a strip (at some reasonable depth) of the original NAC character area along the east side of Ulmer Avenue, to further augment their proposed buffer between their array and the Little Miami neighborhood. This is very commendable.

However, it should be made very clear that this current proposal is to amend the City's "land use policy" as reflected on the Comprehensive Plan's Future Development Map for this area. It is not for direct consideration of an actual rezoning nor even the final use of the property – which is a large solar array, nor even the proposed layout plan for ANY type of potential future development. At this stage, it is strictly a proposed amendment to land use policy for this area.

Because of the very sharp differences between these Character Areas (see page 3), staff's primary concern with the proposal is that it would open all of this property for the possibility of industrial zoning and ALL of its potential uses – even after the lease term for the solar array has expired. This proposal would also preclude the possibility of any future rezoning to residential or light zonings such as O-P or C-N, whose development could be beneficial to the Little Miami neighborhood and the Ulmer Avenue corridor. Furthermore, there is simply no need for ANY additional industrial zoning areas in the city limits, whether it be for the applicant's proposed use or any other use that is customary to M-1 or M-2 zoning. The city currently has many hundreds of acres of "undeveloped" industrial zoning, as well as currently vacant industrial properties that are in severe need of redevelopment.

Therefore staff is fundamentally opposed to this proposed change to create 30 acres of more Industrial Activity Center (IAC) character area at this time. Staff would also be very opposed to adding any industrial acreage in proximity to the Little Miami neighborhood and with direct access to Ulmer Avenue. Staff would further be opposed to consuming this much prime developable acreage (with public infrastructure already in place to support urban development),

for use as a large solar array that should have ample alternative locations more appropriate and not displace this much potential development under the NAC character area guidelines..

Staff Recommendation: Find inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the map amendment review criteria, and recommend denial to the City Council.

Several questions from the Commissioners for Mr. Martin included changes to the tax base, availability of property in adjacent Miller Park, appropriate zoning, and the proposed truck route.

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Steve Chiariello, on behalf of Inman Solar
- George Garnett, on behalf of Cowart & Sons

Mr. Chiariello discussed the benefits of the project and answered questions from the Commissioners. He stated the property would be buffered and landscaped; solar farms make good neighbors; the project would be fenced; and there is very little noise from the equipment.

Mr. Garnett offered to answer any questions the Commissioners may have.

No one spoke against the request.

There being no further discussion, Chairperson Rountree called for a motion.

Commissioner Willis stated he felt the purpose of the property was to buffer the industrial park, and that by granting this request, a precedent would be set for other areas of the city. Commissioner Willis made a motion to recommend denial of the request, citing a decrease in the buffering, the precedent set, and out of character with the surrounding neighborhood. Commissioner Graham second.

Commissioner Bailey comments that this property is not owned by the city and it's a big buffer for a private citizen.

Those in favor of the recommendation to deny the request: Commissioners Willis, Graham, Miller, and Sauls.

Those opposed to the recommendation to deny: Commissioners Wildes, Webb, Bailey, and Biles.

Commissioner McClendon abstained.

Madam Chair Rountree broke the tie and voted against the motion to deny.

The motion to recommend denial of the request failed.

Commissioner Wildes stated he believes the solar farm is an appropriate buffer and made a motion to recommend approval of the request. Commissioner Bailey second.

Those in favor of the recommendation to approve the request: Commissioners Wildes, Webb, McClendon, Bailey, and Biles.

Those opposed to the recommendation to approve: Commissioners Willis, Graham, Miller, and Sauls. Motion carried.

Agenda Item #4

HA-2021-01 Rubber Tire LLC Property size/location: 1.6 acres between Peters Street and East Main Street, Hahira Variance to minimum building setback requirements in R-P zoning

Rubber Tire LLC is requesting a Variance to Section 6-1 Development Standards, of the Hahira Zoning Ordinance as it pertains to minimum building setback requirements in a Residential Professional (R-P) zoning district on multiple proposed lots. The subject property consists of 1.6 acres located between Peters Street and East Main Street, about 300 feet east of North College Street. This includes the same property that was recently rezoned from R-10 to R-P (file # HA-2020-11). The applicant is proposing to subdivide this property into 8 lots, consisting of 7 houses and one duplex. However, given the relatively shallow depth of these proposed lots, they are heavily encumbered by existing required minimum setbacks in both the front and rear yards, which greatly limit the depth of buildable area on each lot. The applicant's logical choices are to either subdivide the property into about six (6) very deep and awkward "thru lots" with frontage on both streets, or seek a reasonable relief to these setback requirements which will facilitate eight (8) lots which are little more conventional in layout design.

The subject property is rectangular vacant acreage with both rear and street frontages. It has an average overall depth of about 190'. For single-family or duplex residential development, subdividing this property as individual thru lots with dual street frontages is impractical, as well as it being discouraged by the Hahira Subdivision Regulations. Subdividing it into two (2) separate rows of lots, each facing a different street, makes good sense and is consistent with the overall lot design pattern of the surrounding area. However, in this particular situation with the resulting rows of lots averaging less than 100' deep each, the minimum required building setbacks of R-P zoning leave very minimal "buildable areas" on each lot in terms of lot depth. For the row of proposed lots along Peters Street, the minimum required setbacks are 30' for the front and 30' for the rear. The applicant is instead proposing 20' front and 25' rear. For the proposed single-family dwelling lots along East Main Street, the required minimums are still 30' for the rear, but is increased to 40' for the front because East Main Street is a designated Minor Arterial roadway. Here, the applicant is instead proposing 30' for the front and 20' for the rear. As for the proposed duplex facing the cul-de-sac (Lot 6), it meets all of the current required setbacks as is.

This particular request differs from the similar request a few months ago for properties facing East Lawson Street (# HA-2020-13) in that this property is instead zoned R-P which allows smaller lot sizes, and that the setback for the frontage along East Main Street is increased even more (40") because of it being an arterial. The differences are further compounded by the

overall depth of each row of lots being about 15' less than previous. However, one similarity is that many of the existing buildings on adjacent and nearby properties have an observed front yard setback of 25' or less; with the adjacent house along Peters Street being less than 10'. This gives rise to a reasonable form of relief for these properties as well. However, since R-P zoning allows for single-family and duplex residential, as well as multi-family residential and professional offices, staff believes that such relief should NOT be granted to these latter uses (apts, offices), since these are a little more intensive and would more likely be developed on a thru-lot layout design anyway – where there is plenty of room to meet current setback requirements.

- Staff Recommendations: Find the proposed reduction in minimum front/rear setback requirements consistent with Variance review criteria, and recommend approval to the City Council as follows, subject to the condition that these approvals be applicable to only single-family and duplex residential development on individual lots:
 1. For the proposed lots facing Peters Street, the minimum required front yard setback from the property line shall be reduced from 30' to 20', and the minimum required rear yard setback be reduced from 30' to 25'.
 2. For the proposed lots facing East Main Street, the minimum required front yard setback from the property line shall be reduced from 40' to 25', and the minimum required rear yard setback be reduced from 30' to 20'.

Commissioner Willis asked Mr. Martin about the zoning classification of the surrounding property.

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Satrina Plyler

Ms. Plyler offered to answer any questions the commissioners may have.

No one spoke against the request.

There being no further discussion, Chairperson Rountree called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Willis to recommend approval of the request as presented including the conditions, Commissioner Graham second. All in favor, no one opposed, Commissioner Bailey abstained. Motion carried.

Agenda Item #5

HA-2021-02 Stoker Development LLC Property size/location: 0.09 acres at 405 East Main Street, Hahira Variance to minimum building setback requirements in R-P zoning

Stoker Development LLC is requesting a Variance to Section 6-1 Development Standards, of the Hahira Zoning Ordinance as it pertains to minimum building setback requirements in a Residential Professional (R-P) zoning district. The subject property is currently vacant and consists of 0.09 acres located at 405 East Main Street, which is along the north side of the

street about 150 feet east of North College Street. The property measures 50' wide and about 81' deep (4,061-sf) which makes it a nonconforming lot of record in R-P zoning. The property is still eligible for development, as long as setback requirements and other development standards are met. Current minimum required setbacks for this lot are 40' for the front and 30' for the rear, which leaves only about 11' of depth for the buildable area. The applicant is seeking relief for both the front and rear yards, and is proposing 15' for both the front and rear instead. The applicant is also in the process of negotiating with Lowndes County (owner of the adjacent "Head Start" property) for a shared driveway access easement.

Given the lot's existing small size, development potential is very limited – even with some reasonable relief to the minimum building setback requirements. Only single-family residential or perhaps a very tiny office is remotely feasible. However, the applicant's request of reducing BOTH the front and rear yard setbacks to 15' is still rather extreme and is not adequately supported by the applicant's submitted site plan. The previous Agenda item (# HA-2021-01) was recommended for the lots facing East Main Street to have a reduced front yard setback of 25', and a rear yard reduced to 20'. For this property, the reduced front yard setback should also be set to 25' for consistency with the abutting properties. However, with the even shallower lot depth in this case, there is some justification for a few more feet of relief for the rear setback, and this should be reduced 5 more feet to a rear yard setback of 15' as requested. This leaves 40+ feet of lot depth on which to situate a building.

Staff Recommendations: Find the proposed reduction in minimum front/rear setback requirements consistent with Variance review criteria, and recommend approval to the City Council for a reduced front yard setback of 25' from the property line, and a reduced rear yard setback of 15' as requested.

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Mr. Mark Perry

Mr. Perry was present to represent the developer.

No one spoke against the request.

There being no further discussion, Chairperson Rountree called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Graham to recommend approval of the request as presented, Commissioner Webb second. All in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Agenda Item #6

REZ-2021-04 Union Station Union Rd., 0228 028A, ±7.5 ac., Hahira water/County Sewer, C-H/C-C to P-D

This request represents a change in zoning on approximately 7.5 acres from C-H (Highway Commercial) and C-C (Crossroads Commercial) zonings to P-D (Planned Development) zoning, in order for a multi-family housing complex to be constructed.

The subject property is part of the Urban Service and Community Activity Center Character Area, with access to and from the property along Union Road, a major collector road. Per Comprehensive Plan guidance, P-D zoning is listed as a permitted zoning within the character area.

The proposed site plan meets the ULDC standards and objectives for Planned Developments

The TRC reviewed the request and found it compliant with the Comprehensive Plan and existing land use patterns of the area.

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Mr. Joseph Johnson

Mr. Johnson represents the company. He stated that the development is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and that there is a strong demand. He feels it will be fully occupied. Additionally, tax credit financing will be used.

No one spoke against the request.

There being no further discussion, Chairperson Rountree called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Wildes to recommend approval of the request as presented, Commissioner McClendon second. All in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Agenda Item #7

REZ-2021-05 Amanda Patch GA Hwy 135, 0247 034, ~5.0 ac., Well & Septic, E-A to R-A

This request represents a change in zoning on approximately 5 acres from E-A (Estate Agricultural) zoning to R-A (Residential Agricultural) zoning, in order for the property to be divided so the two existing homes on the parcel may be sold separately.

The subject property is part of the Rural Service and Agricultural Character Area, with access to and from the property from GA HWY 135, a major collector road. Per Comprehensive Plan guidance, R-A zoning is listed as a permitted zoning within the character area.

This parcel was part of an estate settlement in March of 2020, that reconfigured and subdivided three larger tracts into eight smaller tracts.

The TRC reviewed the request and found it compliant with the Comprehensive Plan and existing agricultural land use patterns of the area.

Commissioner comments centered around DOT driveway requirements.

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Mr. Bob Dewar

Mr. Dewar represents the owners and stated that they plan to divide and sell the homes.

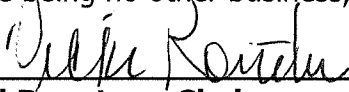
Speaking against the request:

- Ms. Mary Lightsey

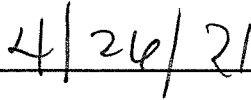
Ms. Lightsey's concerns are regarding driveway issues.

There being no further discussion, Chairperson Rountree called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Wildes to recommend approval of the request as presented, Commissioner Willis second. All in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

There being no other business, Chairperson Rountree adjourned the meeting at 6:56 p.m.



Vicki Rountree, Chairperson
Greater Lowndes Planning Commission



Date