

GREATER LOWNDES PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
MINUTES
325 WEST SAVANNAH AVENUE
Tuesday, June 24, 2019 – 5:30 PM

GLPC Commission Members Present: Franklin Bailey, Johnny Ball, Calvin Graham, Ed Hightower, Lou McClendon, Vicki Rountree (Chairperson), Debbie Sauls, Chris Webb, Chip Wildes, Tommy Willis

Note: Commissioner Ball present at 5:32 p.m.

GLPC Commission Members Absent: Jody Hall

Staff: Molly Stevenson, Lowndes County Engineering/Planning Technician, Trinni Amiot, Lowndes County Planner (Recorder), Matt Martin, City of Valdosta Planning & Zoning Administrator, Jessica Freeman, Remerton City Clerk

VISITORS PRESENT:

(See Sign-In Sheet)

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 body to the local member governments regarding land use requests. Chairperson Rountree 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. 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 McLendon to lead the Pledge of Allegiance followed by the Invocation.

Approval of the Meeting Minutes: May 28, 2019

Chairperson Rountree called for additions, questions, corrections, and approval of the May 28, 2019, GLPC meeting minutes. There being none, Chairperson Rountree called for a motion.

Commissioner Bailey made a motion to approve the April 29, 2019, meeting minutes as presented. Commissioner Wildes second. There being no further discussion on this matter, Chairperson Rountree called the motion. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

VA-2019-02 Joe Nijem Property: 406 Baytree Rd, 403 Pine Tree Rd, 1504 Azalea Dr.
Nature of Request: Joe Nijem is requesting to rezone three parcels totaling 1.43 acres from conditional Multi-Family Residential (R-M)(c) to conditional Multi-Family Residential (R-M)(c) – but with different conditions. The subject properties comprise three (3) of the original eight (8) contiguous parcels of land, which were rezoned in 2014 as part of one larger multi-family complex. The subject properties are directly across the street from VSU’s P.E. Complex and also located at the SW corner of Azalea Drive and Pine Tree Road. The properties currently contain a fraternity house facing Baytree Road, and two single-family residences on the other parcels facing Pine Tree and Azalea. The applicant is proposing to demolish all existing structures and redevelop these properties as two (2) separate apartment complexes which total 26 dwelling units. In addition to this rezoning, the applicant is also seeking Planned Development approval for the southern portion of this property – in order to allow a higher development density for one of the proposed complexes (see next Agenda item, file # VA-2019-03).

In 2014, eight (8) properties at that time (including these three, with this request) were all rezoned to R-M(c) with the following 4 conditions (file # VA-2014-07):

- (1) For multi-family development, combine all parcels of land into one lot.
- (2) From Pine Tree Road, minimum setbacks shall be at least 30’ for buildings greater than one story, and 100’ for buildings greater than 2-story.
- (3) Buffer Yard landscaping shall include a minimum of 3 canopy trees, 4 understory trees, and 30 shrubs per 100 linear feet. Buffer yards shall maintain a minimum width of 20’. There shall be an unbroken 6’ tall opaque solid fence or wall along the entire western boundary as well as the entire frontage area of Pine Tree Road. There shall be no vehicular or pedestrian access to Pine Tree Road.
- (4) Structures abutting the Pine Tree side (4 existing parcels area, about 1.34 acres) shall be no more than 2 stories tall.

The applicant this time around is simply proposing to eliminate condition #1 from the original approval, so that the property can be developed. Staff is very concerned and is opposed to the elimination of this condition of approval – for two main reasons: (A) The intent of this condition was to prevent piecemeal development of separate apartment complexes on each of these properties - particularly for the four properties facing Pine Tree Road - and that any apartments on these four properties would be part of a larger complex that was oriented southward toward Baytree Road (i.e. this would be a complex that was considered “part of the Baytree corridor”, with the portion along Pine Tree functioning as the “back yard” of the development and that it would be very heavily screened and buffered.) Staff’s other concern is (B), if this request is approved it would leave the last two remaining R-M(c) parcels to the west (405 & 407 Pine Tree) left hanging with zoning conditions on redevelopment that prohibit multi-family access to Pine Tree Road and with no physical path of connection to an adjacent multi-family development. This creates a very awkward condition with a “meaningless” zoning

classification on these two properties. If they are not to be redeveloped as multi-family, these parcels should be returned to their original R-10 zoning.

Staff Recommendation: Find inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power (SFEZP) and recommend denial to the City Council.

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Bill Nijem. Mr. Nijem discussed the benefits of developing this property and removing the one condition from the previous rezoning.
- Jon Nijem. Mr. Nijem emphasized the purpose of this development was beauty and revenue for the City.

Speaking in opposition to the request:

- Sheri Johnson
- Sara Bartholomew
- Walter Hobbs

Discussion from opposing citizens included noise, traffic, integrity of the older, established neighborhood, buffering, adverse effects on the elementary school on Azalea Drive.

The Commissioners had several minutes of discussion. Chairman Rountree called the motion. Motion to recommend approval of the request to eliminate condition #1 was made by Commissioner Wildes, Commissioner Bailey second. Commissioners Wildes, Bailey, McLendon, Hightower and Ball voted in favor of the motion to recommend approval. Commissioners Graham, Sauls, Willis and Webb voted against the motion. The motion to recommend approval of the request carried 5-4.

VA-2019-03 Joe Nijem Property Location: 406 Baytree Rd

Nature of Request: Joe Nijem is requesting Planned Development approval for a proposed apartment complex within a Multi-Family Residential (R-M)(c) zoning district. The subject property consists of 0.56 acres as a proposed replatted parcel located at 406 Baytree Road. This is directly across the street from VSU's P.E. Complex. R-M zoning allows a maximum development density of 18 dwelling units per acre, and the applicant is proposing 12 dwelling units (all as 1-bedroom units) on 0.56 acres, which equates to about 21.4 units per acre. This is very similar to Jon Nijem's Planned Development request which was approved in 2017 for the property immediately west at 410 Baytree Road (file # VA-2017-13). The applicant is also seeking rezoning of the subject property, as well as rezoning of the two parcels to the north, to modify the existing zoning conditions of approval which were imposed in 2014. This Planned Development request is being processed concurrently with the rezoning (see previous agenda item, file # VA-2019-02). It should be noted that successful rezoning of this property is a requirement in order for this Planned Development request to be eligible for consideration.

Staff Recommendation: Find inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Planned Development Review Criteria, and recommend denial to the City Council.

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Bill Nijem. Mr. Nijem emphasized the shift in density from Pine Tree Rd and the negotiable setbacks.
- Jon Nijem. Mr. Nijem stated the project was open to adjusting the setbacks.

Speaking Against the request:

- Hellen Hobbs. Ms. Hobbs stated the neighborhood is small and the residents there would like to keep it that way.

The Commissioners had several minutes of discussion. Chairman Rountree called the motion. Motion by Commissioner Wildes to recommend approval of the planned development request, Commissioner Bailey second. Commissioners Wildes, Bailey, McLendon, Sauls, and Hightower voted in favor of the motion to recommend approval. Commissioners Graham, Willis, Ball and Webb voted against the motion. The motion to recommend approval of the request carried 5-4.

COA-2019-01 Battered Women's Shelter, 1807 Plum Street

Nature of Request: The main motivation behind the request is to allow for the demolition of the main (historic) building and the accessory building as well as to rebuild the accessory building on the current concrete slab at 1807 Plum St. The subject property possess road frontage on Plum St. and is 0.18 acres. With this request, the following factors should be considered: the potential impact of the removal of an existing historical building; the potential impact to the surrounding character area. Overall staff is supportive and approves the COA request to allow for the following with conditions: demolition of the existing main structure; demolition of the existing accessory structure; new construction for an accessory structure on the current slab with the condition that the structure adheres to the Remerton Downtown Design Guidelines and is approved by staff prior to being erected.

No one spoke in favor of or against the request.

Motion by Commissioner Hightower to recommend approval of the request as presented, Commissioner Wildes second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

SE-2019-01 Ryan Paschall, 1823 Plum Street

Nature of Request: The main motivation behind the request is to allow for land use to allow for an auto stereo sales/installation business. The subject property possess road frontage on Plum St. and is 0.17 acres. With this request the following factors should be considered: the potential impact of noise to its adjoining neighbors, existing residents and existing businesses; the potential increase in noise complaints; the potential impact to vehicles left in the parking lot overnight unsecured; the potential impact to the number

of shared parking places for vehicles that are left in the parking spaces waiting to be serviced for installation. Overall staff is not supportive of and denies the proposed used request as it does not coincide with the city's current zoning map or ordinance.

Ms. Freeman also discussed the noise ordinance and distributed a noise level chart.

Speaking in favor of the request: Ryan Paschall. Mr. Paschall discussed his business intentions and that he was aware of the noise ordinance and the penalties for violating it. He outlined the hours of operation for his business, the sound barrier in the building and the support he has received from the adjacent property owners.

Speaking against the request: no one.

After some discussion between the Commissioners and the applicant, motion by Commissioner Willis to recommend approval of the request, Commissioner McLendon second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REZ-2019-08 Knudson & Son Outdoor Activities, 3435 Bemiss Knights Academy Rd.

Nature of Request: This request was tabled at the May 28, 2019 Meeting.

No one spoke in favor of or against the request.

Motion by Commissioner Hightower to concur with the decision made by the Board of Commissioners to approve the request, Commissioner Willis second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REZ-2019-09 Mark Courson, 5761 Long Pond Rd.

Nature of Request: This request represents a change in zoning of approximately 1.0 acre, from R-1 (Low Density Residential) zoning to R-10 (Suburban Density Residential) zoning. The motivation behind this request is to divide the parcel into two ½-acre lots for the purpose of building 2 residential homes. Access to and from the subject property is off Long Pond Road, a County maintained local road. Concerning the Comprehensive Plan Future Development Map, the subject property is within the Urban Service Area and depicted as in a Suburban Area. Per Comprehensive Plan guidance R-10 zoning is listed as a permitted zoning district within a Suburban Character Area.

In addition to the above information, the following factors should also be considered: 1) the adjacent R-10 zoning to the north, west and east of the subject property, 2) the R-1 zoning adjacent to the southwest, 3) the R-15 zoning to the southeast, and 4) the proximity of County water and sewer service.

The TRC considered this request and had no objectionable comments. Staff found the request overall consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and recommends for its approval.

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Mark Courson. Mr. Courson stated he was willing to answer any questions anyone may have.

Speaking against the request:

- Kern Walcher
- Emily Traficante

The statements of opposition centered on the health of the lakes, traffic impact, and allowable uses in the property.

After some discussion between the applicant and the Commissioners, Commissioner Wildes made a motion to recommend approval with the condition that the lots not be divided past the proposed two lots requested by the applicant, Commissioner Willis second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REZ-2019-10 Ballard, Madison Hwy.

Nature of Request: This request represents a change in zoning on the subject property from Estate Agricultural (E-A) zoning to Crossroads Commercial (C-C) zoning and Residential Agricultural (R-A) zoning. The general motivation in this case is for the development of approximately one acre of the subject property for the establishment of a new boat/trailer repair business and the remaining to be for residential use. For reference, a comparison chart of the various zoning districts and most of their allowable uses is available. The subject property possesses road frontage on Madison Hwy. Madison Hwy is a State maintained minor arterial road. Concerning the Comprehensive Plan Future Development Map, the subject property is in the Urban Service Area and depicted as an Agricultural/Forestry Character Area. Per Comprehensive Plan guidance, C-C zoning is listed as a permitted zoning within an Agriculture/Forestry Character Area.

In addition to the above information, the following factors should also be considered: 1) the commercial zoning to the north and south, 2) the frontage on an arterial road, 3) and the subject property's service by County water.

The TRC considered this request and had no objectionable comments. Staff finds the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

No one spoke in favor of or against the request.

After some discussion with staff, Commissioner Willis made a motion to recommend approval of the request, Commissioner McLendon second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REZ-2019-11 Stewart, 4151 Stewart Circle

Nature of Request: This request represents a change in zoning on the subject property from Low Density Residential (R-1) zoning to Highway Commercial (C-H) zoning. The general motivation in this case is to develop a new metal panel and supplies company, utilizing the currently active Norfolk Southern railroad spur, as well as developing additional speculative commercial businesses on the subject property. For reference, a chart showing most of the allowable uses in C-H zoning is available. Access to and from the subject property is off Stewart Circle as well as by rail. Stewart Circle is a County maintained minor collector road. Concerning the Comprehensive Plan Future Development Map the subject property is within the Urban Service Area and depicted as a Neighborhood Activity Center Character Area. Per Comprehensive Plan guidance C-H zoning is not listed as a permitted zoning within a Neighborhood Activity Center Character Area.

Aspects of this case worthy of consideration include the following: 1) The recent trend of commercial zoning of Stewart Circle properties, 2) The Community Activity Center Character Area adjacent to the south in which C-H zoning is listed as a permitted zoning, 3) The proposed use of the currently active Norfolk Southern railroad spur, 4) The similar commercial development adjacent to the south, and 5) The desire for future development to focus on redevelopment opportunities and development in urban areas as stated in Section 5 of the Comprehensive Plan.

Overall, while staff found this request inconsistent with the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan, it finds the request consistent with the Community Goals, particularly that of Goal #5 – Land Use, of the Comprehensive Plan. The TRC considered this request and had no objectionable comments.

Speaking in favor of this request:

- Chuck Smith. Mr. Smith offered to answer any questions the Commissioners may have.

Speaking in opposition to this request:

- Angeline Salter. Ms. Salter had questions concerning the nature of the business, and any noise generated from it.

After some discussion with staff and the applicant, Commissioner Willis made a motion to recommend approval of the request, Commissioner Bailey second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Other Business

Chairperson Rountree stated all commissioners now have a booklet containing the attendance policy and an attendance roster.

There being no other business, Chairperson Rountree adjourned the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Vicki Rountree

**Vicki Rountree, Chairperson
Greater Lowndes Planning Commission**

7/29/19

Date