

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
WORK SESSION
Monday, February 10, 2025

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Chairman Bill Slaughter
Vice Chairperson Joyce Evans
Commissioner Scott Orenstein
Commissioner Mark Wisenbaker
Commissioner Demarcus Marshall
Commissioner Michael Smith

Chairman Slaughter called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session of January 27, 2025 and the regular session of January 28, 2025. No revisions to the minutes were requested.

PUBLIC HEARING

REZ-2025-01 Hurtado Property, Bethany Dr., ~6.4ac, R-A to R-1, County Water & Septic

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated this request represents a change in zoning on a portion of the subject property from R-A (Residential Agricultural) zoning to R-1 (Low Density Residential) zoning. The general motivation in this case is for the applicant to subdivide the property into conforming lots for individual residences. The subject property possesses road frontage on Bethany Drive and Val Del Road, both local and collector County maintained roads respectively, is within the Rural Service Area and Rural Residential Character Area, which recommend R-1 zoning. Mr. Dillard stated there are no wetlands other than a man-made pond. The lot depicted is 6.4 acres requesting to rezone to R-1 for a one acre lot minimum. Mr. Dillard stated a letter was received from the Allen Family mentioning a development strategy of selling a minimum of 2.5 acre lots. Mr. Dillard stated at the Planning Commission meeting a drainage issue was mentioned from the Williams family. The Planning Commission recommended denial. Commissioner Orenstein asked if engineering could answer, if there is any evidence of water crossing the road or creating drainage issues? Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod answered no sir, there are no effects on the road, their drainage between Bethany and Dodd and private property, there are large beaver dams, but it is not affecting the ditch or road. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked where is the water coming from on the Williams property? Mr. McLeod answered water enters the ditch beside their house from Bethany Road, but what backs up is the bay between Dodd and Bethany, there are a few beaver dams on private property closer to Dodd Road. There is no affect on the ditch the county maintains. Commissioner Marshall asked how far out on the Val Del Road widening project, Mr. McLeod answered 2029 would be construction. Commissioner Orenstein asked if this is served by county water? Mr. Dillard answered yes. Commissioner Marshall asked regarding traffic control established at Bethany and Val Del Road, Chairman Slaughter answered a traffic study would need to be done.

REZ-2025-02 Hamilton Green Ph. 2, 4618 Bemiss Rd, 1.12ac, C-G to P-D, County Utilities

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated this request represents a change in zoning on the subject properties from C-G (General Commercial) and P-D (Planned Development) zoning to P-D zoning. The general motivation in this case is for the applicant to develop an additional 12-units of townhomes and amenities for the Hamilton Green neighborhood. The subject property possesses road frontage on Bemiss Road, a state highway, is within the Urban Service Area, Bemiss Corridor Overlay and Neighborhood Activity Center Character Area, which recommend P-D zoning. The TRC and Planning Commission recommended approval.

REZ-2025-03 Thomas Linville, 4888 Break Thru Rd., ~16.3ac, R-1 to E-A, Well & Septic

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated this request represents a change in zoning on the subject property from R-1 (Low Density Residential) zoning to E-A (Estate Agricultural) zoning. The general motivation in this case is for the applicant to combine the properties into a single conforming lot for use agriculturally. The subject property possesses road frontage on Break Thru Road and Johnston Road, both locally maintained County roads, is within the Rural Service Area and Agricultural / Forestry Character Area, which recommend E-A zoning. Mr. Dillard stated there are wetlands on the surrounding properties. The TRC and Planning Commission recommend approval. Mr. Dillard stated there were concerns from the neighbors with the applicant's business using Break Thru Road to bring in additional traffic. The applicant designs fire suppressant systems and no chemicals would be stored on the property. Commissioner Wisenbaker mentioned Break Thru Road is a dirt road and there is a concern from the residents regarding heavy truck traffic.

REZ-2025-04 River Run Farm, 6490 River Run, ~27ac., C-C to R-21, County Water & Septic

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated this request represents a change in zoning on a portion of the subject property from C-C (Crossroads Commercial) zoning to R-21 (Medium Density Residential) zoning. The portion of the property zoned CON (Conservation) is proposed to remain zoned CON. The general motivation in this case is for the applicant to develop the property residentially. The subject property possesses road frontage on Lake Alapaha Blvd, a locally maintained county road, is within the Urban Service Area and suburban Character Area, which recommend R-21 zoning. Mr. Dillard stated currently the applicant owns approximately 23 acres of R-21 zoning and is requesting an additional 15 acres to be added to the R-21 zoning having a total of 35 acres. The Planning Commission recommended approval of the R-21 zoning with the condition that no more than nine lots be developed on the 15.3 acres, (6-3). Commissioner Orenstein asked if the recommendation from the Planning Commission is to rezone to R-21 but limit to nine lots? Mr. Dillard stated initially the applicant stated he would develop nine lots along Lake Alapaha Blvd., and the main concerns of the neighbors are the water quality. Commissioner Marshall asked how will this impact the water issue, Chairman Slaughter answered there is no impact with the water, the water issue is due to the byproducts and the water is being treated. Mr. Stalvey stated there is a project to get two new wells in to help and adding a 20,000 gallon pressure tank and testing will begin as soon as the wells are completed. Commissioner Orenstein asked if the entire 15 acres is rezoned to R-21 there will not be a negative effect on the water system, Mr. Stalvey answered, no sir. Commissioner Wisenbaker, asked if a new well will resolve the water issues, Mr. Stalvey answered this can not be guaranteed. Commissioner Orenstein asked if we follow the Planning Commission's recommendation, to only allow nine lots, how would we do that? Chairman Slaughter answered the request is for R-21 and you would have to approve or deny R-21.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Resolution Authorizing the Lowndes County Tax Commissioner to Receive Checks and Money Orders in Payment of Taxes and Licenses

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated at the request of the newly elected Tax Commissioner, Clay Guess, who is here in the audience, this resolution is being presented for your consideration and it is authorized by Georgia statute. Commissioner Marshall asked as far as technology and payment methods, Tax Commissioner Guess answered his office is reviewing a 'tap to pay' option to offer to the citizens.

A Resolution Electing Not to Require Mobile Home Decals

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated at the request of the Tax Commissioner, the resolution is being presented for consideration. It is authorized by Georgia statute. Issuing mobile homes decals creates an expense that does not assist the Tax Commissioner in identifying mobile homes for which the Tax Commissioner has not issued a mobile home location permit. Commissioner Marshall asked what the savings would be in doing away with this option, Chairman Slaughter answered this would be a convenience and benefit to the taxpayer.

Beer and Wine License - Manishkumar Patel of Kasumbal 2025 LLC, DBA Busy Food Mart, 6901 Bellville Road, Lake Park, GA

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item. Ms. Black stated this request is for a license to sale beer and wine for consumption off premises. This is due to a change in ownership.

New Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR) Software

IT Director, Aaron Kostyu, presented the item. Mr. Kostyu stated Endpoint Detection and Response software replaced anti-virus many years ago. This is a new purchase and the request is to purchase Vendor A in the amount of \$44,800.00 per year, with a three-year commitment. Commissioner Marshall asked regarding the vast difference in prices, Mr. Kostyu responded that the two larger quotes are Fortune 500 vendors and are not needed by our organization.

Whitewater Road Lift Station Pump

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated the Whitewater Road lift station is a triplex station on our trunk leading to the LAS. One of the older pumps is out of service. Mr. Stalvey stated the repair cost is seventy-five percent of the cost of a new pump. The new pump comes with a N-impeller which is on the other pumps and is \$46,446.52 from Xylem, Inc. Commissioner Smith asked regarding the warranty on the new pump, Mr. Stalvey answered it is a one-year warranty. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked if there is a core value on the older pump, Mr. Stalvey answered that sometimes parts can be used, but this being a much older pump, no parts can be used.

Acceptance of Hazard Mitigation Grant for Generators

EMA Director, Ashley Tye, presented the item. Mr. Tye stated in July 2019, the Lowndes County Board of Commissioners authorized staff to complete and submit applications for the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA). These applications were for generators to provide emergency backup power to each of the five Pruitt Health facilities in Lowndes County. Mr. Tye stated at the time of this submission in 2019, FEMA allowed nursing homes to be eligible, but required local governments to be the applicant on their behalf. Mr. Tye stated Pruitt Health has agreed to provide any cost share over and above the federal and state funding amounts. Lowndes County received the notice and award letter on February 4, 2025. Commissioner Orenstein asked if

the five facilities mentioned are owned by Pruitt Health, Mr. Tye answered yes. Commissioner Smith asked if these generators would be installed before hurricane season, Mr. Tye answered no, possibly the transfer switches could be installed by August.

At 9:03 a.m. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to adjourn the work session to enter into a scheduled public hearing regarding House Bill 581, second by Commissioner Marshall. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

The Crescent Place of Historic Interest Tax Exemption

At 9:39 a.m. Vice Chairperson Evans made a motion to reconvene the work session, second by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated staff has become aware of the attached 1975 local constitutional amendment and 1978 Board of Commissioners Resolution regarding the exemption from ad valorem taxation for places of historic interest meeting specified criteria and that applies to the Garden Center, Inc. located at 904 North Patterson Street known as the Crescent. The attached proposed Resolution recites that the Board continues to be satisfied that the subject property and the Garden Center, Inc. meet the criteria specified in the attached 1978 Resolution and affirms that the subject property continues to be a place of historic interest exempt from ad valorem taxation. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked if there were any other properties in this situation, Mrs. Dukes responded one other which the attorneys are still working on. Commissioner Smith stated this is very good and important since there has been much expense related to the repair and upkeep of the Crescent.

Rules and Regulations for Claims for Refunds of Taxes

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated in 2017, the Commission adopted Rules and Regulations for the administration of claims for refunds of taxes and license fees and this is an update of those rules to go along with the state statute.

REPORTS- County Manager

There was no additional information reported.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Marshall made a motion to adjourn the work session meeting, second by Commissioner Wisenbaker. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the meeting at 9:42 a.m.