Effingham County Georgia
Board of Commissioners

Damon M. Rahn, Chairman at Large
Forrest F. Floyd, District 1
Roger Burdette, District 2
Jamie Deloach, District 3
Elizabeth Helmly, District 4
Phil Kieffer, District 5

WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 18, 2025

The Board of Commissioners of Effingham County, Georgia, Mr. Damon Rahn, Mr. Forrest Floyd, Mr. Roger Burdette, Mr. Jamie Deloach, and Ms. Elizabeth Helmly, met in work session 4:00pm on Tuesday, November 18, 2025 in the Commissioners Meeting Chambers at the Effingham County Administrative Complex located at 804 South Laurel Street Springfield, Georgia 31329.

STAFF PARTICIPATION

Mr. Tim Callanan – County Manager, Mr. Edward Newberry – County Attorney, Ms. Tasheena Shiggs – Deputy County Clerk, Ms. Marie Todd – Executive Assistant Manager, Mr. Michael King – Assistant County Manager, Ms. Pamela Melser – Director of Development Services, Ms. Chelsie Fernald – Planning Manager, Ms. Jennifer Rose – Planner I, Ms. Kimberly Barlett – Senior Planner, and Mr. Xerxes Sabb – I.T. Support Specialist.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

None to announce.

I - CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Rahn called the session to order at 4:07pm

II- WORK SESSION TOPICS

DISCUSSION OF THE 5 YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN (1):

County Manager Callanan began the work session with a review of the updated 5-Year Strategic Plan, which originated from last year's retreat and integrated input from Chairman Rahn and Commissioner Helmly. Following a final review with the consultant from the Carl Vinson Institute of Government (UGA), two key areas of enhancement were proposed, focusing on Land Conservation and Taxes.

New action items were added to facilitate the creation of an Effingham County-based Land Conservation Trust to manage conservation easements (voluntary agreements preventing development while allowing current uses like farming) and to pursue grant funding for land preservation. The local trust would allow the County to control easement covenants, potentially permitting public access, a benefit currently unavailable with out-of-region trusts. Funds from the County's Tree Fund and Water Utility could be leveraged for these purchases.

Commissioner Floyd expressed concern over taxing citizens to purchase land that is then removed from the tax roll, to which staff confirmed all actions are based on a willing seller model. The plan was amended to prioritize minimizing the property tax burden on homeowners.

DISCUSSION OF AN AMENDMENT TO THE EFFINGHAM COUNTY CODE OF ORDINANCES, PART II, APPENDIX C - ZONING ORDINANCE, ARTICLE III - GENERAL PROVISIONS, SECTIONS 3.15 - HOME OCCUPATIONS & 3.15A - RESIDENTIAL BUSINESSES (2):

Planner I Rose reviewed and discussed substantial amendments to the Effingham County Zoning Ordinance, specifically focusing on Home Occupations (Section 3.15) and Residential Businesses (Section 3.15a), with the core goal of enhancing clarity, consistency, and controlling the intensity of commercial activity in residential zones. General compliance was tightened with the addition of two new definitions and the requirement for full adherence to property tax, zoning, development, and property maintenance standards. A significant structural change amended the allowance for multiple businesses from "per residence" to "per residential parcel at any given time," enabling up to two home-based commercial ventures. A concern was noted regarding the intensity created by allowing two Residential Businesses versus two Home Occupations. New operational sections (3.15.1–3.15.4) were established, creating a formal county staff evaluation and management process that requires applicants to provide a complete business concept plan, operate exactly as approved, and secure an annual renewal. The ordinance sets maximum physical limits, capping the combined total area for both uses at 700 square feet (with a minimum of 500 square feet for home occupations) and restricting activity to eight business-related trips per day. A practical concern was raised over the proposed 5x8 trailer restriction, as utility and landscape contractors often utilize larger trailers (up to 18–22 feet), prompting a discussion on clarifying the rule to prohibit large commercial box trucks while accommodating standard service equipment. Regarding zoning structure, the AR-3 district was added for Residential Businesses requiring a Conditional Use Permit. Furthermore, based on research showing the unique nature of Effingham's ordinance, it was agreed to merge the standalone "Rural Business" title into the Residential Business and Home Occupation categories. The amendments concluded with the establishment of a robust enforcement structure, including warnings, fines up to $1,000 per day for continuing violations, stop-work orders, and a prohibition on reapplying for up to 24 months.

DISCUSSION OF AN AMENDMENT TO THE EFFINGHAM COUNTY CODE OF ORDINANCES, PART II, APPENDIX B - SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS (3):

Planning Manager Fernald and County Manager Callanan engaged in a comprehensive discussion regarding proposed amendments to the Effingham County Code of Ordinances, Part II, Appendix B - Subdivision Regulations, incorporating recommendations from the steering committee on updated development standards. Key proposals centered on mandating a 50-foot road buffer for major subdivisions along the public right-of-way and addressing the critical issue of insufficient parking in R-2 and R-5 districts. To mitigate parking inadequacy for smaller homes, the preferred solution was designing extra parking spaces away from the street, as

widening the road to 36 feet for two-sided parking was deemed detrimental to aesthetics and pedestrian safety by shortening crossing distances. It was also suggested that the cross-cut area could be utilized to install fiber optic lines before the sidewalk. The conversation then shifted to density control, with concerns raised over preventing "tiny lots" and the tendency for developers to default to the densest zoning, such as R-5, which carries high open space requirements contrasted with the less restrictive R-1. The most effective mechanism identified for controlling density and preventing the over-development of districts like AR-2 was regulating access to water and sewer services.

The Board suggested hosting a town hall meeting to discuss a complete overhaul of zoning concepts, including designating an AR-1 overlay in specific areas and acknowledging the need for more commercial and restaurant services in rapidly growing districts.

III – ADJOURNMENT

At 4:59 pm, there being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

Damon Rahn, Chairman

Stephanie D. Johnson, County Clerk

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
DECEMBER 2, 2025