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
FEBRUARY 17, 2026

The Board of Commissioners of Effingham County, Georgia, Mr. Damon Rahn, Mr. Forrest Floyd, Mr. Roger Burdette, Mr. Jamie Deloach, Ms. Elizabeth Helmly and Mr. Phil Kieffer, met in work session 4:00pm on Tuesday, February 17, 2026 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, Ms. Pamela Melser – Director of Development Services, Ms. Jennifer Rose – Planner I, and Mr. Xerxes Sabb – I.T. Support Specialist.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Mike Vaquer.

I - CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Rahn called the session to order at 4:08pm

II- WORK SESSION TOPICS

CORE MPO US 80 SCOPING STUDY PHASE II - EFFINGHAM BOC (*Presentation by Kimley Horn*) (1):

County Engineer Jonathan Hulme introduced a comprehensive existing conditions study focused on the Highway 80 corridor. This initiative, titled the State Route 26/US 80 Scoping Study Phase 2, represents an extension of previous work completed within the City of Pooler and Chatham County. Lead consultants from Kimley-Horn, including Project Manager Rhodes and Deputy Project Manager Harrison Dean, were introduced to present the first phase of the analysis.

Project Manager Rhodes Hunt with Kimley-Horn officially introduced the commencement of the primary phase for the State Route 26/US 80 Scoping Study Phase 2. This high-priority initiative is being executed by Kimley-Horn, recognized by ENR as the premier design firm in the Southeast, building upon their previous success with the Old Augusta Road corridor improvements. The project leadership team includes Mr. Rhodes as Project Manager and Harrison Dean, who is overseeing the Alternatives Analysis phase. The project team is further strengthened by two

Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) subconsultants, Southeastern Engineering, Inc. (SEI) and SymBiocity, who provide critical support in data collection and traffic modeling.

Deputy Project Manager Harrison Dean highlighted a critical intersection of industrial growth, safety concerns, and strategic infrastructure planning in Effingham County. Current analysis shows that truck percentages on several segments are exceptionally high compared to the rest of the region, a trend expected to intensify with coming industrial developments. During peak hours, key intersections like Sand Hill Road and Old River Road are already operating at failing levels of service, leading to significant queuing and safety risks. Over the past five years, the corridor has seen a total of 165 crashes, including four fatalities, resulting in an estimated economic impact of $33.4 million. In response, the study is incorporating future land-use data and coordinating with local zoning to ensure that transportation investments, ranging from the widening of US 80 to a four-lane divided facility to the integration of the Georgia Hi-Lo Trail, align with residential and commercial expansion.

Strategic concerns were also raised regarding the design of planned infrastructure, such as whether the proposed Sand Hill Road roundabout can accommodate future widening, and the impact of Highway 16 and 21 improvements on local traffic flow. To address these bottlenecks and the lack of immediate funding, local officials are discussing a proactive approach to self-fund the remaining phases of these studies using local fund balances. By providing the MPO and GDOT with a stronger technical basis for these projects, the county aims to elevate Highway 80 and Highway 21, currently the highest-ranking unfunded projects in the area for future prioritization.

DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE EFFINGHAM COUNTY CODE OF ORDINANCES, PART II, APPENDIX C, ARTICLE III, SECTION 3.15 (*Home Occupations*) (2):

Planner I Rose presented a proposed amendment to the Home Occupation Ordinance aimed at removing zoning barriers by shifting the focus from strict zoning compliance to operational compatibility. The redline revisions eliminate the requirement that nonconforming properties, often the result of legacy AR-1 "blanket" zoning, be brought into full compliance or undergo a formal rezoning process before a home occupation can be approved. During the discussion, staff and the board noted that requiring residents on nonconforming lots to pursue rezoning for low-impact, home-based work (which involves no signage or customer traffic) constitutes an undue burden, similar to a previous board decision regarding accessory structures. While some board members expressed concern regarding the loss of regulatory "triggers" that encourage properties to come into conformance, the consensus was that forcing individual rezonings in established neighborhoods like Westwood Heights often creates further inconsistency within the block.

The Board concluded that while more significant structural changes or lot line adjustments will still trigger compliance actions, home occupations should be evaluated based on performance standards and operational impacts rather than the conformity of the parcel itself.

DISCUSSION OF AN AMENDMENT TO THE EFFINGHAM COUNTY CODE OF ORDINANCES, PART II, APPENDIX C, ARTICLE V, SECTION 5.13, 5.14 AND SECTION 5.15 (3):

Director of Development services Melser detailed a series of administrative "cleanup" amendments to the I-1 zoning classification, which she characterized as a "zombie ordinance" since new properties can no longer be rezoned into this category. The revisions aim to resolve legacy inconsistencies that arose when other zoning classifications were modernized, specifically addressing a conflict where a previous applicant found discrepancies between the ordinance's text and the Table of Permitted Uses (TPU).

County Manager Callanan detailed a comprehensive overhaul of the County's zoning classifications aimed at enhancing administrative efficiency. The I-1 (Industrial) classification has been designated as a protected or sunset district. Additionally, the amendment streamlines the development process by removing the redundant requirement for planning board plan reviews, directing them instead to the Board of Commissioners for conformance approval, and updates administrative terminology, such as changing "Fire Marshal" to "Fire Chief" to reflect current departmental titles.

III – ADJOURNMENT

At 4:52 pm, there being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

Damon Rahn, Chairman

Stephanie D. Johnson, County Clerk

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MARCH 03, 2026