

WALTON COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

August 7, 2025

***** with corrections to LU25-0256 and Z25-0257**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tim Hinton, Michelle Trammel, John Pringle, Timothy Kemp and Chris Alexander and Wesley Sick

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Josh Ferguson

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT OFFICIALS:

Charna Parker, Kristi Parr and Tracie Malcom

Chairman Tim Hinton called the meeting to order.

Timothy Kemp opened with prayer.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Timothy Kemp made a Motion to approve the minutes of **July 10, 2025**.

Seconded by Chris Alexander.

Motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. LU25-0063 & Z25-0062 – Land Use Change and Rezone Request

Request: Land Use Change from Suburban to Highway Corridor and rezone 7.0 acres from R1 to B2 for mini warehouse/storage facility

Applicant: Angel Zurita

Owners: Pablo & Maria Zurita

Location: 257 Highway 81 | Parcel C1890002 | District 3

Presentation: Angel Zurita, who lives on Covington Street, represented the case. He is looking at rezoning 7 acres at 257 Hwy 81 to B2 for commercial for mini warehouse/self-storage facility. This will be a local family-owned business. He explained the site plan and stated that the front 2 acres is a pond and buffer area. He stated that 2 acres will be a mini-warehouse 20,000 sq. ft. for a drywall company and 2 acres and 3 self-storage

buildings which will be well maintained. There will be 1-acre setbacks and buffers. The 50 ft. transitional buffer will be maintained and 15 ft. setbacks preserved and the pond setback requirements fully respected. The plan is to remove as few trees as possible and put up a 6 ft. vinyl coated chain-link fencing with a gate, and it will be a coded gate, and the neighbors cannot see the warehouses. At the last meeting it was brought up about crime. Some residents believe that self-storage facilities attract criminal activity and increase neighborhood crime rates. They will partner with the police to make sure security measures are in place. They feel that if they have an established partnership with the Sheriff's Officer and local police, they will make regular patrol stops and they will also have property access code for officers on patrol and that collaboration on security is the best practice. As far as security there will be a 6 ft. black vinyl fence, security cameras, coded access gates which will control entry and exit. They will also have motion sensor systems and alarm systems. He stated that the important thing is that Walton County's crime rates remain below average proving our community is still safe. As a family-owned business, we have every incentive to maintain the highest security stands. Our reputation and our neighbor's safety are our top priorities. As far as visual impact there is a 20 ft. elevation drop on the front of the property which has natural vegetation. They will be building on the back part of the property, and they will keep as many trees as possible. There are multiple gas stations, restaurants and food services and other small commercial businesses in the vicinity. Smart growth comes with responsible community development and implication of security measures. We will also be the smallest storage operation in the immediate area. We have already been approved by GDOT for the driveway and entrance location, and we are requesting a Variance for cross districting.

John Pringle asked if there would be any outdoor storage and Applicant said no but he did go on to state there will be a 6 ft. privacy fence.

Tim Hinton asked if it was going to be a coded gated entry and if it would be 24 access and Applicant stated it would be.

Tim Hinton stated that he has come to a conclusion that those working night shift may need to come to the warehouse to pick up things and it may be 2 or 3 in the morning. He also stated that as to the existing trees there is there any reason that you can't leave them all intact or keep as much as possible and the Applicant stated that was their plan.

Public Comment:

William Kirkland, a resident of 265 Old Highway 81, stated that his property directly borders the proposed development site. He expressed concerns about visibility due to the loss of trees on his property from recent storms. Mr. Kirkland noted that the surrounding area is primarily residential and agricultural, and that introducing a commercial use such as mini-warehouses would not be appropriate for this location. He emphasized that there are already 33 self-storage units in the area and questioned the need for more.

Mr. Kirkland, a former firefighter, also raised health and safety concerns, stating that mini-warehouses pose fire risks and attract large trucks, which could be hazardous given that the property is located on a hill. Additionally, he voiced concerns about potential noise, lighting, 24-hour access, and privacy issues related to transitioning from residential to commercial use. He also submitted a petition opposing the rezoning.

John Deaton, owner of the property to the rear of the proposed site, expressed concern about the entrance coming through a residential area. In response, Tim Hinton explained that GDOT (Georgia Department of Transportation) had denied direct access to the property from the highway. However, GDOT is allowing joint access through an adjacent property via a recorded easement. When Mr. Deaton asked if the adjacent property was also being rezoned, Mr. Hinton clarified that it was not, but due to the hardship, they are seeking a waiver.

Eleanor Rogers, a resident of 370 Old Highway 81, spoke in opposition to the proposal. In response to a question from Mr. Hinton, she confirmed she lives about ¼ mile away, at the end of Snook Thompson Road, and has resided there for 38 years. Ms. Rogers asked the board to deny the rezoning request.

Rebuttal:

Jason Brown with Georgia Civil stated that the hardship is the only reason for the Variance is the cross districting. He mentioned that a cross access easement would be necessary, and he has met with the neighbors as well as Christopher Hatch with GDOT, and they are in agreement with this.

Tim Hinton asked would the site plan show the buffer on the property and Mr. Brown stated that it would show a 50 ft. transitional buffer and there is a significant elevation change to the back of the property there. Mr. Hinton asked if they had a problem with the lighting being downward and he stated they did not have a problem with that.

John Pringle asked can anybody see the residence from their property.

Tim Hinton stated based on the draft of the site plan that the lot is 12 to 14 ft. deep and about 8 to 9 hundred feet to the additional 50 ft. buffer and that is quite a bit of buffer.

Recommendation:

Motion by John Pringle to recommend approval with a condition to allow the Variance for the cross districting, all lighting downward, and no outside storage with a second by Wesley Sisk. The motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Z25-0249 – Rezone Request

Request: Rezone 2.45 acres from A1 to A to grow and sell cut flowers for retail and wholesale purchase

Applicant: CJ Hipp-Barros

Owners: CJ & Nicholas Hipp-Barros

Location: 3685 McCullers Road | Parcel C0100015F00 | District 2

Presentation: CJ Hipp-Barros presented the case. She is the property owner and resides at the property with her family, including two young daughters and their pets. This is her primary residence. Ms. Hipp-Barros is requesting a rezoning to allow for flower cultivation and sales. The property is fully fenced, and she is not proposing any additional changes aside from growing and selling flowers.

Chris Alexander inquired whether the business would be retail or wholesale and if there would be significant traffic. Ms. Hipp-Barros responded that the sales would primarily be wholesale, possibly to a florist, and that she does not plan to open to the public.

Timothy Kemp asked about the number of people who might be visiting the property. Ms. Hipp-Barros stated that the number would be minimal and not on a daily basis. Her primary goal is to grow and sell flowers, with any on-site contact being flexible.

Tim Hinton asked whether the florist would only visit seasonally and whether any greenhouses would be added. Ms. Hipp-Barros clarified that there is already a 10x12 greenhouse on the property that was there when they purchased it. She emphasized there would be no public sales, only wholesale to florists. While she may offer a small farm stand for neighbors, that is not the primary purpose of the rezoning request.

Public Comment:

None

Recommendation:

Motion by Chris Alexander to recommend approval as submitted with a second by Michelle Trammel. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Z25-0250 – Rezone Request

Request: Rezone 7.27 acres from A1 to A to grow vegetables and livestock for a non-profit organization and educational tours

Applicant: Henry G Reid, Jr.

Owners: Chance & Eva Reid

Location: 611 Youth Jersey Road | Parcel C0640094 | District 3

Presentation: Hank Reid and Chase Reid represented the case. He stated the people in Gwinnett call him Chef Reid because he does a meal ministry program. He stated that they would like to grow food and provide meals and feed the not so fortunate. He stated since 2019 they have served around 50,000 meals. He stated they would like to expand their ministry program and teach children about rural areas and farming and to also share crops with individuals like a specialty farm. He stated that they have 5 acres to keep and maintain, and they will be doing greenhouses behind the home. He stated that they will try and maintain rural areas as well as grow crops and share educational tips for children. Right now, they do classes for Gwinnett Tech in agriculture and how to maintain resources for the community.

John Pringle asked about livestock and there is a limit on how many small, hoofed animals you can have. The Applicant stated they like would like to have chickens, pigs and goats to show young people and kids how to help the echo system. Mr. Pringle asked how may goats did they had, and he stated that currently he has 5 goats on 7 acres of land.

Tim Hinton verified that livestock is allowed now in A1 and it is okay to have green houses.

John Pringle stated that they would have to go by the county guidelines on raising livestock to sell. He stated that their intent is to have a greenhouse and this will be seasonal.

Timothy Kemp asked do they partner with schools and the Applicant stated that they would hope that they can do a partnership again with Gwinnett to educate children on farming.

Public Comment:

None

Recommendation:

Motion by John Pringle to recommend approval with livestock being used only for tours, follow county guidelines on animals and no commercial sales and only use for non-profit with a second by Wesley Sisk and Wesley wanted to add no sale of produce. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Z25-0253 – Rezone Request

Request: Rezone 84.16 acres from A1 and A2 to R1OSC for a residential subdivision

Applicant: Reliant Homes GA, LLC

Owners: Alcovy Builders, Inc. and MFT Land Investments, LLC

Location: Youth Jersey Road and Monroe Jersey Road | Parcels C0660035, C0650056 and part of C0650057 | District 3

Presentation: Ned Butler who lives at 574 Conyers Road in Loganville represented the case. He is a representative of Reliant Homes and MFT Land Investments. There are 13 acres of property currently zoned A1 on the east hand side which is Suburban and on the west side is Conservation. They would like to do R1OSC on all the lots, which will be a 70-lot subdivision, and they will build the subdivision per the county code and are not asking for any Variances. The Red Oak Subdivision in Loganville has similar houses and the house sizes will be 2,000 to 2,900 sq. ft. There will be a 100 ft. buffer and the only trees being disturbed will be for the entrance. There will be a 50 ft. buffer around all property except the adjacent development.

Mr. Butler stated that the entrance will be a landscaped area with a fence. The grading will begin off the decel lane all the way back to the taper. They would like to look at the topo as far as the height. They will also have a mandatory HOA.

Public Comment:

Judy Solomon, who lives at 3318 Maughon Road, stated she is not against the development but against the smaller 70 lots. This development does not belong here because the lots are too small and all the lots around are large lots and this development should not be allowed on Youth Jersey Road and Maughon Road. She stated that there are traffic issues, and it is already hard to get in and out.

Tim Hinton stated that if they followed the Walton County Guidelines that they could do 84 lots with much bigger lots and much bigger houses. He stated some are lots with streets and some with electrical power lines and as far as the flood plain you cannot build in it.

Mr. Hinton also asked her could her children or grandchildren or college student afford the cost of houses today. The kids need affordable housing.

Shannon Bailey, who lives at 1343 PJ East Road stated that the rear of the property didn't show the 50 ft. buffer and the plat that was turned in was not detailed correctly. The homes or the homes in the rear were done by My Home Communities. They would like to have a 50 ft. buffer along these residential properties and other similar properties.

June Gossling, who lives at 3701 Lovers Lane, spoke and asked for someone to show her where on the map this property is located.

Rebuttal:

Ned Butler came back for rebuttal that as far as the lot size that they did look at the land use map and designed the subdivision to meet all the terms of the code and there will be 23 acres of open space that will not be developed.

Recommendation:

Motion by John Pringle to recommend approval as submitted with a second by Wesley Sisk. The motion passed unanimously.

4. LU25-0256 and Z25-0257 – Land Use Change and Rezone Request

Request: Land Use Change from Employment Center to Suburban and Rezone 121.43 acres from A1-to-A1 2400 residential subdivision

Applicant: JW Residential Group, LLC

Owner: 3SD, LLC

Location: Rowe Road and Highway 78 | Parcel C0750154 | District 5

Presentation: Jessica Cantrell with Underwood & Scoggins Attorneys at Law represented the case. She is representing the Applicant and Owner (J.W. and Emma Shadrach) who live at 2509 Bold Springs Road. There are 2 applications pending. One is for the rezone from A1 Rural Estate to A1 2400 Residential Overlay District on 121.43+- acres on Rowe Road and Hwy 78. The other request is a Character Area Map Amendment from existing Employment Center to Suburban. The property is right off Rowe Road and Highway 78 is 121 + acres. The Character Area for Walton County where the property is located is Employment Center but is surrounded by properties that are Suburban. Employment Center contemplates larger-scale commercial including light industry, office, retail and serviced. Zoning Compatibility for Employment Center is Neighborhood Business (B1), Highway Business (B2), General Business (B3), Office-Industrial (OI), Light Industrial (M1), and Heavy Industrial (M2). Appropriate land uses are commercial, office and industrial. We are asking for Suburban which is planned to accommodate the majority of new residential growth. The appropriate land use is residential, agriculture, public, and mixed use. The subject property is not suitable for large-scale commercial, industrial or office uses because it lacks sufficient visibility and access on Highway 78. Five tracts of land including existing businesses are sandwiched between the subject property and Highway 78. There is another justification which is an environmental factor is the existence of streams, wetlands and other areas along this property to the Alcovy River is not good for commercial property because there would be significantly more runoff due to mass clearing and grading of land which will affect the environmentally sensitive areas. Open space is a better use for the property and there are almost 40 acres dedicated to open space. Ms. Cantrell explained the site plan and

character area map. Banks Crossing which is a 54 single family lot, all the lots would be 25,500 and the density is 1 unit per 2.24 acres and the houses would be 3 to 5 bedrooms with 2 ½ to 4 bathrooms and 2 or 3 garages. There will also be an HOA. Each home is at least 2,400 sq. ft.

Tim Hinton stated that not all the lots are 25,500, that some are larger and he has visited the property, and the development of the property is sufficient but adjacent property that fronts Highway 78 could be commercial and there is nothing to prohibit that. All this Board is here to do is see what is being asked is appropriate for the zoning. If approved he would like something in the sales contract that this neighborhood is adjacent to Highway Corridor and has the potential to be commercial property. Mr. Hinton said because of the proximity someone may want to come to the area and there should be enough buffers there for the homeowner.

Public Comment:

Danny Cook, who lives at 1369 Monroe Drive in Lake Monroe Landing, is not opposed to the rezone but would like to see what they can do to lower the lots. He said this will add congestion on Highway 138 and Highway 78. He would also like for the neighborhood to meet with the builder to get a better understanding of what is being requested. Can they work with GDOT and see if they can work with them to consider having access on Highway 78 with maybe a right turn only.

Jere Rowe, who lives at 1320 Highway 138 lives on the other side and Rowe Road was named after them. He is not necessarily opposed but with growth comes caution. At the end of the road there is traffic, and it is bad traffic and there are bad places to get in and out of. From the Hwy 78 end to the Hwy 138 end there are lots of hills and people drive very fast and there are people walking and riding horses and it is dangerous already.

Fred Thompson who lives at 1450 Monroe Drive at Lake Monroe Landing the site plan shows lots of sizes. He would like to know what the width and how deep and how narrow the setback is and how far is the setback and how far is to the depth and would somebody monitor this. Tim Hinton stated that there was a level 3 study, and the engineer laid the subdivision out the best they can. The Green space is the wet area and the wetlands in the rear are not suitable for a building. Mr. Thompson stated that he did not hear the minimum prices of the houses. He said with 54 houses then that there would be 108 more cars on Rowe Road trying to get on to Highway 78 and you have to turn right and turning in a different direction is a pain and they should put a traffic light there for safety.

Tim Hinton stated that there is potential for traffic everywhere you go and that we have no governor of traffic. He said on Rowe Road there will be a traffic study and GDOT will be giving that to Planning & Development to review. Mr. Thompson said that regarding homes being built that there are lots of subdivisions being developed like the one at Pine Forest. He asked, would it be possible to hire an arborist to save the trees

that are there and not tear down all trees and go back and plant small trees and see if they will live?

Rebuttal:

Jessica Cantrell came back for rebuttal. She is going to touch on some of the concerns. Green Space preserved a lot of land, but it is hard to see on the site plan. There are also ponds that take up land on the property. The developer is not going to come in and clear all the trees. The overlay is trying to preserve the A1 rural area. There is going to be a HOA and as far as the prices of the homes that is getting the horse before the cart.

Tim Hinton said that the frontage on Rowe Road is tree lined and other than the entry there would be no reason to take down trees.

Ms. Cantrell stated that they would leave all trees except for the entrance and there will be monuments with landscaping and fencing behind the landscaping just to where trees are left. He also stated that they requested a meeting and that usually the meetings are before the Planning Commission Meeting, but they have time enough to have a meeting before the Board of Commissioners Meeting, and could they find a time and place to meet with the neighbors, and she stated that they can.

The frontage is going to be on Rowe Road and there is 100 ft. right of way. They will have the standing timber and only tear down trees as far as the entry and other than the entrance they will not disturb. They will have an entry with monumental signage with trees, shrubs, nice landscaping and fencing behind.

Recommendation:

Motion by Tim Hinton to recommend approval with condition that a disclosure be put in the contract that this neighborhood is being built adjacent to a highway corridor and has the potential for commercial property with a second by Timothy Kemp. The motion passed unanimously.

***CORRECTION TO MOTION: Tim Hinton made a recommendation to approve the request with conditions that a note be on any sales agreement that states "this is a commercial corridor and has the potential for commercial property; and that the frontage of the property remain undisturbed (leaving all existing trees) except for the area for the entrance; this area shall be replanted with trees and shrubs with fencing preferably behind the landscaping to the point where the existing stand of trees remains undisturbed.

PUBLIC COMMENT – None

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tim Hinton – Chairman

Tracie Malcom, Executive Secretary

W.C. Planning Commission

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