

Mr. Dillard presented the case in which the applicant is requesting a change in zoning on the subject property from E-A (Estate Agricultural) zoning to PD-R (Rural Planned Development) zoning. The general motivation in this case is for the applicant to utilize the property as a Club, Lodge, Meeting or Event Facility, primarily for weddings, family reunions, birthday parties, corporate events, community gatherings, etc., with the ability to accommodate overnight guests. The subject property possesses road frontage on Old Valdosta Road and Salem Church Road, a collector and local road respectively, and is within the Rural Service Area and Agricultural/Forestry Character Area.

Aspects of this case worthy of consideration include: 1) The nature of the request as it pertains to a rural setting, 2) Current trends of event venues in rural areas, 3) Surrounding agricultural and clustered residential use of lands.

The TRC considered the request and is supportive of the following Staff-recommended conditions:

1. Uses permitted in the Estate Agricultural (E-A) zoning district, and
  - a. A club, lodge, meeting or event facility, with overnight accommodations, where the operation of the facility is limited to meetings, retreats, celebrations, and weddings for groups no larger than the fire code allows for the proposed buildings/area. Outdoor performances by bands or ensembles that are accessory to a meeting, retreat, celebration, or wedding shall be allowed.
2. Unless otherwise noted on the LCBOC approved site plan, the use of the property shall be subject to all standards applicable to properties in the E-A zoning district.
3. The operation of the event facility shall adhere to the Lowndes County Noise Ordinance.
4. Exterior lighting shall be shielded to avoid direct illumination of adjacent properties.

Vice-Chair Steve Miller asked what capacity the fire code allows, to which Mr. Dillard replied that 16 overnight guests are allowed before sprinkling is required. Commissioner Bailey asked if the fact they want to open to the public is what triggered this rezoning request. Mr. Dillard explained that opening to the public constitutes a change in use. Chairman Hightower verified that the closest property owner is 1500' from the site. Commissioner James Miller asked if there is a timeline for building the additional structures depicted on the site plan. Mr. Dillard explained that for PD zoning, a site plan is approved and that is what the applicant must abide by. Any changes require coming back to amend, so applicants are encouraged to depict anything they think they may want for future growth up front. Commissioner Bailey asked if the 3200 sq ft is inclusive of all structures depicted. Mr. Dillard stated that the 3200 sq ft is only the existing lodge. Commissioner Rountree verified that if the property owner wanted to make any changes in the future, it would require a PD Amendment. Mr. Dillard confirmed.

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Bill Holland, Applicant's Representative – 109 S. Ashley St.