

GREATER LOWNDES PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
325 WEST SAVANNAH AVENUE
Monday, May 27, 2025 – 5:30 PM

GLPC Commission Members Present: Franklin Bailey, Calvin Graham, Ed Hightower, James Miller (Vice-Chair), Steve Miller (Chair), Vicki Rountree, Chris Webb, Chip Wildes, Tommy Willis

Absent: Ron Bythwood, George Foreman, Shawanna Griffith

Staff: Matt Martin, City of Valdosta/Hahira Planning Director; JD Dillard, Lowndes County Planner; Molly Stevenson, Lowndes County Planning Analyst (Clerk)

VISITORS PRESENT:

(Sign-In sheet available in file.)

CALL TO ORDER, INVOCATION, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Steve Miller called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Bailey gave the Invocation. Chairman Miller welcomed everyone to the GLPC meeting and explained that the Planning Commission serves as an advisory (recommending) body to the local member governments regarding land use requests, and the final determination of the requests presented at this meeting will be made by the applicable local governments. Chairman Miller then explained the meeting procedures and announced the dates of the public hearings for the local member governments, as listed on the agenda.

Agenda Item #2

Approval of the Meeting Minutes: April 28, 2025

Chairman Miller called for additions, questions, and corrections of the April 28, 2025, GLPC meeting minutes. There being no additions, questions or corrections to the April 28, 2025, GLPC meeting minutes, Chairman Miller called for a motion. Commissioner Bailey made a motion to approve the April 28, 2025, meeting minutes as presented. Commissioner Hightower second. All voted in favor, no one opposed (8-0). Motion carried.

Agenda Item #3

REZ-2025-08	Joseph Williams, 7219 Good Hope Rd., 0258 008, ~10 ac.
Current Zoning:	E-A (Estate Agricultural)
Proposed Zoning:	R-A (Residential Agricultural)

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 E-A & R-A (Residential Agricultural) zoning in order to create legally conforming lots. The subject property possesses road frontage on Good Hope Road, a County maintained Collector, and is within the Rural Service Area and Agricultural and Forestry Character Area, which recommend R-A zoning.

The TRC analyzed the request, the standards governing the exercise of zoning power set forth in 10.01.05 of the ULDC, and factors most relevant to this application, including the neighboring land uses and lot sizes, the viability of a Well & Septic system, the separation and preservation of land in a cultivated state, and therefore recommends approval of the request for E-A and R-A zoning as depicted on the submitted survey.

Commissioner Willis inquired as to the speculative use. Mr. Dillard stated it is for financial reasons. Commissioner Bailey asked for clarification of the amount being requested to rezoned. Mr. Dillard explained that while the entire tract contains 10 acres, only 2.5 acres are included in this request.

There being no further questions for staff, Chairman Miller opened the Public Hearing portion of the case.

No one spoke in favor of, nor in opposition to the request.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Miller called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Rountree to recommend approval of the request as presented by staff. Commissioner Willis second. All voted in favor, no one opposed (8-0). Motion carried.

Agenda Item #4

REZ-2025-09 All Metal Buildings, 2515 Madison Hwy., 0128B 006 & 0128B 008, ~1.9ac.
Current Zoning: C-G (General Commercial)
Proposed Zoning: C-H (Highway Commercial)

Mr. Dillard presented the case in which the applicant is requesting a change in zoning on the subject property from C-G (General Commercial) zoning to C-H (Highway Commercial) zoning. The general motivation in this case is for the applicant to unify the commercial zoning on the properties for their expanding business. The subject property possesses road frontage on Madison Highway, Cannon Avenue, Poole Street, and Douglas Avenue. Madison Hwy is classified as a state maintained minor collector, and shall be considered the primary front for access and setbacks. Douglas Avenue is an improved County Road, while Poole Street and Cannon Avenue remain unimproved County maintained roads.

The property is within the Urban Service Area, Community Activity Center Character Area, the Valdosta Airport Overlay, and a Drastic Groundwater Recharge area. C-H zoning is recommended for this area, and City of Valdosta Utilities are available across Madison Hwy, while Atlanta Gas and Light lines are along Douglas and Cannon Avenues.

The TRC analyzed the request, the standards governing the exercise of zoning power set forth in 10.01.05 of the ULDC, and factors most relevant to this application, including the neighboring land uses and lot sizes, the lack of availability of County Utilities, the viability of well and septic systems, the existing and proposed expanding business on the property, and therefore recommends approval of the request for C-H zoning with the following conditions:

1. Any vehicular ingress/egress off of Poole St. or the unimproved portion of Cannon Ave. shall require the property owner/developer to pave the street from that ingress/egress to the nearest paved street. The property owner/developer will also be responsible for the design, any acquisition of necessary right-of-way, relocation of utilities, and construction costs for the paving of those sections mentioned above.
2. The eastern property line along Poole St. shall be required to have a landscaped buffer that meets or exceeds ULDC Section 4.07.06.

Commissioner Bailey inquired about water & sewer provisions. Mr. Dillard explained that if there is further development, an extra-territorial agreement would be considered. Vice-Chairman Miller asked if landscaping regulations have already been presented to the applicant to which Mr. Dillard responded affirmatively. Chairman Miller asked about the existing building potentially encroaching on the property line. Mr. Dillard stated that a Variance request has not been submitted at this time.

There being no questions for staff, Chairman Miller opened the Public Hearing portion of the case.

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Elizabeth Andablo Gaona, Applicant - 3865 Bear Hollow

Ms. Gaona provided some history of the business and explained that more space is needed. It was decided that the best route was to request a change in zoning which would open up more options for potential expansion.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Miller called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Hightower to recommend approval of the request as presented with the two conditions as recommended by staff. Commissioner Bailey second. All voted in favor, no one opposed (8-0). Motion carried.

Agenda Item #5

HA-2025-06 Bank South Mortgage Company (505 South Church Street)
Special Exception for a financial institution in R-P zoning

Mr. Martin presented the case in which the applicant is requesting Special Exception approval to allow a “financial institution” in a conditional Residential Professional (R-P)(c) zoning district. The subject property is located within the developing office complex located at 505 South Church Street, which is along the east side of the road between Jacquelyn Street and East Coleman Drive. The applicant is proposing to occupy one of the tenant spaces (about 1,000-sf) located in the eastern portion of Building 6 within the southern part of the office complex.

The subject property is located within a Neighborhood Activity Center (NAC) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan.

The applicant’s letter of intent states the office will operate during normal business hours and serve clients primarily by appointment. Staffing of the office will consist of less than 5 persons. This proposed use is significantly smaller in size than other financial institutions such as a commercial bank, which is why there is a Special Exception requirement in R-P zoning. Therefore, the proposed use will fit in very easily with other office type uses of the developing complex and it should be readily approved. The existing “conditions” on the R-P zoning already limit the maximum size of each tenant space, and therefore there will be no adverse impacts from this proposed use. As reference, these conditions of R-P zoning (from file # HA-2021-07); are as follows:

1. Development of this property shall be in the form of a multi-tenant office or commercial development consisting of more than one building, with no individual building exceeding 5,600 square feet gross floor area (GFA), and no individual tenant occupying more than 5,600 square feet gross floor area (GFA).
2. Multi-family residential development shall require a Special Exception approval by the Hahira City Council.

Other than the customary 1-year expiration date, no additional conditions of approval should be needed in this case.

Staff finds the Special Exception consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, and the Special Exception review criteria, and recommends approval to the Hahira City Council, subject to the following condition:

1. Approval shall expire after one (1) year from the date of City Council approval, if no City business license has been obtained for the use by that date.

Discussion amongst commissioners and staff centered around the Kings Court development and how many units are still available.

There being no further questions for staff, Chairman Miller opened the Public Hearing portion of the case.

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Nikki Rogers, Branch Manager – 8274 Miller Rd.

Ms. Rogers explained that their clientele is mostly by appointment only as a mortgage service.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Miller called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Hightower to recommend approval of the request as presented with the two conditions as recommended by staff. Commissioner Bailey second. All voted in favor, no one opposed (8-0). Motion carried.

There being no further questions for staff, nor anyone present to speak in favor of or in opposition to the request, Chairman Miller called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Willis to recommend approval of the request as presented with one condition and recommended by staff. Commissioner Webb second. All voted in favor, no one opposed (8-0). Motion carried.

Agenda Item #6

CU-2025-04 Mills PMD Company (821 & 823 South Lee Street)
CUP for a machine & welding shop in C-H zoning

Mr. Martin presented the case in which Mills Permanent Metal Decking (PMD) Company is requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a reinstated machine and welding shop in a Highway Commercial (C-H) zoning district. The subject property consists of two (2) small parcels totaling 0.24 acres located at 821 & 823 South Lee Street. This is at the NE corner of South Lee Street and Youles Street, and is directly across the street from Ella's Top Corral Restaurant. The properties contain two existing buildings (4,200-sf total) which formerly housed the "Walker's Welding & Fabrication" business for about 40 years. It became a grandfathered-in nonconforming use in 2006 when this property was annexed into the City as part of the "islands annexation". The business later lost its grandfathering status soon after it closed a few years ago. The property has recently sold to the applicant, who is now wanting to renovate and utilize this property as part of their existing metal fabrication business – thus requiring the CUP approval. See attached letter of intent for more details.

The subject property is located within a Community Activity Center (CAC) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan.

The applicant's letter of intent describes their business as primarily a heavy construction civil subcontractor, which operates in several states. Their proposed use of this property is to use it as a "logistics hub for storing equipment and tools, as well as a facility for maintenance and field support", of their equipment which will include some degree of welding for repairs a\etc.. Most of the applicant's operation can be classified as a Permitted Use in C-H zoning, under the heading of a heavy construction contractors office. However, it is the non-office portion of the use as a "logistics hub and maintenance facility" that crosses into the light industrial category that requires CUP approval in C-H zoning. Nonetheless, the subject property has a long history of being "Walkers Welding & Fabrication" which operated without any known complaints, and in many ways this request is simply to re-establish the previous use of the property. Although this is one of the most intensive forms of commercial use, the property's small size (0.24 acres) greatly limits the overall scope of the operation and any potential impacts that did not occur in the past. Therefore, approval should be granted but in the name of the applicant only.

Staff finds the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Conditional Use Review Criteria, and recommends approval to the City Council, subject to the following condition:

1. Approval shall be granted in the name of the applicant only, for a machine and welding shop facility in conjunction with the applicant's heavy construction business.
2. Conditional Use approval shall expire one (1) year from the date of approval if no Business License for the proposed use has been issued by that date.

Commissioner Bailey asked if the establishment will be strictly for their business or if "walk-up" customers would be able to utilize their services. Mr. Martin stated that the intent is strictly for their business. Chairman Miller asked if the parking provided is sufficient. Mr. Martin confirmed that it is.

There being no further questions for staff, Chairman Miller opened the Public Hearing portion of the case.

No one spoke in favor of, nor in opposition to the request.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Miller called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Wildes to recommend approval of the request as presented with the two conditions as recommended by staff. Commissioner James Miller second. All voted in favor, no one opposed (8-0). Motion carried.

Agenda Item #7

CU-2025-05 Walter Fletcher (1313 South Troup Street)
CUP for a machine & welding shop in C-H zoning

Mr. Martin presented the case in which Mr. Walter Fletcher is requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for a reinstated machine and welding shop in a Highway Commercial (C-H) zoning district. The subject property consists of 1.45 acres located at 1313 South Troup Street, which is along the east side of the road immediately north of the intersection with South Patterson Street. The property contains an existing small 2-story office building in the front with an attached 8,400-sf warehouse building behind. This building housed a previous machine and welding shop business for several decades. It became a grandfathered-in nonconforming use in 2006 when this property was annexed into the City as part of the "islands annexation". The business later lost its grandfathering status soon after it closed a few years ago. The property has recently sold to the applicant, who is a descendant (grandson) of the business founder, and is now wanting to resurrect the old family business. The applicant has already begun an extensive cleanup and renovation of the site, but is not proposing any major changes to the site at this time. See attached letter of intent for more details.

The subject property is located within a Community Activity Center (CAC) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan.

The applicant's letter of intent describes this original business history, as well as currently proposed scope of operations. The subject property has a long history of being a machine and welding shop for many years without any known complaints, and this request is simply to re-establish the previous use of the property. The surrounding land use pattern is dominated by fairly intensive commercial uses. There is also a very large (grandfathered) junkyard on the property immediately to the north. The applicant's proposed use will simply maintain the status quo of the subject property, which is considered perfectly acceptable for the foreseeable future.

Staff finds the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Conditional Use Review Criteria, and recommends approval to the City Council, subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval shall be granted in the name of the applicant only, for a machine and welding shop facility.
2. Conditional Use approval shall expire one (1) year from the date of approval if no Business License for the proposed use has been issued by that date.

There being no questions for staff, Chairman Miller opened the Public Hearing portion of the case.

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Walter Fletcher, Applicant – 5565 Jumping Gully Rd.

Mr. Fletcher explained that he is the third generation to be doing this line of work and that while of late he has been operating as a mobile business, he wants to operate in the family's location again. Additionally, he stated that walk-in customers will be welcome.

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Miller called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Rountree to recommend approval of the request as presented with the two conditions as recommended by staff. Commissioner Graham second. All voted in favor, no one opposed (8-0). Motion carried.

There being no other business, Chairman Miller adjourned the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

Steve Miller, Chairman
Greater Lowndes Planning Commission

Date