

GREATER LOWNDES PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
325 WEST SAVANNAH AVENUE
Monday, September 29, 2025 – 5:30 PM

GLPC Commission Members Present: Ron Bythwood, Calvin Graham, James Miller (Vice-Chair), Steve Miller (Chair), Vicki Rountree, Chris Webb, Tommy Willis

Absent: Franklin Bailey, George Foreman, Shawanna Griffith (Resigned), Ed Hightower, Chip Wildes

Staff: 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 Tommy Willis 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: August 25, 2025

Chairman Miller called for additions, questions, and corrections of the August 25, 2025, GLPC meeting minutes. There being no additions, questions or corrections to the August 25, 2025, GLPC meeting minutes, Chairman Miller called for a motion. Commissioner Bythwood made a motion to approve the August 25, 2025, meeting minutes as presented. Commissioner Rountree second. All voted in favor, no one opposed (6-0). Motion carried.

Agenda Item #3

REZ-2025-15

Stewart Circle (Edward Jennings, LLC), Stewart Circle,
0072 004 & 0072 004A , ~13.6 acres

Current Zoning:

C-C (Crossroads Commercial) and R-1 (Low Density Residential)

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-C (Crossroads Commercial) & R-1 (Low Density Residential) to C-H (Highway Commercial) zoning, in order to unify the zoning for the property to be developed with a mixture of commercial uses.

In 2004, a 3acre portion was rezoned to R-1 for development of a single-family dwelling, while the remainder of the property remained Agriculture Use (A-U) and Neighborhood Commercial (C-N), before changing to R-1 and C-C in 2006 with the adoption of the ULDC. Code Enforcement has had issues with previous owners regarding junk vehicles, illegal dumping, property maintenance, and tree removal permitting, however, the current property owners are aware and have mitigated the issues while working through the proper development processes.

The subject property is within the Urban Service Area and US 41 Corridor Overlay, and Community Activity Center and Institutional Activity Center Character Areas, which recommend C-H zoning. Primary access is off Stewart Circle, and there are existing drives and proposed easements connecting to the Val North Commercial complex. There is a large, ~5.6ac wetland area centrally located on the property, which will require additional engineering design and environmental assessment once development begins.

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 availability of County Utilities, the potential environmental impacts, and the ability to properly apply the standards of the ULDC, and therefore recommends approval of the request for C-H zoning.

Additionally, although the TRC does not believe that conditions of approval are necessary for the following information, it should be noted for future reference: the minimum buffer area between Commercial and Residential zonings is 30 feet, which may be decreased by 50% and the buffer landscaping decreased by 25% with the installation of a 6' to 8' opaque fence.

Commissioner Willis asked if the junk cars have been removed by staff. Mr. Dillard stated they have. Chairman Miller asked if the house has been removed and if the wetlands have been or need to be isolated. Mr. Dillard stated the house has been removed and the Army Corp of Engineers would make any wetlands isolation determinations.

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

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Kevin Hollis, Developer – 1525 BCT Gin Rd.

Mr. Hollis made himself available to answer questions. Commissioner Willis asked about speculative use. Mr. Hollis stated there are 3 retail merchants who have shown interest. Commissioner James Miller asked if any of the interested parties could have an impact on the wetlands. Mr. Hollis answered no..

No one spoke in opposition to the request.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Miller called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Graham to recommend approval of the request as presented by staff. Commissioner Webb second. All voted in favor, no one opposed (6-0). Motion carried.

Agenda Item #4

TWR-2025-01 US-GA 5379, Rocky Ford Road, 0039 007, ~13.5 acres
Current Zoning: E-A (Estate Agricultural)
Proposed Request: Telecommunications Tower

Mr. Dillard presented the case in which the applicant is requesting to construct a new ~260' telecommunications tower on a 10,000sf leased area on Rock Ford Road near Watkins Road. The subject property is currently zoned Estate Agricultural (E-A) and is allowed to be used for the construction of a new telecommunications tower with GLPC review and LCBOC approval. The proposed tower is determined to be of "No Hazard to Air Navigation" by the Federal Aviation Administration, and officials at Valdosta Regional Airport (VLD) and Moody Air Force Base (MAFB) have been notified of the request and provided no objection, noting that the proposed construction would be acceptable contingent upon the addition of marling/lighting IAW FAA Aeronautical study No 2025-ASO-7122-OE and FAA Advisory circular 70/7460-1 Change 1.

The primary motivation for a new tower at the subject property is to fill a gap in the existing coverage area. The subject property is in the Rural Service Area and depicted as Rural Residential on the Future Land Use Map. Surrounding properties include a County Fire Station, Watkins Family property, and Camp Rock of Georgia.

Mr. Dillard stated a letter of opposition from the owner of the closest residence to the proposed tower location had been received this morning via email, and a petition opposing the request with ~25 signatures was handed to him before the start of the meeting.

The TRC analyzed the request, the standards set forth in 5.05.00 and 10.02.00 of the ULDC, and factors most relevant to this application, including the proposed location's ability to enhance telecommunication service, minimize adverse impacts on the community, and encourage the location of towers in non-residential areas, and therefore recommends approval of the request for a new telecommunications tower.

Commissioner Graham asked if there has been any opposition from the community. Mr. Dillard stated the only opposition has been those already mentioned.

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

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Dan Ausley, Representing Applicant – 1003 Washington St., Tallahassee, FL
- Jay Watkins, Property Owner – 4391 Rocky Ford Rd.
- Trey Cothron – 6435 Ousley Rd.

Mr. Ausley stated the intent of the request is to fill in gaps in coverage in the area.

Commissioner Graham asked if a search for a property away from residences had been conducted. Mr. Ausley stated the proposed location was determined the best. Commissioner Bythwood asked who the tower owner is. Mr. Ausley explained it is a private cellular tower company building for T-Mobile.

Mr. Watkins explained the benefit would be increased coverage, enhancement to the community and better safety to include 911 coverage.

Mr. Cothron stated with better coverage, property values may be enhanced.

Speaking in opposition to the request:

- WD Watkins – 5389 Watkins Rd.
- Lynn Eager – 5450 Watkins Rd.

Mr. Watkins stated concerns about the proximity to residences. Commissioner Graham asked if he currently has coverage at his home. Mr. Watkins answered affirmatively.

Ms. Eager's concerns included not having enough information about potential risks, including radiation emission, noise and lighting. Commissioner Rountree explained that the GLPC is not qualified to address those concerns and suggested that Mr. Ausley arrange a meeting to have the client answer those questions. Commissioner James Miller explained that the design professional will be required to make sure compliance is met.

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 Bythwood second. All voted in favor, no one opposed (6-0). Motion carried.

Before adjournment of the meeting, Mr. Dillard reminded the commissioners that the South Georgia Regional Commission in concert with local authorities will be updating the Comprehensive Plan over the next several months and some GLPC work sessions will be utilized for public input.

There being no other business, Chairman Miller adjourned the meeting at 5:59 p.m.

Steve Miller, Chairman
Greater Lowndes Planning Commission

Date

DRAFT