

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
WORK SESSION
Monday, September 8, 2025

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Chairman Bill Slaughter
Commissioner Scott Orenstein
Commissioner Mark Wisenbaker
Commissioner Michael Smith

Vice Chairperson Joyce Evans and Commissioner Demarcus Marshall were not in attendance.

Chairman Slaughter called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session of August 25, 2025, and the regular session of August 26, 2025. No revisions to the minutes were requested.

PUBLIC HEARING

REZ-2024-06 Budd Horace Ave, 1735 Madison Hwy, ~3.0ac, CON & C-H to CON & C-H, Well & Septic

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. This request represents a change in the existing boundaries of CON (Conservation) and C-H (Highway Commercial) zoning to the newly proposed boundaries of CON and C-H zoning. The main motivations in this case are to bring the current commercial use of the property into compliance and for speculative future commercial use. Mr. Dillard stated there was a complaint to Code Enforcement regarding this property, which led to a meeting with TRC in February. Mr. Dillard further stated staff analyzed the application and held it because they were waiting for additional information from the applicant and received no response. Staff then moved forward with the application in July. Mr. Dillard stated the property is on the corner of Madison Highway and Horace Avenue where there are vehicles that have been there for quite a while, which you can tell by the growth of vegetation on the property. Mr. Dillard stated staff has concerns about the viability due to the environment of the area. There is approximately a three to four foot elevation drop from Madison Highway down to the property. Mr. Dillard stated the building on the property is located in the city limits of Valdosta, and has been built to higher elevation standards. Mr. Dillard went on to say that one of the issues is the unpermitted building on the property being fed by unpermitted power, and unpermitted well and septic usage. No permits have ever been pulled for this structure. The conservation zoning line covers approximately two thirds of this property. The Commercial Highway is a little under three quarters of an acre. The Future Land Use Maps depicts this area as predominantly recreational. Mr. Dillard stated the Valdosta Regional Airport Overlay also impacts this property. The property is in the Conical Surface Zone, Horizontal Surface Zone, Runway Protection Zone, Transitional Surface Zone, Approach Zone, and Noise Contour Zone, which have supplemental standards limiting its overall uses. Mr.

Dillard stated there is a history of land disturbing activity on the property and it has also been unpermitted. He further stated staff has no record of a permit, nor does the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), or EPD. Mr. Dillard referenced a survey submitted in 2024 of a flood way line and flat wetlands. When staff received the survey, they requested that official information from the Army Corps of Engineers be submitted to verify that it was approved by the Army Corps, but the Army Corps of Engineers has not received an application nor has staff received any updates regarding changes to the floodplain. Staff analyzed the request, the standards governing the exercise of zoning powers 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 historic and proposed use of the property, the environmental sensitivity of the site, and the VLD Overlay Standards, and therefore recommends:

A) Tabling:

The Commission could consider tabling the request until:

1. A Jurisdictional Determination has been issued by the ACOE.
2. A Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR[4]) has been issued by FEMA/EPD.

B) Approval with Conditions: If the Commission is ready to move forward, then they could consider approval with conditions. The current set of draft conditions are as follows:

1. Regarding the CON / C-H zoning boundary:
 - a. The C-H zoning boundary and its allowed uses shall not extend beyond the delineated wetland boundary as approved by the ACOE.

Or, if that boundary is not known at the time of LCBOC consideration, then

- b. The C-H zoning boundary shall extend from the southern end of the property along Horace Avenue to 55' off of the southernmost GIS wetland boundaries.
2. Any vehicular ingress/egress off of Horace Avenue while it is unimproved shall require the property owner/developer to pave the street from that ingress/egress to the nearest paved street. The property owner/developer will be responsible for the design, any acquisition of necessary right-of-way, relocation of utilities, and construction costs for the paving of the section mentioned above. The paving shall be completed before the issuance of any Certificate of Occupancy (CO) is granted on the subject property.
3. Per GA EPD Floodplain Management, a guardrail shall be installed around the perimeter of anything stored on the property to a height two (2) feet above the flood zone.
4. A sign and/or billboard shall not be permitted on the property until the commercial use is brought into compliance.
5. Any lighting located on the property shall be shielded and directed to avoid direct illumination of adjacent residentially zoned properties.

6. Any loudspeakers, paging systems, or electromagnetic interference generated on or by uses of the property shall be designed, installed and used such that they are not discernible at any abutting residentially zoned property line.
7. The following list of uses shall not be allowed on the subject property:
 - a. Care Homes
 - b. Transitional Care Facilities
 - c. Agricultural and Farm Operations
 - d. Chicken Coops
 - e. Kennels
 - f. Adult Entertainment
 - g. Animal Care Facilities
 - h. Child Care
 - i. Lodging
 - j. Lounges, Bars, and Nightclubs
 - k. Research and Experimental Laboratories
 - l. Schools & Universities
 - m. Truck Stops
 - n. Telecommunications Towers
3. Deny

At the Planning Commission meeting, the applicant's representative spoke in favor of the request. Ultimately, the Planning Commission recommended denial (6-1).

Commissioner Orenstein stated even if the wetland lines, delineation, and all reports come back fine, based on one of the maps presented by Mr. Dillard, he would still be occupying a portion of the property that is zoned conservation. Commissioner Orenstein then asked if there is a way that the applicant can go around that. Commissioner Orenstein further stated he asked the question because he is concerned about the conservation area being protected. He also asked if the applicant applied for conservation years ago. Mr. Dillard responded, no, it has historically been in flood hazard and conservation zoning since 1996-1997 when the initial flood FEMA Maps came out, and in 2006 conservation zoning took its place. Commissioner Orenstein asked if the applicant has been receiving the benefit of being zoned conservation on the largest portion of the property because he gets a tax benefit on the conservation status, Mr. Dillard responded that is tax conservation, not conservation itself. County Attorney, Walter Elliott stated those are two different things. Chairman Slaughter asked if the request is to take part of the conservation zoned area and make it C-H and if they will be changing the amount of C-H, Mr. Dillard responded, correct. Chairman Slaughter asked if option one is to table until they get the Corps of Engineers' approval and do whatever they need to do to legally move the line. Mr. Dillard responded, yes. Chairman Slaughter stated he does not see how the Board of Commissioners can change lines and put it in commercial highway if it is in a floodplain and/or is in the jurisdiction of the Corps of Engineers. Chairman Slaughter stated he thinks the Commission will be getting into trouble for allowing that. He further stated he thinks the best option is to deny or table until they get the work done, that includes getting the reports from the Corps and the delineation of the wetlands. Mr. Dillard stated that is correct. He further stated in 2024 staff asked for that information to be provided and it has not been provided. Commissioner Smith asked if the applicant has not done what they need to do or if the Army Corps of Engineers has not provided their response on where the lines are, Mr. Dillard responded that the applicant has not submitted anything to the Army Corps of

Engineers. Commissioner Smith asked if staff has found any leakage from the vehicles, such as battery acid, hydraulic fluid, oil, or gas on the property, Mr. Dillard responded some of Code Enforcement's investigations did show leakage. Commissioner Mark Wisenbaker asked if for some reason this is approved and they continue to do business in a flood zone, and there is a catastrophe in that area, would the County be held liable for approving this request, Mr. Dillard responded he is not sure about the County's liability, but staff has multiple concerns. County Attorney Walter Elliott stated he is not prepared to answer that question, but he can consult with Attorney Jim Elliott who is more of the liability expert to get an answer. County Manager, Paige Dukes, asked Director of Engineering, Chad McLeod to weigh in, and Mr. McLeod stated, if the commission approves the item, there will be a long list of items they would have to complete, as well as get an approved set of plans to be able to help control some of the environmental concerns and to operate the business. Chairman Slaughter stated the applicant is in extreme violation right now. Commissioner Smith asked if the applicant is running a semi-truck repair shop without a business permit, and Chairman Slaughter responded that is his understanding. Commissioner Smith thanked Mr. Dillard for all his efforts in this case.

REZ-2025-14 Dinkins, 6533 Lake Alapaha Blvd, 1.0ac, C-C to R-21, County Water & Septic

County Planner, J.D. Dillard presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated this is Mr. Dinkins' last C-C (Crossroads Commercial) property that has been in existence since the late 1980s. He is requesting the one remaining acre to be rezoned to R-21 (Medium Density Residential) zoning. Mr. Dillard stated the property has no current wetland or floodplain issues. He further stated R-21 is consistent with the surrounding land uses, County water is available, and there are no issues with the viability of the septic system from the Health Department's standpoint. TRC recommended approval. Mr. Dinkins spoke in favor of the request at the Planning Commission meeting; no one spoke in opposition and the Planning Commission recommended unanimous approval (7-0).

FOR CONSIDERATION

Pet Shop Ordinance

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated staff became aware of a pet store that is relocating outside of the unincorporated area of Lowndes County. Mrs. Dukes stated we have received quite a few calls from the rescue community and concerns from Animal Services staff. Lowndes County is still euthanizing close to 1000 animals per year at the Lowndes County Animal Shelter, which is tragic. Mrs. Dukes further stated it is a direct result of the lack of spayed and neutered animals. Mrs. Dukes went on to say that part of the frustration from our staff as well as others in the community, including volunteers, rescues, and the Humane Society, is that our fosters are full, and we are doing everything that we can to rehome the homeless pets so that euthanasia rates can be controlled more favorably. Pet stores sell animals that have not been altered. Mrs. Dukes stated that in Georgia, the Department of Agriculture requires any animal that is officially adopted to have paperwork that has to go to the Department of Agriculture, and it is required that those animals are documented. Mrs. Dukes further stated the ordinance has been drafted by the county attorneys based on the Commission's direction for the Commission to consider. Mrs. Dukes stated we can make changes to the ordinance and/or answer questions. We believe that this sends the message to citizens that there are fantastic pets available in our community, outside of pet stores. There are also reputable licensed breeders. Mrs. Dukes further stated this ordinance prohibits the retail sale of pets in the unincorporated area of Lowndes County. Commissioner Smith asked if this ordinance is only pertaining to cats and dogs, County Attorney Walter Elliott and Mrs. Dukes both responded yes, that is correct. Commissioner Wisenbaker referenced a section of the ordinance that mentions the adoption

of a dog younger than eight weeks old is prohibited, and stated he would like to make a change. He stated the issue is that having been around Labradors, Spaniels, and other dogs, the litter needs to be broken up no later than 49 days (seven weeks) because the longer the litters stay together, an alpha male or female is ranked and can cause problems with certain members of the litter. Commissioner Wisenbaker stated he would like to change the time from eight weeks to seven weeks. Mrs. Dukes stated that may be a Department of Agriculture standard, but we will check today to see if we have the flexibility to make that change. Chairman Slaughter mentioned the issue of spaying and neutering and that the County is going to have to put something in the ordinances in the future that is going to require spaying and neutering if we want to one day become a no-kill shelter. Mrs. Dukes stated Animal Services staff, Attorney Will Elliott, and herself have been working to update the existing Animal Services Ordinance, which will include splitting the ordinance to address the dangerous dog portion, which comes mostly from the state statute of the ordinance, and then the animal care side of the ordinance. Mrs. Dukes further stated they will be doing research and looking at other communities who have gotten ahead of the issue. Chairman Slaughter stated he believes if we are going to be aggressive about animal control and animal welfare, there has to be a large component of spay and neuter requirements. Commissioner Smith stated he thinks that it is important that the County intentionally moves forward on the different aspects of the issue, especially learning from other counties that are doing it well. Chairman Slaughter agreed and stated we need to ensure that what we do has proven to work elsewhere. Commissioner Wisenbaker stated we need to be innovative.

BID

Moody Water Storage Tank Rehab

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated Moody Air Force Base has an (MAFB) underground water storage tank that is in need of rehab. Mr. Stalvey further stated Moody has secured funds for this project to be performed under the water & wastewater contract with Lowndes County. Staff advertised the project and two bids were received. Mr. Stalvey stated one bid was received from Razor Back, LLC for \$149,370.00, and Southeastern Tank & Tower submitted a bid of \$319,000.00. Both staff and Moody personnel checked multiple references and past jobs performed by Razor Back, LLC. Mr. Stalvey stated we discussed the low bid with Razor Back, LLC, and they were satisfied with the bid. Staff recommends approval and to authorize the Chairman to sign the agreement. Chairman Slaughter asked if rehab of a water tower is the same as what has been done with some of the others recently under contract, where they are flushed, cleaned, and painted if needed, Mr. Stalvey responded, yes, this particular tank is a 500,000 gallon underground storage tank, so most of the work is internally. The tank is bare concrete on the inside and EPD has not made it a requirement yet, but they are discussing and recommending that tanks be coated on the inside with a protective coating, and that is what this will be. Commissioner Michael Smith asked, with the County's partnership and agreement with Moody, if the County does the contracting, bidding and outreach process along with their partnership and approval, Mr. Stalvey stated that is correct. Commissioner Smith asked when the work is done if all we have is staff time in it, or do we get reimbursed. Mr. Stalvey responded, the County will get some reimbursement as well. Chairman Slaughter mentioned that typically there is a small administrative fee that the County will get. Chairman Slaughter further stated it is a win-win process. It allows them to get contractual work done, which has been a great effort. Chairman Slaughter went on to say that County Manager, Paige Dukes has championed the effort with Moody and across the Department of Defense. Chairman Slaughter stated it helps the Federal Government and those entities because all they have to do is get the funding, and we are able to manage and advertise the projects, take the bids, and hopefully save them some money in that process, rather it having to be handled through the Department of Defense. Mrs. Dukes added

that the County's involvement through the IGSA process provides for a lot of our local small businesses, especially those that normally would not be able to navigate or have someone on their team to help them navigate through dealing directly with the federal government, so they are basically bidding on Lowndes County work just like they would any other bid opportunities that Lowndes County would have. Mrs. Dukes stated this increases the participation of our local and small businesses as well. Chairman Slaughter stated the IGSA agreement is just an opportunity to get more local subcontractors involved with Moody Air Force Base's work and it also saves the Department of Defense a substantial amount of money.

REPORTS- County Manager

County Manager, Paige Dukes, deferred her report to tomorrow evening.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting, second by Commissioner Orenstein. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the meeting at 9:06 a.m.