

GREATER LOWNDES PLANNING COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
325 WEST SAVANNAH AVENUE  
Monday, January 30, 2023 – 5:30 PM

**GLPC Commission Members Present:** Ron Bythwood, Calvin Graham, Ed Hightower (Chairman), Vicki Rountree, Chris Webb, Chip Wildes

**GLPC Commission Members Absent:** Franklin Bailey, Johnny Ball, Steve Miller, Tommy Willis

**Staff:** Matt Martin, City of Valdosta/Hahira Planning & Zoning Administrator; 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 Hightower called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m. Commissioner Graham led the Pledge of Allegiance followed by the Invocation. Chairman Hightower 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 Hightower then explained the meeting procedures and announced the dates of the public hearing for the local member government, as listed on the agenda.

Chairman Hightower thanked Commissioner Rountree for her 2 years of leadership and service as Chairperson.

**Agenda Item #2**

**Approval of the Meeting Minutes: November 28, 2022**

Chairman Hightower called for additions, questions, and corrections of the November 28, 2022, GLPC meeting minutes. There being none, Chairman Hightower called for a motion. Commissioner Wildes made a motion to approve the November 28, 2022, meeting minutes as presented. Commissioner Graham second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**Agenda Item #3**

HA-2023-01 BoValdosta, LLC, 940 GA Hwy 122 W, Special Exception for a gasoline station with more than 8 pumps

Mr. Martin presented cases HA-2023-01 and HA-2023-02 together as they are both the same project. However, motions and votes will be separate.

With regard to HA-2023-01, the applicant is requesting Special Exception (SE) approval of a proposed gasoline station with more than 8 pumps, to be located within the Hahira Gateway Corridor Overlay District. The subject property consists of 2.64 acres is located at 940 GA Highway 122 West. This is along the north side of the road about 400 feet east of the Union Road intersection. This is next door to the existing Robinson Family Dental clinic and diagonally across the street from the new Wendy's restaurant. The subject property is currently vacant, but has been partially cleared recently. The applicant is proposing to develop it as a combination gasoline station, and a convenience store with internal Bojangles restaurant (total building area about 6,700-sf) The Hahira Zoning Ordinance has provisions for the Gateway Corridor Overlay District which requires that any gas station with more than 8 pumps must receive a SE approval from the City Council. The applicant is proposing a gasoline station component with 16 pumps (8 service islands with 2 pumps each). The applicant is also requesting certain Variances from general development requirements of the Overlay District as well, and these are being processed separately under file # HA-2023-02. (all or part of Tax Parcel 0026-033).

The subject property is located within a Community Activity Center (CAC) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan. Gasoline stations in C-H zoning with 8 pumps or less are a Permitted Use throughout the Overlay District, and there is no Special Exception (SE) requirement. Larger facilities with more pumps (and hence a larger fuel canopy, more maneuvering areas, more traffic, etc...) require the special review process on a case-by-case basis. The intent of this "more than 8 pumps" threshold of the Overlay is to protect the less-intensive developed areas of the District from uses that may be too great in magnitude, and may be deemed incompatible (or less compatible) with the overall development patterns of the immediate area as well as the Overlay's stated purpose and goals. [refer to Purpose statements of Section 4-5.1 in the Overlay District provisions of the Hahira Zoning Ordinance].

The Overlay District boundaries stretch along the entire GA Highway 122 West corridor, from the railroad crossing near downtown westward past the Exit 29 interchange. The intensity level and scale of development along this corridor, ranges from the least intensive (small lot, small building, pedestrian scale) patterns at the eastern end, to the more intensive (large parcels/sites, I-75 commerce scale) patterns at the western end which are not pedestrian focused. The subject property is within the middle area of (or transition between) these two extremes. The applicant's proposal is for a gas station that is literally TWICE the size of the special review threshold. It is staff's opinion that such a

use is clearly on the more intensive side of the Corridor spectrum, and it should instead be located in closer proximity to Exit 29 (i.e. west of the Union Road intersection). Staff's concern is only that of size and magnitude --- in this location. If the proposed use were reduced to 8 pumps, it would not require a SE approval and would instead be a Permitted Use.

It should also be noted that there is a difference in "definitions" being used by the staff and the applicant. When the applicant was designing their proposed site, they believed that having 8 refueling "islands" (each accommodating 2 vehicles at the same time, utilizing separate "dispensers") was the same as "8 pumps" and therefore did not trigger the SE review process. However, it is staff opinion and interpretation of the Ordinance (& agreed to by the City Manager and City Attorney) that having 8 refueling islands with 2 sets of dispensers each – accommodating up to 16 vehicles at one time --- is equal to "16 pumps" under the terms and intent of the Ordinance. (Staff will be discussing the official interpretation of this, when this SE request goes before Hahira City Council.)

Staff finds the Special Exception request "inconsistent" with the Comprehensive Plan, and the Special Exception review criteria, and recommends denial to the Hahira City Council, based on the magnitude of the project and the area.

There being no questions from the commissioners, Chairman Hightower opened the Public Hearing portion of the case.

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Brad Folsom – 2611 N. Patterson St., Valdosta, GA

Mr. Folsom stated he is the attorney for the applicant and spoke for the applicant's character stating that the applicant is involved in and supportive of the community. Mr. Folsom stated that the area in which the subject property lies is in the process of being developed and that this particular property is as close to the interstate for development as possible. Mr. Folsom distributed additional materials that describe and define "pumps vs dispensers" stating that the fuel industry defines pumps as in the underground tank. Mr. Folsom stated that "Pump" is not defined in the Ordinance.

Mr. Folsom introduced Mr. Bill Kent as the project architect who was available to answer any questions the commissioners might have.

Commissioner Rountree asked Mr. Folsom to please address a rumor regarding a truck stop planned for the north side of the subject property. Mr. Folsom stated there is no intention of that from the applicant.

No one spoke against the request.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Hightower called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Rountree to recommend approval of the request for a Special Exception for a gasoline station with more than 8 pumps. Commissioner Wildes second. All in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried (5-0).

**Agenda Item #4**

HA-2023-01 BoValdosta, LLC, 940 GA Hwy 122 W, Variances from the Hahira Gateway Corridor Overlay District

Mr. Martin presented this case in conjunction with Agenda Item #3, HA-2023-01. The applicant is requesting three (3) Variances to certain provisions of Section 4-5 of Hahira Zoning Ordinance, as they pertain to the Hahira Gateway Corridor Overlay District. The subject property consists of 2.64 acres located at 940 GA Highway 122 West. This is along the north side of the road about 400 feet east of the Union Road intersection. This is next door to the existing Robinson Family Dental clinic and diagonally across the street from the new Wendy's restaurant. The subject property is currently vacant, but has been partially cleared recently. The applicant is proposing to develop it as a combination gasoline station, and a convenience store with internal Bojangles restaurant (total building area about 6,700-sf). These requested Variances (with Staff discussion of each) are as follows:

(A) The Overlay District requires a minimum front yard building setback distance of 15 feet from the right-of-way line, but with a maximum setback of 75 feet. The applicant is instead proposing a front yard setback distance of 165 feet to the front wall of the restaurant & convenience store. If the proposed fuel station "canopy" were attached to the building, this minimum setback distance (of the overall building) would be at 55' instead, and no variance would be required. \*\* This variance should be approved, subject to having the fuel station canopy as shown on the submitted site plan.

(B) The Overlay District requires no more than 50% of the front yard area can be parking & driveways. The applicant is proposing approximately 64%. The applicant's front yard frontage along GA 122 is nearly twice as wide as what would otherwise be needed for the interior developed portion of the site, and it causing an unusual high % calculation of paving in the front yard area. This is being necessitated by GDOT's requirement upon the applicant – through no fault of the applicant -- to have their sole access driveway line-up with the existing driveway across the street. \*\* This variance should be approved, subject to the conceptual layout design and driveway configuration being imposed by GDOT.

(C) The Overlay District requires a 5' wide sidewalk along GA Highway 122 West. The applicant is instead proposing to stub-out their internal walkway system to the right-of-way line so that it may connect to the future "GDOT" sidewalk system that is planned for

this roadway. \*\* Due to the impending streetscape improvements by both the City and GDOT for this portion of the roadway (which includes a sidewalk system within the RoW), other similar variances have already been granted from this requirement of the District. This property should receive the same variance approval.

Staff finds the request consistent with Variance Review Criteria, and recommends approval to the City Council for each of these requested variances as stipulated above, and subject to the submitted site plan.

There being no questions for staff from the commissioners, Chairman Hightower 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 Hightower called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Wildes to recommend approval of the request for Variances from the Hahira Gateway Corridor Overlay District as presented by staff. Commissioner Bythwood second. All in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried (5-0).

#### **Agenda Item #5**

VA-2023-01 Dineshkumar Patel, 3095 James Road, Rezone 1.92 acres from PMD to C-H

Mr. Martin presented the case in which Mr. Patel is requesting to rezone 1.92 acres from Planned Mixed-Use District (PMD) to Highway Commercial (C-H). The subject property is located at 3095 James Road, which is along the west side of the road about 300 feet south of the intersection with North St Augustine Road. This is directly behind the existing Raceway gasoline station & convenience store. The property is currently vacant and the applicant is proposing to develop it with a small multi-tenant commercial center containing about 13,500 square feet of building area.

As a geographic reference, the subject property is about 1/3 of a much larger tract of land zoned PMD for the former "Market Street" master planned development, which was approved in 2007 but never developed.

The subject property is located within a Regional Activity Center (RAC) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan which allows the possibility of C-H zoning.

The subject property consists of a very small portion of the 2007 PMD master plan, but is in an area that was planned to be all commercial type uses – and this also includes the PMD areas to the west and to the immediate south. With the PMD development now being defunct, and in reviewing the request from a conventional zoning perspective, the

proposed C-H for this property is consistent with the existing C-H zonings to the north and east as well as the overall commercial zoning pattern of the Exit 18 area.

Staff finds the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Standards for the Exercise of Zoning Power (SFEZP) and recommends approval to the City Council.

Chairman Hightower opened the Public Hearing portion of the case.

Speaking in favor of the request:

- Bill Kent, Innovate Engineering – 2214 N. Patterson St., Valdosta, GA

Mr. Kent stated he is the project engineer and is available to answer any questions the commissioners might have. There being no questions for Mr. Kent, Chairman Hightower invited anyone opposed to the request to come forward.

No one spoke against the request.

There being no further discussion, Chairman Hightower called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Wildes to recommend approval of the request to rezone 1.92 acres from PMD to C-H as presented by staff. Commissioner Webb second. All in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried (5-0).

### **Agenda Item #6**

REZ-2023-02 Thomas Property, Madison Hwy., Rezone ~10.0 acres from R-1 (Low Density Residential) to R-A (Residential Agricultural)

Mr. Dillard presented the case, stating the applicant is requesting a change in zoning on approximately 10 acres from R-1 (Low Density Residential) zoning to R-A (Residential Agricultural) zoning, in order for the property to be utilized for agricultural purposes, including the raising of livestock.

Historically, this parcel was zoned A-U (Agricultural Use) prior to the ULDC adoption in 2006. The property abuts R-1 zoning to the north and east, and M-3 (High Intensity Industrial) to the south and west. It should be noted that the Valdosta Southern Railroad abuts the property along its western boundary. The subject property is in the Urban Service Area and a Suburban Character Area, with access to and from the property off Madison Hwy, a State maintained minor arterial road. Per Comprehensive Plan guidance, R-A zoning is listed as a recommended zoning within that character area.

For reference, M-3 zoning provides for industrial uses that are involved in high intensity manufacturing and processing of materials which create excessive noise, odor, smoke, or dust. Special considerations for high intensity industrial uses include screening of

activities, noise mitigation, and protection from encroachment from incompatible development. To help with the dynamics associated with the M-3 zoning and the nearby paper mill complex staff has made efforts to reach out to their representatives about this case.

The TRC considered the request and had no objectionable comments. Additionally, Staff finds the request consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and existing land use patterns of the area, and believes that rezoning from a residential to an agricultural district provides added protection to the M-3 district from potential incompatible future development, and recommends approval of the request.

Chairman Hightower 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 Hightower called for a motion. Motion by Commissioner Wildes to recommend approval of the request to rezone ~10.0 acres from R-1 to R-A as presented by staff. Commissioner Rountree second. All in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried (5-0).

There being no other business, Chairman Hightower adjourned the meeting at 6:12 p.m.



**Ed Hightower, Chairman  
Greater Lowndes Planning Commission**

2 27 2023  
**Date**