



Chatham County - Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission

Arthur Mendonsa Hearing Room
November 2, 2021 ~ 1:30 PM
Minutes

November 2, 2021 Regular MPC Meeting, 1:30 P.M.

Members Present: Joseph Welch, Chairman
Karen Jarrett, Vice-Chair
Travis H. Coles, Secretary
Laureen Boles
Elizabeth Epstein
Ruel Joyner
Jay Melder
Wayne Noha
Lee Smith
Dwayne Stephens

Members Absent: Malik Watkins, Treasurer
Eula Parker
Joseph Ervin
Tom Woiwode

Staff Present: Melanie Wilson, Executive Director
Pamela Everett, Assistant Executive Director
Marcus Lotson, Director of Development Services
Melissa Paul-Leto, Planner
Sally Helm, Administrative Assistant
Julie Yawn, Systems Analyst

I. Call to Order and Welcome

II. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

III. Approval of Agenda

[1. Approval of Agenda](#)

Motion

Approval of the Agenda

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Wayne Noha

W. Lee Smith - Aye

Travis Coles - Aye

Joseph Welch - Aye

Karen Jarrett - Aye

Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Ruel Joyner	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Aye

IV. Notices, Proclamations and Acknowledgements

[2. November 23, 2021 Regular MPC Meeting, 1:30 P.M., Planning Commission, GO-TO- WEBINAR \(VIRTUAL\) to access go to: www.thempc.org or Arthur Mendonsa Hearing Room, 112 East State Street..](http://www.thempc.org)

V. Item(s) Requested to be Removed from the Final Agenda

[3. ZONING MAP AMENDMENT | Sweetwater Station | Rezone from R-A - to RSF-4 | File No. 21-003991-ZA](#)

Motion

Item is Postponed to the next regularly scheduled Planning Commission Meeting, Tuesday, November 23, 2021.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Wayne Noha

W. Lee Smith	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Ruel Joyner	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Aye

[4. REZONING MAP AMENDMENT | Wicklow Street | Rezone from B-C and RSF-E to RMF-3 | File No. 21-004883](#)

Motion

This item is Postponed to the next regularly scheduled Planning Commission Meeting, Tuesday, November 23, 2021.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Wayne Noha

W. Lee Smith	- Aye
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Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Ruel Joyner	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Aye

[5. REZONING MAP AMENDMENT | 700 Christopher Drive | Rezone from OI-E to RMF-2-40 | File No. 21-005198-ZA](#)

Motion

This item is Postponed to the next regularly scheduled Planning Commission Meeting, Tuesday, November 23, 2021.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Wayne Noha

W. Lee Smith	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Ruel Joyner	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Aye

[6. MINOR SUBDIVISION VARIANCE REQUEST | 8624 Old Montgomery Road | File No. SUBD 0621 - 000140](#)

Motion

This item is Postponed to the next regularly scheduled Planning Commission Meeting, Tuesday, November 23, 2021.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Wayne Noha

W. Lee Smith	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye

Joseph Welch	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Ruel Joyner	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Aye

[7. ZONING MAP AMENDMENT | 7672 Johnny Mercer Blvd | Rezone request from R-1 / EO to R-3-12 / EO | File No. Z-1021-000179](#)

Motion

This item is Postponed to the next regularly scheduled Planning Commission Meeting, Tuesday, November 23, 2021.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles
Second: Wayne Noha

W. Lee Smith	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Ruel Joyner	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Aye

VI. Items Requested to be Withdrawn

The Consent Agenda consists of items for which the applicant is in agreement with the staff recommendation and for which no known objections have been identified nor anticipated by staff. Any objections raised at the meeting will result in the item being moved to the Regular Agenda. At a 12:30 briefing, the staff will brief the Commission on Consent Agenda items and, time permitting, Regular Agenda items. No testimony will be taken from applicants, supporters or opponents, and no votes will be taken at the briefing.

VII. Consent Agenda

[8. Approval of the October 12, 2021 Briefing and Regular Meeting Minutes.](#)

[📎 10-12-2021 MPC BRIEFING MINUTES.pdf](#)

[📎 10.12.2021 Meeting Minutes.pdf](#)

Motion

Approval of the Briefing and Regular Meeting Minutes.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Wayne Noha

W. Lee Smith	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Ruel Joyner	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Aye

[9. Adoption of the 2022 Calendar of Meetings](#)

📎 [2022 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS - Tentative.pdf](#)

Motion

APPROVAL of the 2022 Calendar of Meetings.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Wayne Noha

W. Lee Smith	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Ruel Joyner	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Aye

VIII. Old Business

[10. SPECIAL USE PERMIT | 2301 Montgomery Street | Vehicle Sale, Rental, and Leasing | File No. 21-004407-ZA](#)

📎 [site visit.pdf](#)

📎 [AERIAL MAP 21-004407-ZA.pdf](#)

- ④ [FLU MAP 21-004407-ZA.pdf](#)
- ④ [LABEL MAP 21-004407-ZA.pdf](#)
- ④ [TAX MAP 21-004407-ZA.pdf](#)
- ④ [VICINITY MAP 21-004407-ZA.pdf](#)
- ④ [ZONING MAP 21-004407-ZA.pdf](#)
- ④ [Application.pdf](#)
- ④ [FW_ Petition Against File No_ 21-004407-ZA.pdf](#)
- ④ [Applicant's improvements to the property for vehical sales.pdf](#)
- ④ [P14 - Handicap Parking Sign Mode_201212101131333299.pdf](#)
- ④ [P15 - ADA Handicap Parking Space_201212101132156899.pdf](#)
- ④ [Staff Report.pdf](#)

Ms. Melissa Paul-Leto, Planner, stated the petitioner is requesting approval for a Special Use pursuant to Section 3.10 of the Savannah Zoning Ordinance to establish a vehicle sale, rentals and leasing use. The Special Use process includes review by the Planning Commission and the Savannah City Council. Should a permit be granted by the City of Savannah, it will be governed by the permit enforcement criteria outlined in Article 3 of the Savannah Zoning Ordinance. The item received one letter of objection dated back from the October MPC meeting, as this item was postponed to today's date.

The subject property is located at 2301 Montgomery Street, on the corner of Montgomery and W 39th Streets, in the Thomas Square Historic Neighborhood. The parcel is .08 acres, or 3,484.8 square feet, and includes the following structures: a one-story structure with an attached carport, a detached carport, and a shed, the remaining parcel is surfaced in concrete. The subject property is located across the street from residential properties on Montgomery Street. The parcel abuts an abandoned one-story residential structure and is located across the street on W 39th Street from Wells Park. The applicant has made improvements to the property, which include creating six (6) tandem display parking spaces for the subject cars for sale, two (2) customer off-street parking spaces, and painted the proposed sales office which is the existing one-story structure on the property. Based on the 1953 and 1966 Sanborn Maps, the subject property was a residential parcel with a dwelling unit and transitioned to a used auto sales establishment. It was most recently a car washing establishment.

The subject property is in an area that is developed with primarily residential uses mixed with some retail uses and a city park. Both the zoning classification and the land use designation are compatible with the proposed special use. Based on the applicant's improvements on-site, it appears to be able to accommodate the request regarding adequate space. The special use process allows the Planning Commission and the Mayor and Aldermen to consider individual circumstances and apply conditions if necessary. It also allows the City Council to manage the permit issuance based on the ongoing compliance of the permit holder to include revocation if necessary. Staff finds that the subject site will most likely support the proposed use.

The subject property is in the TC-2 (Traditional Commercial) zoning classification, as well as the Traditional Commercial Future Land Use designation in the Comprehensive Plan. Per Section 5.13.1 b., "The TC-2 district is established to ensure the vibrancy of historic mixed-use neighborhoods with traditional development patterns characteristic of Savannah during the streetcar and early automobile eras. The district provides for the creation of commercial corridors along higher classifications of streets that traverse historic neighborhoods". The requested use is consistent with this designation at this location within a mixed-use neighborhood. The petitioner has indicated their hours of operation would be Monday through Saturday, from 8am-5pm. The applicant has provided improvements of the property to staff since they presented on October 12th to the Planning Commission. Based upon the criteria for a special use permit; staff recommends approval with conditions.

Mr. Oemer Benson, petitioner, stated they fulfilled the required recommendations, they only want a car lot. The only reason this has been a carwash was to have income coming in, protecting their investment, until they were able to get approval from the Board.

Mr. Joseph Welch, Chairman, asked if they will continue to be washing the cars that are on the lot for sale, and if so, is there proper drainage for this?

Mr. Benson said they will only be washing the cars they are selling and yes, there is proper drainage.

Mr. Ruel Joyner, Board member, said one of the concerns was not working on the vehicles there on the lot. This was to be clearly understood.

Mr. Wayne Noha, Board member, asked for clarification, when the staff recommendation says "no repairs" what does this mean?

Mr. Benson stated, if there are any repairs needed to the vehicles, they will send the vehicle to an automotive repair shop.

Mr. Jay Melder, City Manager, asked what the operating hours will be.

Mr. Benson stated, 10am - 6pm, Monday through Saturday.

Mr. Melder, requested that the operating hours be part of the requested restrictions as well.

Ms. Karen Jarrett, Vice Chair, asked about the parking, the required spaces, and two off street spaces. Is a handicap space required as well? After the ADA parking space, how many spaces will be left for vehicles?

Mr. Benson stated, it is not required to have a handicap space for private parking. He has asked the question, can they get a couple of parking spaces on Montgomery Street and was told this is a City issue. Most people pull in from Montgomery Street to go into the car lot.

Ms. Leto stated, Mr. Benson and herself have spoken with Barry, the City's traffic engineer. He stated there is a requirement for one ADA parking space for the customer. There are two off street spaces, including one ADA. The ADA needs to be revised due to the measurements. MPC staff is conditioning that one space be designated for the employee. There will be enough space for one more space.

Mr. Joyner asked how is this conditional with this petitioner. If he goes to sell the property, is this contingent on the city approving that also? That doesn't seem fair to the petitioner.

Mr. Marcus Lotson, Director of Development Services, stated the City and MPC have been discussing lately, the special use permit process, which the applicant is seeking today. That process is in place where there is a series of uses in the Zoning Ordinance that may be allowed in the district but require a public hearing. In the past, under the old ordinance, a request like this would have gone to the Zoning Board of Appeals as a special use. The correct process, since this is similar to a zoning action, it has to be approved by the Council,. With that, if it gets approved, this petition or any special use petition, the permit is then granted to the petitioner. That permit is the petitioner's permit. Should the applicant sell his business, if the non transferable nature of the permit it adopted with this particular request, then a new buyer of that business would have to seek special use approval as well prior to buying the business.

Ms. Elizabeth Epstein, Board Member, stated October 12th, last meeting, it was deemed there was not enough space on the property for the use. Since there is now a limit on the number of cars that can be sold, does that meet the conditions?

Mr. Lotson stated yes. Since the last meeting, the petitioner has provided more information which has given staff more to work with. Based on the conditions recommended, particularly to the number of cars, this is something that is enforceable by the City.

Motion

Approval with conditions of the request to establish a vehicle sale, rentals and leasing establishment at 2301

Montgomery Street.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Wayne Noha

Second: Travis Coles

W. Lee Smith	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Ruel Joyner	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Aye

[11. ZONING MAP AMENDMENT | Ogeechee Road Multifamily | Rezone request from PUD-BC to R-3-25 | File No. Z-0921-000173](#)

📎 [Access Easement Agmt to Enterprise Bank 8-15-18.pdf](#)

📎 [Access Points.pdf](#)

📎 [Maps Combined.pdf](#)

📎 [Context Aerial.pdf](#)

📎 [Development Progress.pdf](#)

📎 [Staff Report 0173.pdf](#)

Mr. Marcus Lotson, Director of Development Services, stated the petitioner is proposing to rezone a portion of a tract of land from PUD-B-C (Planned Urban Development - Community Business) to R-3-25 (multifamily residential). This petition was continued from the October 12, 2021 MPC meeting, so the applicant could meet with the Chatham County Department of Engineering. The purpose of the meeting was to address issues that were raised during the hearing, related to access onto Chatham Parkway and stormwater management. The applicant met with staff on Wednesday, October 20th. The primary concern of staff was the development review process should this property be annexed into the City of Savannah. If the property is annexed prior to development, the City of Savannah would be responsible for review of development plans, including the issues of stormwater management and access. Chatham County indicated a desire to be included in the review process, because of potential impacts on County maintained infrastructure. The applicant consents to enter into an agreement with Chatham County that would ensure the requested review.

The subject property is located in the southwest quadrant of the intersection of Ogeechee Road and Chatham Parkway. The parent tract is 30.45 acres in size and the proposed portion to be rezoned is 20 acres in the southern section of the parcel. The dividing line is an existing County canal. The subject portion is bounded on the south by a rail line and does not abut any existing uses. The petitioner's stated intent is to develop the subject properties as a residential apartment community. The R-3 zoning district allows one- family, two-family and multifamily residential as well as certain civic uses, churches, and schools. Density is calculated as buildable area which would eliminate approximately five acres due to existing wetlands and approximately 15% of the remainder for parking, streets, landscaping, and stormwater management. The balance of land in this scenario would be 12-13 acres. The number of residential units is likely to range between 250 – 325. Because a site plan has not been presented for review at this time, the number of achievable lots is not guaranteed but cannot exceed the approved

density for the site.

The proposal includes rezoning only a portion of the lot and maintaining the commercial zoning adjacent to existing commercial development. Commercial and residential development in the Ogeechee Road and Chatham Parkway corridors have increased in recent years as the western portion of the county continues to grow. There have been at least five rezoning requests for multifamily residential in the corridors over the last 3 years. This is due in part to the availability of large tracts of land and commercial services in the area.

The subject property is currently zoned commercial, which would allow uses such as grocery stores, hotels, restaurants, and retail, all of which could be developed on the remaining unchanged portion of the property. The portion proposed to be rezoned can accommodate multifamily residential. The adjacent commercial developer has entered into an agreement (**see attached access easement agreement**) to construct a vehicular access and utility easements to serve the subject property, which will have access to both Ogeechee Road and Chatham Parkway.

Based upon the existing zoning pattern and character of the area surrounding the subject property, as well as the review criteria; Staff recommends approval of the request to rezone the identified property from PUD-BC to R-3-25 with conditions.

Mr. John Rauers, Petitioner, stated they are taking a commercial piece of property and zoning it to multi family. The questions from the last meeting were pertaining to drainage and traffic flow onto Chatham Parkway. We met with the County Engineers office. They wrote a statement regarding their ability to review as well as the City with any issues regarding this property should it annex into the City. The County just completed a drainage project there that they have been involved in the past couple of years. The zoning on this property is believed to cause less traffic than it would if it was a commercial venture. This project is not designed to be intrusive to any neighborhoods. It borders a railroad track, Chatham Parkway, and Commercial ventures.

Ms. Karen Jarrett, Vice Chair, asked if this was going to be affordable housing.

Mr. Rauers stated all housing created has some aspect of affordable housing. This property is owned by a bank. They are selling it to a developer. Once the petition gets to the site plan review process, they will know what portion will be affordable housing.

Mr. Wayne Noha, Board member, asked what the adjacent property was zoned.

Mr. Lotson stated it was zoned commercial.

Mr. Noha asked if this was reviewed or approved by County staff.

Mr. Lotson stated, the language was reviewed. The language can be amended. This still goes before the County Commission for a zoning hearing. The language can be addressed there.

Ms. Melanie Wilson, Executive Director of MPC, stated, if the property was annexed after being zoned, there would still be a request made for the City to allow the County to review it.

Mr. Jay Melder, City Manager, stated, the City fully supports the condition that this property would be built to County standards. At any point should the property owner petition into annex in the City, if that ever comes, the City would also support a mandate that those be built to County standards as well. (But would appreciate the review and not the approval from the County).

Motion

Approval of the request to rezone the identified property from PUD-BC to R-3-25 with conditions.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Ruel Joyner

Second: Jay Melder

W. Lee Smith	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Ruel Joyner	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Aye

IX. Regular Business

[12. REZONING MAP AMENDMENT | 5313 Skidaway | Rezone from RSF-10 to O-I | File No. 21-004900](#)

- 📎 [Maps.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Pic.pdf](#)
- 📎 [21-0136C_C01_DRIVEWAY_CONCEPT.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Letters of Suppprt Neighborhood Assn.pdf](#)
- 📎 [5313 Skidaway- DRIVE PERMIT.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Residential Conversions.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Staff Report 5313 Skidaway.pdf](#)

Mr. Marcus Lotson, Director of Development Services, stated the petitioner is requesting to rezone the subject property from RSF-10 (Single Family Residential) to O-I (Office – Institutional). The stated purpose of the rezoning is to convert the exiting building into an office for use by the applicant.

As required by the City of Savannah Zoning Ordinance, all property owners within 300 feet of the subject property were sent notices of the proposed rezoning. Public notice was also posted on site. Staff received one letter of opposition (attached) from the property owner at 2035 East DeRenne Avenue. This is the first residence on the south side of DeRenne Avenue west of Skidaway Road.

The subject site is at the northwest corner of the intersection of two arterial streets, DeRenne Avenue and Skidaway Road. The corner lots off the intersecting streets are developed with retail, personal service shops, and institutional uses. While there are residences that abut Skidaway Road and DeRenne Avenue in the general vicinity, the subject property is the only residence at this intersection. 5313 Skidaway Road is a part of the Forest Park (formerly Forest Hills) neighborhood. The neighborhood extends from Skidaway Road to the Truman Parkway and consists largely of single-family residences but does include Jenkins High School, Low Elementary School, and a small number of other non-residential uses. On Skidaway Road, there are examples of former residences that have converted into nonresidential uses including daycares, hair salon, medical service, and a tennis academy. Non-residential uses are not as prevalent on DeRenne east of the Truman Parkway (*see attached document*). Often, increased vehicular traffic in close proximity to single family residential uses result's in increased redevelopment pressure for the conversion of homes into non-residential uses. That pattern is present, but not significant along DeRenne Avenue and Skidaway Road.

Within the Office uses of the Zoning Ordinance there are three categories, OI-T (Office Institutional-

Transition) O-I (Office Institutional) and OI-E (Office – Institutional – Extend). Each with an increased level of intensity and corresponding development standards. The intent statement of the O-I zoning district indicates that it is established to allow uses that are compatible with an office environment. The subject property would represent an isolated example of office use as it relates to the properties most immediately adjacent.

The OI-T district allows fewer non-residential uses and is intended to "...facilitate the orderly transition of properties originally developed for residential [use](#) to limited nonresidential uses. These properties are located in areas where increased automobile traffic, [road](#) widening or other factors have diminished residential viability, resulting in the need for a transitional area to buffer surrounding residential properties." If a zoning change is recommended, the OI-T district would be a more compatible option. In addition, single family residential is a permitted use in the OI-T district which would allow the property to remain conforming should it not be converted to an office.

The OI-E district is reserved for major complexes such as hospitals, universities, and office parks.

The subject property is in an area that is developed with a mix of institutional, office, retail, and residential uses. Skidaway Road and DeRenne Avenue are two of the primary thoroughfares to reach the islands, southside Savannah, hospitals, shopping, Truman Parkway and other destinations throughout Chatham County and Savannah. There are many examples of residential conversion in the area and on similarly trafficked roadways such as Montgomery Crossroads, Waters Avenue and White Bluff Road.

Based upon the character of the area surrounding the subject property, as well as the review criteria; Staff recommends denial of the O-I (Office – Institutional) zoning district and approval of the OI-T (Office Institutional - Transition) zoning district subject to conditions.

Mr. Ron Walker, represents the seller of the property, and Ms. Rebecca Holcomb, Broker/Owner of Neighborhood Realty, the petitioner, stated on a residential standpoint, it is very difficult to find a buyer for the property on a corner like this. It is best suited for commercial use of some sort. There is a solution to parking, being able to come in on both sides of the road. This will be a small real estate office operating there.

Mr. Wayne Noha, Board Member, stated, his concern with the parking is where the actual entrance to the property. If you are going North on Skidaway Road, you will have to cross two lanes of traffic to get into the tight, singular drive coming in. There is more concern entering and exiting the property.

Mr. Lotson stated, this exhibit was created based on discussions with the Traffic Engineer. However, MPC staff recommendation is the final approval be granted by them prior to occupation of the building. (This may or may not be the final layout).

Mr. Jay Melder, City Manager, asked if the petitioner was agreeable to the Office Institutional Transition zoning rather than Office Institutional.

Ms. Holcomb stated yes. If that was the recommendation, then that was acceptable.

Mr. Joseph Welch, Chairman, asked if the 6 ft fence would be going across the back of the property.

Mr. Lotson stated it would going across the two adjacent property lines.

Ms. Karen Jarrett, Vice Chair, asked if the petitioner was going to make sure there is site distances for those intersecting driveways.

Mr. Lotson stated, yes, that will be part of the Traffic Engineers review of the driveway cuts.

Ms. Jarrett, stated, she was concerned this area is headed in the same direction as Montgomery Crossroads, where there are several little places being rezoned.

Mr. Welch, stated, he agrees with Ms. Jarrett, but that seems to be common now. This particular property location and it's difficulty getting in and out, will be more likely to be used rezoned.

Mr. Ruel Joyner, Board member, stated he agrees with the petitioner in that this property is going to be hard to sell as residential. The OI-T gives the freedom to be able to do both. The property rights of the owner are not being infringed upon. The neighborhood presidents are in support of the rezoning of this property.

Motion

Approval, based upon the character of the area surrounding the subject property, as well as the review criteria; denial of the O-I (Office; Institutional) zoning district and approval of the OI-T (Office Institutional - Transition) zoning district subject with conditions:

Final approval of vehicular access plan by the City of Savannah Traffic Engineer.

Erection of a 6-foot privacy fence where the subject property abuts another residentially zoned property.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Ruel Joyner

W. Lee Smith	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Ruel Joyner	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Aye

[13. SPECIAL USE PERMIT | 2110 Montgomery Street, Suite A | Packaged Alcohol Sales | File No. 21-005177-ZA](#)

- 📎 [AERIAL MAP 21-005177-ZA.pdf](#)
- 📎 [FLU MAP 21-005177-ZA.pdf](#)
- 📎 [LABEL MAP 21-005177-ZA.pdf](#)
- 📎 [VICINITY MAP 21-005177-ZA.pdf](#)
- 📎 [ZONING MAP 21-005177-ZA.pdf](#)
- 📎 [SITE VISIT.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Application.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Letter of objection 1.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Staff Report.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Letter of Objection 2.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Letter of Objection 3.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Letter of Objection 4.pdf](#)
- 📎 [Letter of Objection 5.pdf](#)

[Letter of Objection 6.pdf](#)

Motion

Approval to move the petition to the November 23, 2021 MPC Meeting.

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Travis Coles

Second: Wayne Noha

W. Lee Smith	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Ruel Joyner	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Aye

[14. REZONING MAP AMENDMENT | Dean Forest Road | Rezone from R-A to I-L | File No. Z-1021-000175](#)

[Maps Combined.pdf](#)

[Aerial.pdf](#)

[Aerial 2.pdf](#)

[Municipal Boundaries.pdf](#)

[Staff Report Dean Forest Rd.pdf](#)

Mr. Marcus Lotson, Director of Development Services, stated the petitioner is proposing to rezone a 2.9-acre tract of land from R-A (Residential – Agriculture) to I-L (Light Industrial). The subject property is located in the northwest quadrant of the intersection of Dean Forest Road and Landfill Road in Unincorporated Chatham County. The municipal boundary with Garden City is at Dean Forest Road, the City of Savannah boundary is south of the subject property, and the property abuts an existing industrial use immediately north which is owned by the applicant.

The petitioner is requesting to rezone the subject property to the I-L classification for the purpose of developing a light industrial warehouse use. The development pattern in the vicinity includes a municipal landfill, a 350,000 square foot warehouse and a hauling operation. The proposed zoning and the uses permitted in that district are consistent with this pattern and compatible with the area.

Based upon the existing zoning pattern and character of the area surrounding the subject property, as well as the review criteria; staff recommends approval of the request to rezone the identified property from R-A (residential Agriculture) to I-L (Light Industrial).

Mr. Bill Hussey, Petitioner, stated they want to get the property rezoned to be able to use within their business in the same manner as everything else in that area.

Mr. Wayne Noha, Board member, asked if the Landfill Road is a public road or private? If its private will this property have access to that road?

Mr. Lotson stated it is a private road. The applicant will have to seek access to that road through the private property owner.

Motion

Approval of the request to rezone the identified property from R-A (residential Agriculture) to I-L (Light Industrial).

Vote Results (Approved)

Motion: Ruel Joyner

Second: Travis Coles

W. Lee Smith	- Aye
Travis Coles	- Aye
Joseph Welch	- Aye
Karen Jarrett	- Aye
Dwayne Stephens	- Aye
Wayne Noha	- Aye
Ruel Joyner	- Aye
Laureen Boles	- Aye
Elizabeth Epstein	- Aye
Jay Melder	- Aye

X. Presentations

[15. Forsyth Park Master Plan Presentation \(Draft\) - Ellen Harris](#)

Ms. Ellen Harris, Ethos Preservation, gave a presentation of the Forsyth Park Master Plan Draft. This is a plan that is prepared by the Friends at Forsyth, in partnership with the City of Savannah. Nelson Bird Wolfe Landscape Architects was the prime consultant for the project. There are several things that are a part of the plan besides the Master Plan itself: Timelines, Topographical Survey, which is the first one to ever be done for Forsyth Park, Tree Survey, Preservation Inventory, Project Phasing Recommendations which will include cost estimates, etc.

We are towards the end of the process. We began with a discovery phase and received feedback from over 2000 members of the community. We moved into the design option phase and received feedback from 2500 community members. Now we are in the final design phase, finalizing the Master Plan and reaching out again to engage community members.

During the inventory of historic resources phase, we found that certain portions of the Park had higher degrees of historic integrity. Some parts with less, usually due to additional structures and facilities that have been added. Because the Park is considered historic landscape, there are additional historic features that typically are not thought of (view sheds and circulation patterns). Iconic views of the Fountain are important to preserve as well.

Initially, there were two design options presented in the early phases. We asked which parts of each of the ideas the community like the most. Three things rose to the top: Additional bathrooms at the South end of the park, biking and jogging paths, separate from pedestrian path, and keeping parking in it's current location was preferred. Most responses, as expected, were from zip codes closest to the Park. We did receive responses from just about every zip code in the City. There was additional community feedback received that will be included in the Master Plan, which included additional drinking fountains, additional seating, better lighting, more trash cans, and bike deterrence at the North and South ends of the central spine.

Getting to this point, we worked with a lot of different organizations including neighborhood organizations, historic preservation groups, Rotary Clubs, business along the park, and technical advisory groups (including almost all departments in the City of Savannah).

The proposed Master Plan calls for additional bathrooms at the South end, clustering some of the existing buildings at that end. The basketball courts would move to the West slightly to allow for an additional playground at the South end with a water feature. That area will become a community gathering space. The parking stays as is. The tennis courts stay as is (they will be resurfaced and improved). A potential place holder for a new monument or public art located along the central spine. The Master Plan does not dictate what that should be, that is a community initiative in the future. The Fragrant Garden would be restored to provide ADA access, fresh planting, a new shade garden and a children's garden. The Band Shell would be redesigned and revamped with improvements. A dedicated bike and jogging lane separated around the parameter of the Park. The lighting will be enhanced.

Ms. Karen Jarrett, Vice Chair, stated concern about the water feature play area and the rotary playground area being separated and parents struggling which way to go with multiple children wanting to play in separate areas at the same time.

Ms. Harris stated, where the two playgrounds are currently located across from each other, has been problematic for parents trying to keep an eye on both playgrounds at the same time. It creates a pinch point within the center of the park, where there is a lot of activity. By moving it to the South, we think its far enough that you will not have children running back and forth from one to the other. They will each be individual destinations.

Ms. Jarrett, expressed her concern regarding two lanes on Whitaker and two lanes on Drayton. Both tend to be raceways and a safety concern for pedestrians.

Mr. Joseph Welch, Chairman, expressed his concern with the playground being close to the basketball court, and the physical aggression (fights) and language that tends to happen on basketball courts.

Ms. Harris stated this was a frequent comment received from the community. They are still working on solutions to this concern.

Mr. Ruel Joyner, Board member, said to make sure the area is lit up well, so families feel safe to go there in the evening, as well as daylight. Add security cameras for extra safety.

Mr. Jay Melder, City Manager, asked, did the planning give any discussion or recommendations for the City about general connectivity to the Park and how the Park is connected to the surrounding neighborhoods?

Ms. Harris stated, one of the challenges of accessing the Park is the topography of the actual roads themselves as they connect. It can be very difficult for bicyclists, people in wheelchairs, and people with strollers to navigate the really deep ruts found along Whitaker and Drayton Streets. We are recommending improvements along those intersections, to make sure they are ADA accessible in that regard.

Mr. Travis Coles, Secretary, asked if consideration has been made about putting a single story, underground garage under those two fields. There is opportunity where people could actually enter the Park from within the Park, instead of having to cross Whitaker and Drayton. It would be single story away from the roots of the oak trees. There is a huge amount of space that could accommodate anyone visiting the Park for any event. More specifically, in the layout, did you allow for entrance and exit for potential development of a garage?

Ms. Harris stated, nothing they are doing in terms of their planning would prevent that from happening in the future.

Mr. Joyner suggested finding hardy grass for the area. This will prevent people trying to get applications for the use of Forsyth and not able to due to the grass. Make this useable for everyone to get a lot of return on investment.

Ms. Loreen Boles, Board member, asked what the main thought around opposition to improve East /West access?

Ms. Harris stated there was an archway proposed in the original plan to connect the East / West and it was felt that would change the character of the park to a degree that was too much. There is still East/West access, particularly in the middle and both the East and West ends.

Mr. Wayne Noha, Board member, asked what is the timeframe for the remainder of the plan?

Ms. Harris stated the plan will be taken to City Council later this year, possibly early next year. This is a Master Plan, so this is a long term project. The funding for all of the projects has not been secured and will likely occur over a period of time. We are looking over a 50 year range.

[16. AMENDED GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN | 4704 Ogeechee Road | 21-000432](#)

📎 [Plan.pdf](#)

📎 [Letter of Agreement.pdf](#)

Mr. Marcus Lotson, Director of Development Services, stated this Amended General Development Plan is an item that will be coming before the Commission for action at a future meeting. This is a project that has been ongoing for a number of years now. This project is a Borrow Pit, soon to be a former Borrow Pit, in which the applicant purchased from the previous Borrow Pit operator. Their intention, what they are working toward now, and have made some strides toward, is developing the front portion of the property along Ogeechee Rd. for warehouse space. The seller would not agree to the sale, unless the buyers bought the entire property (which they did). They have made a number of changes to donate property, to conserve property, and do other things to turn this from an eye sore into a usable piece of property.

A number of years ago the MPC approved a General Development Plan for this property. That included some conditions the applicant address. They will be requesting to amend this plan to accommodate what they will be discussing.

Mr. Harold Yellin, on behalf of the petitioner Pier Rock, stated there has been an approved Borrow Pit on this site since 2000. There have been several issues, not only visual issues, but compliance issues with the prior use. The petitioner is moving toward the closure of the Borrow Pit. Under NewZO, we have to come before the MPC Board to discuss the closure. This is brand new. Previously a Borrow Pit was handled as a building permitting issue. This property was rezoned in 2020. The "light" industrial only on the front piece of the property. The staff report noted that the petition will serve as a catalyst to improve a site that has been unimproved for many years. It said that a rezoning to light industrial will not impact nearby properties because of industrial uses already East and West of the site. The proposed zoning was consistent with the development patterns in the area. The best part of this zoning petition involves something unprecedented. We were only rezoning 61.67 acres, the part on Highway 17. There was an enormous amount of surplus property. We will be deeding approximately 36 acres to the neighbors. Ten (10) acres would go to the City of Savannah, 216 acres would go to the Savannah Wildlife Rescue Center. As a result of this, we have received letters of support from every adjoining property owner and from Ms. Patterson, the Director of the Savannah Wildlife Rescue Center.

The general development plan presents only two matters that are appropriate for discussion. One, the fencing, if it should go around the Borrow Pit in light of the fact that the entire area around it will be the Savannah Wildlife Rescue Center. Second, sloping requirements, we think should follow the requirements of the GA EPD, not the new language that appears in NewZO.

Mr. Jeff Jepson, EVP & COO of Evans General Contractors, stated they have been working diligently with all parties involved. All of the neighbors are satisfied, we have actually deeded a lot of property specifically to owners. In addition to their support, they have agreed to significant buffers when we went through rezoning. The buffers from the industrial, including the 100ft that they are donating to neighbors in certain areas, puts us at 300ft. According to NewZO, the buffer between residential and industrial is typically 40ft (and they are up to 300ft). This provides a great area for landscaping and tree preservation. The issue is, because they were forced to buy this from the last owners, there was a pit operator that had been operating this property for years, Rob Lee with Lanyard Development. Rob has owned and operated more Borrow Pits in Savannah and Chatham County than any other operator. He has done all of those under the requirements that are regulated and permitted and closed out by EPD. EPD regularly visits the site, he applies with their standards. He is completing this work and closing this out under a handshake.

There was no contract with the last owners and there is no contract with the new owners. His request was, it is important to close this out consistent to what we have already closed out 95% of Borrow Pit activities here.

Those specific elements are fencing around the Borrow Pit. The majority of the property is being donated to the Savannah Wildlife Rescue Center, so access to the water is important to the animals they rescue. In terms of benching and sloping, there is a requirement that is typically seen in and around residential developments when you have a slope. You apply a 3 to 1 slope, which is what they are doing here. In the event that somebody falls in, there is a safety measure that people have said "Let's consider putting a bench or a flat area about 4ft under the water that goes out for a period of time in case someone falls in, they can stand up". That is not a requirement for the State. This is an extremely deep pit. In order to do that it would require draining all of the work that has already been closed out with EPD. The request is, how do we deal with that issue? We have met with the City of Savannah, we have met with Julie McClain and the compliance officer, Kevin Middleton. We have negotiated back and forth with language and documents, etc. They agreed with what we presented but said the appropriate forum for these variances would be this particular forum, not City Council.

Ms. Karen Jarett, Vice Chair, stated she understands there is a deep pit and putting a bench in would be prohibitive, but what about reducing the slope? Are the properties around this pit industrial? The concern is children being able to access the area where the slopes are steeper.

Mr. Jefferson said those areas are industrial properties. There are fences in areas, but there have been people that violate those fences. People can access the property directly across the undeveloped land. In the future, the area will be all fenced. There are a few residential lots in the area, those residents are in support of this project. They are gaining land, as well as there has been agreements of extensive buffers.

Mr. Ruel Joyner, Board member, asked how deep Borrow Pits are?

Mr. Jefferson stated, a Borrow Pit will be as deep as there is productive, good quality soil. They could go as deep as 60-70ft. They backfill the Borrow Pits with dirt to achieve a 3 to 1 slope that is inspected by EPD. A lot of times, these Borrow Pits will be completely filled back in with unsuitable dirt from various construction sites. According to the Borrow Pit operator, there could be areas in this Borrow Pit as deep as 20ft. The pond only looks to be 4-5ft because it has been filled back in. There is an area in the back corner that is not accessible, and remains around 20ft. The Savannah Fire Department has asked if they can come out and use this area for their dive training.

Mr. Joseph Welch, Chairman, asked if there was a school anywhere near the area?

Mr. Jefferson said Gould Elementary was in the area.

Ms. Elizabeth Epstein, Board member, stated they will be decommissioning Gould Elementary in 2023.

Mr. Jay Melder, City Manager, asked, in regards to the property to be deeded to the City of Savannah, will you be working with David Keating to explore the issue?

Mr. Jefferson said yes.

Ms. Lauren Boles, Board member, asked what the slope requirements are under NewZO versus what is being requested here.

Mr. Lotson said the requirements that were part of the original General Development Plan approval were that the property be sloped at a 3 to 1 ratio. What the applicant is requesting is that the whole project be closed out consistent with the EPD standards. When this was done in 2010, it was unusual at that time to include something like slopes. It was approved at a 3 to 1 ratio. The petitioner is asking to remove that requirement, so the Borrow Pit can be closed out in conjunction with EPD standards.

Mr. Chad Zittrauer, with Kern & Co., stated, the issue is 3 to 1 is the same at the first 4ft below the water table and the City of Savannah standards and in EPD standards. The difference is City of Savannah standards are established based upon the final water elevation, Everything here is pumped down on this Borrow Pit, so there really is no a way to establish the final water elevation. Once we get

passed the 3 to 1, the City of Savannah allows us to increase those slopes going to a 3 to 2 in the next 5ft and then a 1 to 1 down below that. That complies with the City standards. The issue above the water table is Savannah actually requires a 6 to 1 slope. Because we do not know where that final water table is, it is difficult for the contractor and code enforcement to establish/know where that line will be. We are asking for the variance just to comply with EPD's requirements, 3 to 1 all the way around and everything is closed out from that standard (and we are not guessing where that water table is). Currently, regulations do require going in and do soil borings currently in order to determine where that is, the issue with this property is, it slopes about 20ft from front to back from an elevation standpoint. This was not done in 2000, when the initial permit was issued. We are having issues with determining where is that final water elevation.

Mr. Wayne Noha, Board member, asked what percentage of the project has already been closed out as far as slope?

Mr. Zittrauer said EPD has closed out approximately 90%.

XI. Other Business

XII. Adjournment

17. Adjourn

There being no further business to present before the Board, the November 2, 2021 Regular Metropolitan Planning Commission Meeting adjourned at 3:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Melanie Wilson
Executive Director
MW/sh

The Chatham County - Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission provides meeting minutes which are adopted by the respective Board. Verbatim transcripts of minutes are the responsibility of the interested party.