

TOWN COUNCIL

STAFF REPORT

Department of Growth Management



MEETING DATE:	April 9, 2024
PROJECT:	ZONE-02-24-018921 A request by Nathan Sturre of Sturre Engineering on behalf of the property owners Cornerstone Church of Bluffton and Lalie Ann Mole, for approval of an amendment to the Town of Bluffton Zoning Map to rezone two (2) parcels from Planned Unit Development (PUD) to a mix of Agricultural (AG) and Rural Mixed Use (RMU). The subject parcels consist of approximately 43.31 acres and are identified by tax map numbers R610 036 000 0014 0000 and R610 036 000 014B 0000 located south of May River Road approximately 600 feet east of Stardust Lane.
PROJECT MANAGER:	Kevin Icard, Director of Growth Management

REQUEST: The Applicant, Nathan Sturre of Sturre Engineering, on behalf of the property owners Cornerstone Church of Bluffton and Lalie Ann Mole, is requesting approval of a Zoning Map Amendment. The two subject parcels total +/- 43.31 acres and are identified by Beaufort County Tax Map Numbers R610 036 000 0014 0000 and R610 036 000 014B 0000 (Attachment 2).

The Applicant is requesting an amendment to the Official Zoning Map for the Town of Bluffton to rezone the two (2) parcels from Planned Unit Development (PUD) to a mix of Agricultural (AG) and Rural Mixed Use (RMU) zoning designations. The subject properties are currently zoned Planned Unit Development (PUD) and regulated by the Mindstream Academy Planned Unit Development (Attachment 3).

INTRODUCTION: The Applicant proposes to rezone the southern portion of Parcel R610 036 000 0014 0000 (11 Grassey Lane) to the AG zone district. Due to the proximity of the northern portion of 11 Grassey Lane to the May River Road (SC 46) corridor, the Applicant proposes to subdivide this +/- 7.0 acres into its own parcel zoned RMU. The Applicant also proposes to rezone the 2.1-acre Parcel R610 036 000 014B 0000 (21 Lake Lane) to the AG zone district (Attachment 4). The application includes a Use Comparison Table that provides a comparison of uses allowed under the currently zoned Mindstream PUD and the proposed zone districts (Attachment 5).

BACKGROUND: Initially approved by Beaufort County and developed in accordance with Beaufort County's Zoning and Development Standards Ordinance (ZDSO), the properties contains approximately 98,000 square feet of existing buildings, which include an equestrian center, dormitory building, maintenance facility, multiple classrooms, and several accessory structures. In addition to these buildings, a 7.87-acre pond, several pasture areas, outdoor gathering spaces, and numerous significant trees are located throughout the site.

On July 20, 2010, Bluffton Town Council approved the Annexation Petition, Tulfinney PUD Zoning Map Amendment, and associated Initial Master Plan with the following conditions:

- Phase 1 can operate under the current business structure using the existing structure up to 32 occupants;
- Phase 2 (future development) land use and density program will be determined upon a Planning Commission meeting and a Neighborhood meeting prior to Town Council approval.

On April 12, 2011, after having held the required meetings, Town Council approved the now renamed Mindstream Academy PUD Zoning Map Amendment and Initial Master Plan as presented. The approved master plan included a Future Development Plan Exhibit (Attachment 6).

As a requirement for this zoning map amendment request, a Planning Commission Workshop was held on February 28, 2024. This request is on the agenda as a public hearing item and for consideration of a recommendation to Town Council. As of March 19, 2024, Town Staff has received six (6) public comment inquiries (Attachment 9).

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION: The Town of Bluffton Planning Commission voted unanimously at the March 27, 2024, meeting to recommend to Town Council to approve the Cornerstone Church Campus Zoning Map Amendment.

REVIEW CRITERIA & ANALYSIS: The Planning Commission and Town Council shall consider the criteria set forth in Section 3.4.3 of the Unified Development Ordinance in assessing an application for a Zoning Map Amendment. The applicable criteria are provided below followed by Staff Finding(s) based upon review of the application submittals to date. Pages 8-10 of the narrative submitted with the Applicant's Zoning Map Amendment application includes a section that describes compliance with the below referenced review criteria 1-5 (Attachment 2).

- 1. Section 3.4.3.A. Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan or, if conditions have changed since the Comprehensive Plan was adopted, consistency with the overall intent of the Comprehensive Plan, recent development trends and the general character of the area.**

Finding. The request is consistent with Blueprint Bluffton, The Town's Comprehensive Plan.

The Future Land Use Plan presented in the Comprehensive Plan identifies the subject properties as Residential Estate uses (Attachment 7). As described in the Comprehensive Plan, this category is intended to maintain existing rural character, decrease environmental impacts, and reduce traffic volumes.

- 2. Section 3.4.3.B. Capability of the site's physical, geological, hydrological and other environmental features to support the breadth and intensity of uses that could be developed in the proposed zoning district.**

Finding. The site can support the breadth and intensity of uses that could be developed in the proposed zoning district.

The requested rezoning restricts uses permitted in the Rural Mixed Use (RMU) Zone District to a 7.0-acre section that fronts on May River Road. The remainder of the subject parcels will be within the Agricultural (AG) Zone District (Attachment 4). Per the Town's Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) the character of the RMU Zone District is "low-intensity, mixed-use development", and the character of the AG Zone District is "Agricultural; rural residential at very low densities".

Furthermore, a Use Comparison Table provided by the Applicant demonstrates that the requested zone districts represent a significant down-zoning from the uses currently allowed in the Mindstream PUD (Attachment 5). It should also be noted that all the permitted uses allowed under the Mindstream PUD are allowed anywhere within the areas identified as "undeveloped land" on the Mindstream Future Development Map (Attachment 5).

3. Section 3.4.3.C. Compatibility of all the potential uses allowed in the proposed zoning district with surrounding uses and zoning districts in terms of suitability of location, impacts on the environment, noise, density, nature of use, traffic impacts, aesthetics, ability to develop adjacent properties under existing zoning, and potential influence on property values.

Finding. The potential uses allowed in the proposed zoning districts are compatible with surrounding uses and zoning districts in terms of suitability of location, impacts on the environment, noise, density, nature of use, traffic impacts, aesthetics, ability to develop adjacent properties under existing zoning, and potential influence on property values.

The rear 36.3 acres, representing over 83% of the subject property, is restricted to the AG Zone District. Uses allowed within this district have minimal impacts regarding environment, noise, density, nature of use, and aesthetics. The remainder of the subject property is located nearest May River Road and is restricted to uses allowed within the RMU Zone District. Similarly, uses allowed within this district have minimal impacts regarding environment, noise, density, nature of use, and aesthetics. Some of the uses currently allowed within the Mindstream PUD, such as grocery stores and vehicle sales, are not allowed in either of the proposed zone districts.

A Traffic Impact Study prepared in October 2023 is included as part of this zoning map amendment request (Attachment 8). Section 5 of the traffic study provides summary findings and recommendations based on build-out traffic volumes of the church and a day care. Based on the anticipated build out volumes, a left-turn lane and right-turn lane are warranted and recommended along SC 46 at Meadow Drive. The mainline of the existing intersection of SC 46 & Meadow Drive is expected to operate adequately with the proposed project in the 2025 Build conditions. The Meadow Drive approach is expected to experience delays; however this is typical of minor approaches of two-way stop-controlled intersections. Consistent with the Town's development process, any future developed proposed within the RMU Zone District would require a similar traffic impact study based on anticipated traffic volumes.

4. Section 3.4.3.D. Capacity of public infrastructure and services to sufficiently accommodate all potential uses allowed in the proposed district without compromising the public health, safety and welfare of the Town of Bluffton.

Finding. Public infrastructure and services are sufficient to accommodate all potential uses allowed in the proposed zone districts without compromising the public health, safety, and welfare of the Town of Bluffton.

The existing infrastructure including Dominion Energy electric service, Hargray Communications service, private well and private septic system are adequate to serve the proposed Religious Assembly use for the site. Any future development would be required to meet applicable BJWSA sewer and water requirements. Currently, BJWSA infrastructure is available for the site along Stardust Lane, located approximately 1,000 feet north of the front proposed RMU acreage and approximately 3,200 feet north of the back proposed AG acreage.

5. Section 3.4.3.E. Public need for the potential uses permitted in the requested zoning district.

Finding. There is public need for the potential uses permitted in the requested zone districts.

The Current Growth Framework Map presented in the Comprehensive Plan identifies the subject properties as being situated along a Character Preservation Corridor (May River Road) and between two “place types”; a Town Center Node located at the Okatie Highway/May River Road intersection, and a Rural Crossroad Node located at the Gibbet Road/May River Road intersection (Attachment 10). The intent of the map is to encourage future growth based on “place types” that are considerate of the Town’s “natural resources, historic fabric, diverse housing, access to nature, mixed-use activity centers, street network and neighborhood structure.” The requested AG and RMU zone districts support the preservation of existing rural corridors and gateways by limiting future development to a short list of rural-type uses.

In addition, Cornerstone Church offers numerous community recreation and institutional opportunities which will be a direct benefit to the community. Cornerstone Church has adamantly planned through this process to provide regular community events and opportunities for the adjacent property owners to also enjoy and utilize the property.

6. Section 3.4.3.F. The application must comply with applicable requirements in the Applications Manual.

Finding. The application has been reviewed by Town Staff and has been determined to be complete.

TOWN COUNCIL ACTION: Town Council has the authority to take the following action:

- Approve the application as submitted by the Applicant; or
- Deny the application as submitted by the Applicant.

Zoning Map Amendment Procedure	Step Completed	Date Completed
Step 1. Pre-Application Meeting	✓	June 6, 2023
Step 2. Application Check-In Meeting	✓	January 31, 2024
Step 3. Planning Commission Workshop	✓	February 28, 2024
Step 4. Planning Commission Public Hearing and Recommendation	✓	March 27, 2024
Step 5. Town Council Ordinance 1 st Reading	✓	April 9, 2024
Step 6. Town Council Public Hearing and Ordinance 2 nd /Final Reading	✓	May 14, 2024

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Town Council Presentation
2. Application and Project Narrative
3. Zoning Map
4. Proposed Zoning
5. Use Comparison Table
6. Mindstream PUD Future Development Plan
7. Future Land Use Map
8. Traffic Impact Study - October 2023
9. Public Comment Received
10. Growth Framework Map
11. Zoning Map Amendment Ordinance
12. Suggested Motion