

## Staff Report

**Subject:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading – Zoning Map Amendment  
**Author:** Kimberly Barlett, Community Planner  
**Department:** Development Services  
**Meeting Date:** June 17, 2024

**Item Description:** **Gilvan and Shannon Valim** requests a **conditional use** to allow for an **Agritourism Business** in AR-1. Located 1383 George Hurst Road. **[Map# 223 Parcel# 8]**

### Executive Summary/Background

- The request for a Conditional Use is a requirement of Appendix C – Zoning Ordinance, Article V – Uses permitted in Districts.
- The applicant requests a conditional use for an Agritourism Business located at 1383 George Hurst Road.
- This parcel is currently zoned AR-1 and is surrounded by AR-1 zoned parcels.
- A site plan and business narrative have been provided per the Effingham County Code of Ordinance, **Part II- Official Code, Appendix C – Zoning Ordinance, Article V – Uses Permitted in Districts, Section 5.1.2.13 – Agritourism Business.**
- Per the Agritourism Business ordinance, examples of uses permitted include the following
  - On-farm sales
  - Pick your own.
  - Agricultural crafts/ gift sales
  - Fee fishing/ hunting
  - Wildlife viewing and photography.
  - Equine-related activities
  - Wagon rides
  - School tours
  - Garden/ Nursery tours
  - Farm Technical Demonstrations and sales (canning, weaving, soap-making, etc.)
  - Winery tastings or tours
  - Corn mazes
  - Haunted attractions
  - Small, private zoological attractions or sanctuaries
  - Christmas tree farms

This operation's purpose is Hope Ranch Zoo. The facility will include educational tours, hands-on animal encounters, and interactive farm-based learning activities for the public. Its mission is to bridge the gap between the public and the agricultural community, promoting appreciation for rural heritage. This endeavor supports local economic development by creating tourism opportunities, increasing traffic to nearby businesses, and creating jobs.

Designated parking areas are to accommodate approximately 150 standard spaces, including 2 Large Van ADA-accessible spaces, compliant with county and federal accessibility requirements. . Parking will be organized to avoid overflow onto nearby properties.

The adjacent properties are primarily zoned as Agricultural (AR-1), with surrounding areas being used for farming, timber, or residential purposes.

Approximately 10 acres of the property will be used for agritourism purposes, including animal enclosures, barns, arena space, a gift shop, and parking for guests.

All operations will be conducted during reasonable daytime hours, and buffers such as fencing and natural landscaping will be used to maintain privacy

The zoo is open to the public seven days a week from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. The first tour begins at 10:00 AM and the last tour starts at 4:00 PM. Tour hours are adjusted seasonally for daylight savings or for special events.

The applicant anticipates an average of 50–75 visitors per day, with higher numbers during weekends and holidays.

### **Determination**

Staff has reviewed the application, and is complete with the following conditions:

1. The applicant shall obtain, and keep in good standing, an Effingham County Occupational Tax Certificate (business license).
2. The applicant shall obtain and maintain the required USDA license and Georgia Game and Wildlife License.
3. Follow all applicable requirements of **Chapter 10 – Animals**.

**Department Review:** Development Services

**FUNDING:** N/A

**Attachments:** 1. Zoning Map Amendment