



Staff Report

Subject: Rezoning
 Author: Jennifer Rose, Planner I
 Department: Development Services
 Application: RZN-26-6
 Meeting Date: April 7, 2026

Proposed Zoning: AR-2 (Agricultural Residential; 1 acre)

Existing Zoning: AR-1 (Agricultural Residential; 5 acres)

Location: 1100 Long Bridge Road
 Map & Parcel No: 445-19A
 Commissioner District: Fifth District – Commissioner Kieffer
 Parcel Size: ±5.00 acres
 Proposed Use: Residential subdivision

Applicant/Owner: Jose Manuel Navarro Hernandez
 1100 Long Bridge Road
 Rincon, GA 31326

Rezoning Summary

<u>Item</u>	<u>Description</u>
Applicant Request:	Rezone 5 acres from AR-1 to AR-2 to allow for residential subdivision.
Location:	1100 Long Bridge Road
Proposed Use:	Residential subdivision, revised from five (5) one-acre lots to three (3) residential lots.
Future Land Use Map:	Agricultural–Residential
Staff Recommendation:	Approval with conditions based on the revised development plan and consistency with applicable standards.
Planning Board Recommendation:	Denial (March 10, 2026)



Item

Description

Key Considerations:

Reduction in density from five (5) to three (3) lots due to septic suitability and access constraints. Revised layout improves compatibility with surrounding rural development and feasibility for Environmental Health compliance.

SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting rezoning of approximately 5.00 acres from **AR-1 (Agricultural Residential; 5-acre minimum lot size)** to **AR-2 (Agricultural Residential; 1-acre minimum lot size)** to allow subdivision of the property for residential use.

The stated purpose of the request is to facilitate the creation of residential lots for family members. The original concept plan proposed five (5) one-acre lots; however, following review of site constraints—including septic suitability requirements and the need to establish a 60-foot access easement—the applicant has revised the proposal to three (3) residential lots.

This request represents an increase in allowable density from the current AR-1 zoning classification. The revised development concept reduces the overall intensity of development compared to the original proposal and is intended to better align with site limitations, infrastructure capacity, and applicable regulatory requirements.

The property is designated Agricultural-Residential on the Future Land Use Map, which supports low-density residential development within a rural context. The revised proposal maintains a development pattern that is generally consistent with this designation and the surrounding area.

EXISTING CONDITIONS:

The subject property is located along Long Bridge Road and contains approximately five (5) acres. The parcel is currently developed with one mobile home, with the remainder consisting primarily of undeveloped wooded land.

The property is served by private well and septic systems, which is typical for rural development in this area. No public water or sewer infrastructure is available to serve the site.

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Based on review of available GIS mapping and county data, no mapped wetlands or floodplains are located on the subject property. The site appears generally suitable for residential development, subject to compliance with Environmental Health requirements and other applicable development regulations.

The existing conditions reflect a rural, low-density residential and agricultural setting consistent with the surrounding area.

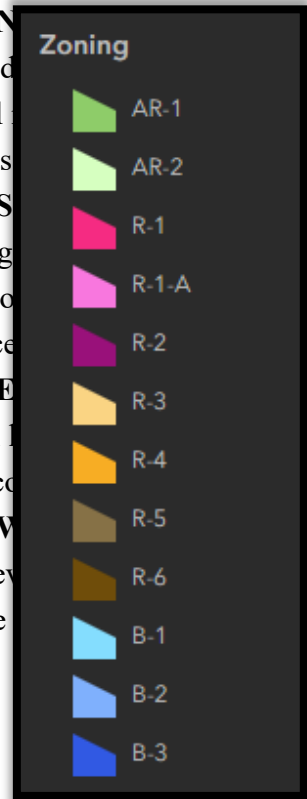
SURROUNDING DEVELOPMENT PATTERN:

The subject property is located along the Long Bridge Road corridor within a predominantly rural area characterized by agricultural uses and low-density residential development.



Directional Zoning Breakdown:

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(Zoning Map)

(Zoning Legend)

The surrounding zoning pattern is primarily AR-1, with localized pockets of R-1 and limited AR-2 zoning. While higher-density residential zoning exists in the vicinity, it is not the predominant pattern and is generally clustered in specific areas.

Development in the area is characterized by single-family homes on larger lots, agricultural uses, and undeveloped wooded tracts. The area lacks urban-level infrastructure and relies primarily on private well and septic systems.

The revised three-lot configuration maintains a development pattern that is generally consistent with the surrounding rural character  and does not introduce a level of density that is incompatible with adjacent properties.

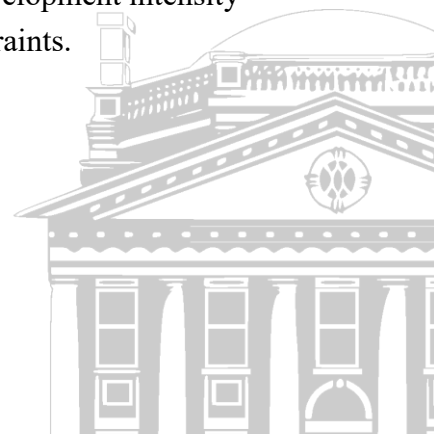
PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS:

The subject parcel contains approximately 5.00 acres. In order to facilitate subdivision, a 60-foot access easement is required, which reduces the total developable area of the site. After accounting for this easement, the remaining developable area is approximately **3.67 acres**.

The applicant's revised proposal includes the creation of three (3) residential lots, resulting in an average lot size of approximately **1.22 acres per parcel**. This represents a reduction in development intensity from the original five-lot proposal and reflects consideration of site-specific constraints.

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The reduction in lot yield improves the feasibility of accommodating private well and septic systems in compliance with Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) requirements. It also allows for more flexibility in lot layout to accommodate drain fields, reserve areas, and access improvements.

From a site planning perspective, the revised configuration provides a more appropriate balance between development potential and environmental and infrastructure limitations. The lower density reduces potential impacts related to access, septic placement, and overall site disturbance.

The applicant has indicated that a portion of the wooded area may be cleared to support future residential development. Any such activity will be subject to applicable land disturbance and permitting requirements.

Overall, the revised development plan represents a more constrained and site-responsive approach compared to the original proposal and is generally consistent with the rural character of the surrounding area.

Facts and Findings:

Site Characteristics

The subject property consists of approximately five (5) acres and includes one mobile home and predominantly wooded land. No wetlands or floodplains are identified.

Zoning Context

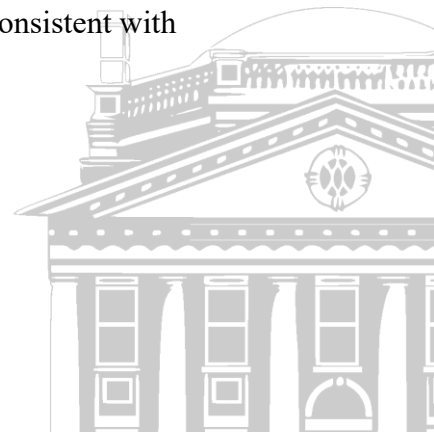
The property is currently zoned AR-1. The requested AR-2 zoning classification allows a minimum lot size of one acre, which would allow the property to be subdivided into smaller residential tracts.

While the original concept plan illustrated five one-acre lots, consultation with the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) and further evaluation of site constraints indicate that such density may not be feasible due to septic suitability requirements and the need to accommodate a 60-foot access easement.

The applicant has since revised the proposal to a three-lot subdivision. Based on the overall parcel size and required easement, the adjusted layout results in an estimated 3.67 acres of developable area, with each lot containing approximately 1.22 acres. This revised configuration is more consistent with Environmental Health requirements and typical rural development patterns.

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Infrastructure and Services

The property is accessed via Long Bridge Road and will require a 60-foot access easement for subdivision. Development will rely on private well and septic systems and must comply with Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) regulations.

The applicant has indicated that approximately four acres of wooded area may be cleared. Clearing activities exceeding county thresholds will require approval of a Land Disturbance Activity (LDA) permit prior to any land clearing.

According to the Effingham County Code of Ordinances, Section 4.1A – Permitted Use Table, the following uses are **allowed** within the **AR-2** (Agricultural – Residential, 1 acre or more) zoning district: Single-Family (fee simple), Single-Family Detached, One Additional Single-Family detached dwelling, Disaster Emergency Housing, Home Occupations, Non-Conforming Uses, Mobile Homes, Manufactured Homes, Parks, Openspace & Trails, Education Support Facilities, Fire and Rescue, Police, Emergency management Agency, Emergency Medical Services, E-911, Places of Worship, Crop Production, Vegetable Farming or Growing Services, Fruits and Trees, Greenhouse, Nursery, and Floriculture, Food Crops Grown Under Cover, Nursery and Tree Production, Floriculture Production, Poultry and Egg Production and Hatcheries, and Apiculture (Bees, Wax, and Related Operations).

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CONSISTENCY:

The subject property is designated **Agricultural-Residential** on the **Future Land Use Map (FLUM)** within the Effingham County **2020–2040 Joint Comprehensive Plan**.

This designation is intended to **support agricultural uses and low-density residential development while preserving the rural character of the county**. Development within this designation typically includes **large residential lots, agricultural activities, and rural residential uses compatible with surrounding farmland and open space**.

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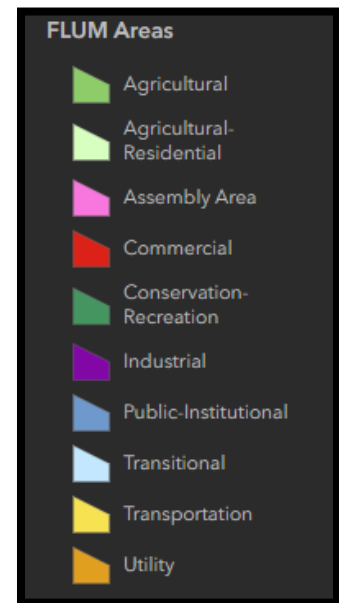
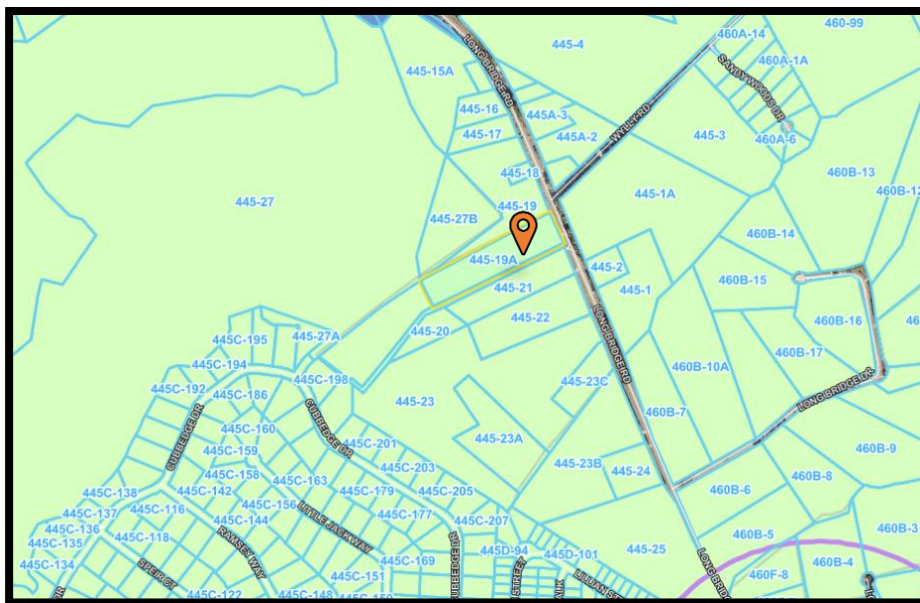
The requested rezoning from **AR-1 to AR-2** would continue to support **low-density residential development within a rural setting**, although the AR-2 zoning allows smaller lot sizes, the revised three-lot configuration maintains a density and pattern consistent with the intent of the designation.

Overall, the requested zoning classification is **generally consistent with the Agricultural-Residential designation identified in the Effingham County Comprehensive Plan.**

REZONING CONSIDERATIONS:

Staff evaluated the rezoning request using commonly accepted zoning review criteria, including existing use, suitability, compatibility, infrastructure, and environmental considerations.

Existing Use of the Property



The property currently contains one mobile home, with the remainder consisting primarily of wooded land. The existing use is consistent with the AR-1 zoning classification and reflects the rural character of the area.



Suitability of the Property for the Current Zoning

The subject property is suitable for continued use under the existing AR-1 zoning classification, which requires a minimum lot size of five acres. However, the size and configuration of the parcel also allow for consideration of a lower-density subdivision pattern under AR-2, provided that site constraints are adequately addressed.

Compatibility with Surrounding Development

The surrounding area is predominantly zoned AR-1, with pockets of R-1, R-6 and limited AR-2 zoning. The revised three-lot configuration results in lot sizes exceeding one acre and maintains a rural residential character. As such, the proposed development is generally compatible with surrounding land uses and does not introduce a pattern of development that is out of scale with the area.

Infrastructure Impacts

The property is accessed via Long Bridge Road and will require a 60-foot access easement to serve interior lots. Development will rely on private well and septic systems. The reduced lot count improves the likelihood of meeting Environmental Health requirements and reduces potential strain on site infrastructure.

Environmental Considerations

No wetlands or floodplains have been identified on the subject property based on available GIS data. However, development of the site will require compliance with all applicable land disturbance and environmental regulations, particularly in relation to clearing and stormwater management.

Public Interest and Welfare

The request represents a balance between the applicant's intent to provide residential lots for family members and the need to preserve the rural character of the area. The reduction in density from the original proposal mitigates potential adverse impacts and supports a development pattern that is more consistent with surrounding properties.

POTENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Staff has identified the following considerations that may affect future development of the property:

Septic Suitability

Development of the property will rely on private well and septic systems. Based on preliminary review

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and consultation with the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), the originally proposed five-lot configuration may not have met minimum septic suitability requirements due to limited suitable soil area and the impact of required easements. While the revised three-lot configuration improves feasibility, final approval of septic systems will be subject to Environmental Health review, and lot layouts may require adjustment to accommodate drain fields and reserve areas.

Access and Easement Requirements

A minimum 60-foot access easement is required to provide access to interior tracts created through subdivision. This easement reduces the total developable area of the parcel and directly impacts achievable lot yield and layout. The design and placement of the easement must comply with county standards and ensure adequate access for emergency services and future residents.

Land Disturbance Activity Permit

The applicant has indicated that a significant portion of the property of 4 acres may be cleared for development. Clearing activities exceeding county thresholds will require issuance of a Land Disturbance Activity (LDA) permit. Compliance with erosion and sedimentation control measures will be required to minimize impacts to adjacent properties and infrastructure.

Subdivision Approval

Approval of the rezoning request does not constitute approval of a subdivision. Any future subdivision of the property must undergo formal review and approval in accordance with the Effingham County Subdivision Regulations. This process will include evaluation of lot configuration, access, drainage, and compliance with all applicable development standards.

Planning Board Summary – March 10, 2026

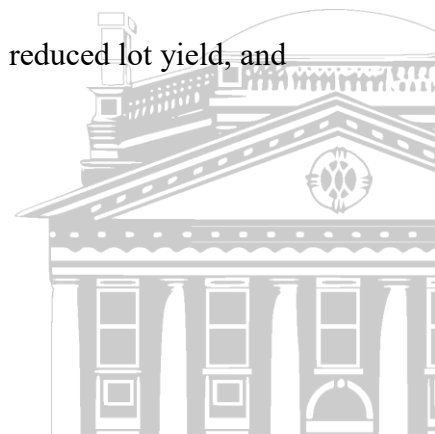
The Planning Board held a public hearing on the request. The applicant’s representative stated the intent to subdivide the property for family residential use.

Public opposition cited concerns related to increased density, compatibility with the surrounding rural character, infrastructure, septic and well limitations, tree removal, and potential precedent. Additional concerns were expressed regarding access and impacts on adjacent properties.

The Board discussed zoning appropriateness, potential alternative zoning districts, reduced lot yield, and the impact of the required access easement on development feasibility.

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Following discussion, the Planning Board recommended denial based insufficient justification.

Motion: Denial

Made by: Smith

Seconded by: Kessler

Vote: Unanimous

STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION:

Staff evaluated the rezoning request in accordance with the Effingham County Zoning Ordinance, Comprehensive Plan, and standard zoning review criteria including compatibility, suitability, infrastructure, and public interest.

The subject property is currently zoned AR-1, which requires a minimum lot size of five (5) acres and reflects the prevailing rural development pattern along the Long Bridge Road corridor. The applicant is requesting AR-2 zoning to allow subdivision into smaller residential lots for family use.

A key consideration in this request is the **change in development intensity**. The original proposal for five (5) one-acre lots represented a significant increase in density that raised concerns regarding septic suitability, infrastructure limitations, and compatibility with the surrounding area. In response, the applicant revised the proposal to three (3) lots.

The revised configuration results in approximately **1.22 acres per lot**, which represents a moderate increase in density but remains more consistent with the rural character of the area when compared to the original proposal. This adjustment reduces potential impacts associated with septic system placement, access requirements, and overall site constraints.

From a **Comprehensive Plan perspective**, the Agricultural-Residential designation supports low-density residential development while preserving rural character. While AR-2 zoning allows smaller lot sizes than typically associated with this designation, the revised three-lot layout maintains a density that can be considered generally consistent with the intent of the plan, particularly given the size of surrounding parcels and the absence of urban-level infrastructure.

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In terms of **compatibility**, the surrounding area is predominantly zoned AR-1 with some clustered R-1 and limited AR-2 zoning. The revised proposal does not introduce a development pattern that is out of scale with nearby properties, especially given that the resulting lot sizes exceed one acre and maintain a rural residential character.

Regarding **infrastructure and environmental constraints**, the property will rely on private well and septic systems. The reduction in lot count improves the likelihood that each parcel can meet Georgia Department of Public Health requirements. Additionally, the required 60-foot access easement has been factored into the development analysis, ensuring that access can be provided in compliance with county standards.

The Planning Board recommended denial of the request, citing concerns related to justification and compatibility. Staff acknowledges these concerns; however, the revised development plan addresses many of the issues raised, particularly those related to density and septic feasibility.

Based on the analysis above, staff finds that the request, as revised to three (3) lots, is:

- **Generally consistent** with the Comprehensive Plan;
- **Compatible** with the surrounding development pattern; and
- **Feasible** given site constraints and infrastructure limitations.

Therefore, staff recommends **approval with conditions**, as outlined below, to ensure that future development complies with all applicable regulations and standards.

The Board may approve the request, approve the request with conditions, or deny the request

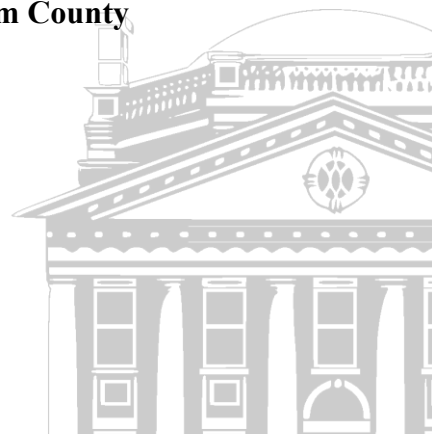
RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS:

If the Board elects to approve the rezoning request, staff recommends the following condition:

1. A **60-foot access easement shall be established to provide access to interior tracts created through subdivision of the property.**
2. Any subdivision of the property shall comply with all applicable **Effingham County subdivision regulations.**

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3. All lots must meet **Georgia Department of Public Health Environmental Health requirements for private well and septic systems.**
4. Clearing of wooded areas exceeding county thresholds shall require approval of a **Land Disturbance Activity (LDA) permit** prior to land clearing.

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