



Damon M. Rahn, Chairman at Large
Forrest F. Floyd, District 1
Roger Burdette, District 2
Jamie Deloach, District 3
Elizabeth Helmly, District 4
Phil Kieffer, District 5

WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES OCTOBER 21, 2025

The Board of Commissioners of Effingham County, Georgia, Mr. Damon Rahn, Mr. Forrest Floyd, Mr. Roger Burdette, Mr. Jamie Deloach, Ms. Elizabeth Helmly, and Mr. Phil Kieffer met in work session 4:00pm on Tuesday, October 21, 2025 in the Commissioners Meeting Chambers at the Effingham County Administrative Complex located at 804 South Laurel Street Springfield, Georgia 31329.

STAFF PARTICIPATION

Mr. Tim Callanan – County Manager, Mr. Edward Newberry – County Attorney, Ms. Stephanie Johnson – County Clerk, Ms. Tasheena Shiggs – Deputy County Clerk, Mr. Michael King – Assistant County Manager, Ms. Pamela Melser – Director of Development Services, Ms. Chelsie Fernald – Planning Manager, Ms. Jennifer Rose – Planner I, Mr. Josh Moody – Building Official, Ms. Kimberly Barlett – Senior Planner, and Ms. Maraya Durham – I.T. Support Specialist.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

None to announce.

I - CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Rahn called the session to order at 4:07pm

II- WORK SESSION TOPICS

DISCUSSION OF AN AMENDMENT TO THE EFFINGHAM COUNTY CODE OF ORDINANCES, PART II, APPENDIX C - ZONING ORDINANCES, ARTICLE V - USES PERMITTED IN DISTRICTS, SECTION 5.19 - EBENEZER HISTORIC OVERLAY DISTRICT (1):

Planning Manager Fernald presented the proposed amendment to the Ebenezer Historic Overlay District ordinance, focusing on the boundary, permitted uses, and design standards. The boundary was revised to encompass the area east of the roundabout at Ebenezer Road and Long Bridge Road, extending to Ebenezer Creek, covering parcels within 500 feet of the centerline. The overlay district prioritizes historic character in design. Permitted uses include Home Occupations, while all other residential or rural business uses require Conditional Use approval by the Board of Commissioners. The current draft prohibits rezonings to non-residential commercial districts and establishes standards for signage to prevent excessive or flashing displays.



The Board raised two primary issues. First, the minimum buffer from the street right-of-way was listed as 30 feet, which was determined to be inconsistent with new county standards, requiring adjustment to 50 feet. Second, a philosophical concern was noted regarding the proposed ordinance's restriction on a property owner's right to petition the Board for rezoning, regardless of the likely outcome. It was suggested that strong design standards and the 50-foot setback might offer adequate protection without eliminating the right to petition. The item was deferred to a subsequent meeting to allow staff to revise the setback and reassess the language related to permitted uses.

DISCUSSION TO AMEND THE EFFINGHAM COUNTY CODE OF ORDINANCES, PART II, CHAPTER 30 - ENVIRONMENT, ARTICLE X - TREE PROTECTION & PRESERVATION (2):

Planning Manager Fernald introduced two new sections to strengthen the County's regulations against premature and unauthorized clearing: Section 410 (Pre-Clearing Restrictions) and Section 411 (Clear Cutting Regulations).

Planner I Rose presented significant amendments to the Tree Protection and Preservation Ordinance, aiming to curb premature land clearing and ensure proper canopy restoration. The proposal introduced two critical sections. Section 410 (Pre-Clearing Restrictions) prohibits unauthorized tree removal and land alteration before receiving formal development approvals. Any violation results in an immediate stop-work order, permit suspension, and stiff penalties of at least \$1,000 per day. Violators must also mitigate the loss by replanting at a three-to-one ratio or contributing to the Tree Fund and are required to retain or restore a minimum of 10% of the original tree canopy. Section 411 (Clear Cutting Regulations) governs large-scale deforestation, defining clear-cutting as removing 75% or more of the tree canopy. To close a regulatory loophole, any land that was clear-cut under a forestry exemption and is later brought forward for rezoning or development within three years will be retroactively subject to the full mitigation and penalty requirements.

The Board discussed the Tree Fund, agreeing that funds collected in lieu of replanting should be allowed to be used for land conservation or hiring an arborist, rather than solely requiring the County to plant and maintain trees in parks. Commissioner Kieffer questioned the 75% clear-cutting threshold, noting that wetlands (which are typically protected) could artificially inflate the remaining canopy. The Board agreed to verbally amend the language to exclude wetlands when calculating the retained canopy percentage, with the exact wording to be formalized during the second reading.

DISCUSSION OF AN AMENDMENT TO THE EFFINGHAM COUNTY CODE OF ORDINANCES, PART II, APPENDIX B - SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS (3):

This item was postponed until the next work session.

DISCUSSION OF AN AMENDMENT TO THE EFFINGHAM COUNTY CODE OF ORDINANCES, PART II-OFFICIAL CODE: CHAPTER 10- ANIMALS OF THE EFFINGHAM COUNTY CODE OF ORDINANCE (4):



This item will be discussed at the regular agenda meeting.

DISCUSSION TO AMEND APPENDIX C - ZONING ORDINANCE, ARTICLE III- 3.46- ACCESSORY DWELLING UNIT OF THE EFFINGHAM COUNTY CODE OF ORDINANCES (5):

This item will be discussed at the upcoming regular agenda meeting.

DISCUSSION OF AN AMENDMENT TO APPENDIX C - ZONING ORDINANCE, ARTICLE III- 3.3 ACCESSORY STRUCTURES IN RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS OF THE EFFINGHAM COUNTY CODE OF ORDINANCES (6):

This item will be discussed at the upcoming regular agenda meeting.

III – Adjournment

At 4:59 pm, there being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

Damon Rahn, Chairman

**APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
NOVEMBER 4, 2025**

Stephanie D. Johnson, County Clerk