



Staff Report

Subject: Amendment to Open Burning Ordinance
Author: Jennifer Rose, Planner I
Department: Development Services – Planning & Zoning
Meeting Date: February 17, 2026

Proposed Zoning: N/A
Existing Zoning: N/A
Map & Parcel: County-wide application
Parcel Size: N/A
Proposed Use: The proposed ordinance amendments revise specific provisions of the County’s Open Burning Ordinance to clarify definitions, refine operational standards, and strengthen location and safety requirements for development-related burning activities.
Applicant: Effingham County Board of Commissioners
Owner(s): Effingham County
Location: County-wide

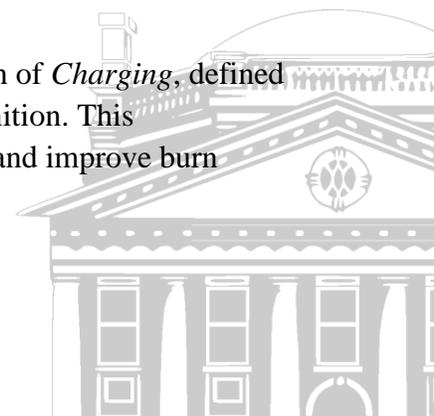
Background:

The proposed redline amendments are intended to update and consolidate regulatory standards related to open burning, based on operational experience; coordination with fire and emergency services; applicable requirements of the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) and Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD); and observed conditions related to development activity, burn supervision, and proximity to occupied structures.

The Proposed Amendments:

The proposed ordinance amendments include the following key changes:

- **Clarification of Definitions:** The amendments add and clarify the definition of *Charging*, defined as the act of adding combustible material to an existing open burn after ignition. This clarification is intended to support enforcement of operational time limits and improve burn management practices.



- **Hours of Operation and Charging Restrictions:** The ordinance is revised to clarify that open burning is permitted only between sunrise and sunset, and that charging of burn piles must cease at least one (1) hour prior to sunset. Limited smoldering may continue after sunset only when it does not pose a safety hazard.
- **Development Activity and Land-Clearing Burning Standards:** The amendments refine location requirements for open burning associated with development and land-clearing activities. Burn sites must be located a minimum of one-half (1/2) mile from any occupied structure unless an Air Curtain Destructor (ACD) is utilized. Burning associated with development activity must also comply with all applicable Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) and Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) authorizations and conditions.

These revisions are intended to reduce wildfire risk, limit smoke impacts to nearby residences, and improve consistency between County requirements and state agency standards.

Determination:

Based on staff review, the revisions provide greater clarity for residents, developers, and enforcement personnel, strengthen operational controls on open burning activities, and reduce potential impacts to occupied structures and surrounding areas.

Conditions for Consideration:

The proposed amendments enhance public safety by clarifying when and how open burning may occur, particularly with respect to charging activities and development-related burns. Clearer distance requirements and expanded use of Air Curtain Destructors help mitigate smoke, fire spread, and nuisance impacts. Overall, the revisions improve consistency, enforceability, and predictability while continuing to allow lawful and responsible open burning activities within Effingham County.

Planning and Zoning Services

804 South Laurel St., Springfield, Georgia 31329
(912) 754-2128
effinghamcounty.org

