



Staff Report

Author: Akela Wright, MPA, Planning Manager
Department: Development Services
Subject: Variance
Meeting Date: August 4, 2026
Application: VAR-26-27
Existing Zoning: AR-1 (Agricultural–Residential, 5 acres or more)
Map & Parcel: 330A-16E
Parcel Size: 0.178 acres
Applicant & Owner: Yomaira Cristina Nunez

Commissioner District: First District

Location: 359 Ohoopee Avenue
Meldrim, GA 31302

Existing Land Use and Zoning:

The subject parcel at 359 Ohoopee Avenue is developed with an existing residential structure. The applicant proposes to temporarily occupy a camper/RV on the property while a new primary dwelling is constructed. Access to the property is provided via Ohoopee Avenue, with the site also fronting on Eighth Street. The property is served by an existing private well and septic system/drain field.

The parcel is zoned AR-1 (Agricultural–Residential), which requires a minimum lot size of five (5) acres. The subject parcel, at approximately 0.178 acres, is a legal nonconforming lot of record — platted as part of the historic Town of Meldrim subdivision prior to the adoption of the current AR-1 minimum lot size.

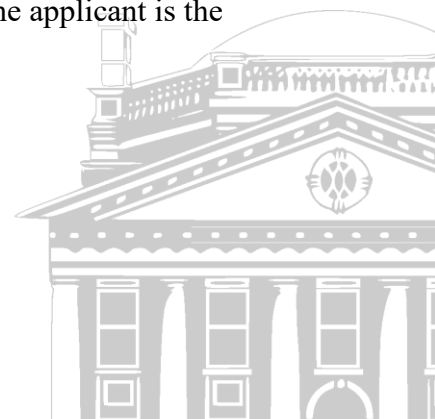
Surrounding properties are a mix of similarly small, legacy-platted residential lots and larger AR-1 tracts, consistent with the older platted core of Meldrim rather than the larger-lot rural residential pattern typically associated with AR-1 zoning elsewhere in the County.

The Proposed Request:

This variance request seeks approval for the temporary residential occupancy of a camper/RV while a new primary dwelling is constructed on the property, and to permit the installation and connection of temporary electrical utility service to the camper until construction is complete. The applicant is the property owner and intends to reside on site during the construction period.

Facts and Findings:

Site Characteristics



The subject parcel consists of approximately 0.178 acres.

According to County GIS mapping, a freshwater forested/shrub wetland area is identified in the vicinity of the property, located on adjoining land to the south rather than on the subject parcel itself. No FEMA-designated floodplain has been identified on the property.

Surrounding Development Pattern

The area surrounding the parcel reflects the older platted residential core of Meldrim, with a mix of legacy small-lot residential parcels, larger AR-1 tracts, and institutional (church) property. Development intensity and lot sizes vary more than is typical elsewhere in the AR-1 district, reflecting the historic town plat.

Surrounding development includes:

To the North of the property is an AR-1-zoned residential parcel (330A-12E).

To the South of the property is an AR-1-zoned parcel associated with First Baptist Church of Summerville (330A-15E).

To the East of the property, across Eighth Street, is an AR-1-zoned parcel associated with Church Meldrim Colored (330A-17E).

To the West, across Ohoopee Avenue, is an AR-1-zoned residential parcel (330A-1E).

Zoning Context

The parcel is currently zoned AR-1, which requires a minimum lot size of five (5) acres. The surrounding area is predominantly zoned AR-1, with pockets of AR-2 and R-1 zoning in the broader vicinity, reflecting a transition in lot sizes across the historic Meldrim plat. The district is intended to support low-density residential development; the subject parcel's substandard lot size predates this intent.

Infrastructure and Services

The property is served by a private well and septic system, consistent with surrounding development. The applicant has also requested approval to install and connect temporary electrical service to serve the camper during the construction period.

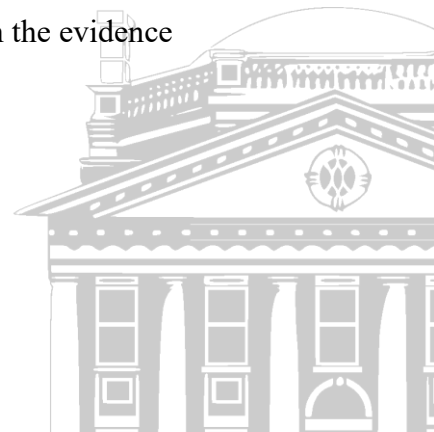
Road Routes: The property has frontage on Ohoopee Avenue and Eighth Street, both classified as local roads within the historic Meldrim street grid.

Variance Criteria – Article IX – 9.1:

The board of commissioners shall not grant such variances unless it finds based on the evidence presented to it in each specific case that:

Planning and Zoning Services

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



- a. The granting of the variance will not be detrimental to the public safety, health, or welfare or injurious to other property, and;
- b. The conditions upon which the request is based are unique to the property for which the relief is sought and are not applicable generally to other property, and;
- c. Because of the particular physical surroundings, shape, or topographical conditions of the specific property involved, a particular hardship to the owner would result, as distinguished from a mere inconvenience, if the strict letter of these regulations is carried out, and;
- d. The relief sought will not in any manner vary the provisions of the zoning ordinance or comprehensive plan, except that those documents may be amended in the manner prescribed by law.

Staff Analysis of Variance Criteria

(a) Public Safety and Welfare

The proposed temporary use of a camper/RV on the property during active construction of the primary residence is not anticipated to adversely affect public health, safety, or welfare. The request is limited in duration and scope and is intended to provide safe, temporary housing while the new primary residence is under construction.

Provided that appropriate conditions are established — such as compliance with health department regulations, proper and code-compliant temporary utility connections, and a defined timeframe for removal — the request is consistent with the maintenance of the public health, safety, and welfare of the community.

(b) Unique Conditions

The subject property is affected by circumstances not commonly shared by other properties in the area. The primary residence is currently undergoing construction, creating a condition in which the property cannot reasonably function as a permanent residence during the construction period. In addition, the parcel's substandard lot size as a legacy platted lot of record is itself an unusual condition relative to the AR-1 district's standard five-acre minimum.

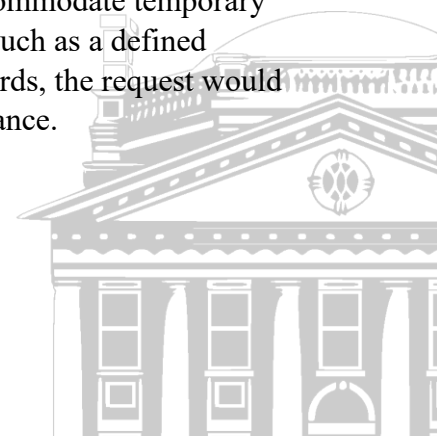
(c) Hardship

The requested variance is based on a claimed hardship associated with the temporary occupancy of a camper/RV during construction of a new primary dwelling. Allowing temporary on-site use of a camper would provide a reasonable means of accommodating the applicant during construction of the primary residence.

Staff finds that the request is limited in scope and duration, intended solely to accommodate temporary living arrangements during the construction period. With appropriate conditions, such as a defined timeframe for occupancy and compliance with applicable health and safety standards, the request would not adversely impact the surrounding area or be contrary to the intent of the ordinance.

Planning and Zoning Services

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



(d) Consistency with the Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan

County ordinance Section 3.21.1 – Mobile homes, trailers, mobile home parks, and trailer parks – states that parked or stored camping and recreational equipment shall never be occupied or used for living, sleeping, or housekeeping purposes.

Although the ordinance does not typically permit occupancy of a camper as a dwelling unit, the request is temporary in nature and associated with the active construction of a new primary residence.

The requested variance does not alter the permitted use of the property or conflict with the intent of the zoning ordinance. The proposed use remains incidental and subordinate to the principal residential use of the property and does not represent a permanent change in land use. With appropriate conditions and time limitations, the request maintains the overall intent and integrity of the zoning regulations and comprehensive plan.

Comprehensive Plan:

The parcel is designated Agricultural–Residential on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM). This category supports single-family and multifamily residential uses arranged within general net-density ranges, with the intent of ensuring residential development patterns compatible with surrounding densities, building types, and established neighborhood character (Effingham County 2020–2040 Joint Comprehensive Plan).

Recommendation:

Based on the findings contained in this report, staff finds that the request satisfies the variance criteria contained in Article IX, Section 9.1 of the Effingham County Zoning Ordinance. The requested relief is temporary in nature, represents the minimum necessary variance, and is not expected to adversely affect surrounding properties or the public health, safety, and welfare. Staff therefore recommends approval subject to the following stipulations:

The RV/camper may be occupied for up to twelve (12) months during home construction. Should an extension be needed, the applicant shall come before the Board of Commissioners for approval.

Upon completion of construction, the camper shall be vacated and disconnected from the well and septic system, and the temporary electrical service shall be disconnected.

Planning and Zoning Services

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

