Effingham County Georgia
Planning and Zoning Services

Staff Report

Subject:	2nd Reading- Zoning Map Amendment
Author:	Kimberly Barlett, Senior Planner
Department:	Development Services
Application:	RZN-26-32
Meeting Date:	October 6, 2026
Existing Zoning:	**R-1 (Single Family Residential)**
Proposed Zoning:	**AR-1 (Agricultural Residential; 5 acres or more)**
Map & Parcel(s):	351B-10
Total Acreage Affected	±5.71 acres
Location:	4028 Blue Jay Road
Commissioner District:	First District
Proposed Use:	Existing rural residential use
Applicant/Owner:	Tim Hutchings 4028 Blue Jay Road Guyton, GA 31312

Rezoning Summary:

Item	Description
Request	Rezone ± 5.71 acres from **R-1 to AR-1**
Proposed Use	Existing rural residential use
Existing Use	Single-family residence, accessory shop, and pond
Future Land Use	Agricultural Residential
Utilities	Public Water & septic
Access	Blue Jay Road

Project Summary:

The applicant is requesting to **rezone ±5.71 acres** from R-1 (Single-Family Residential) to **AR-1 (Agricultural Residential).** The purpose of the request is to align the zoning classification with the property's existing rural character, lot size, and surrounding agricultural-residential development pattern. The applicant seeks greater flexibility to expand existing agricultural activities, including keeping livestock and chickens and potentially selling eggs.

The applicant would also like the option to establish an additional dwelling on the property in the future, although there are currently no immediate plans to do so. The property is currently utilized for rural residential and agricultural purposes, and the requested AR-1 zoning would better reflect the existing character of the property.

The AR-1 zoning district is intended to support low-density residential development, agricultural activities, and preservation of rural character. No subdivision of the property or expansion of the existing development footprint is proposed as part of this request.

Zoning History

The subject property is currently zoned R-1 (Single Family Residential). The property is associated with a prior variance case. On July 16, 2019, the Board of Commissioners approved a variance to allow an accessory building to be located in front of the primary building setback.

Existing Site Condition

The subject property consists of approximately **5.71 acres** and is located along Blue Jay Road, with direct frontage and access from the roadway. The property is currently developed with a single-family residence, accessory shop structure, and pond.

County GIS mapping indicates the presence of **wetlands** on portions of the property; however, the parcel is not located within a mapped **FEMA flood hazard area.**

Surrounding Use and Zoning Pattern

Surrounding Neighborhood
• North: AR-1 (Agricultural–Residential, 5 acres or more)
• South: R-1(Single Family Residential) & R-5 (Single- Family Traditional Neighborhood)
• East: R-1 (Single-Family Residential) & AR-1 (Agricultural–Residential, 5 acres or more)
• West: AR-1 (Agricultural–Residential, 5 acres or more)

The surrounding area consists of a mix of rural residential homesteads, agricultural tracts, and established single-family subdivisions. Development intensity varies from approximately one-half-acre residential lots within nearby subdivisions to larger rural residential and agricultural tracts.

Surrounding development includes:

- North of the property is a mix of rural residential and agricultural tracts (AR-1).
- East of the property are rural residential lots (R-1 & AR-1). Directly adjacent are board-approved businesses:
  - Down and Dirty Dog Training for boarding and kennels (AR-1)
  - Emmanuel Community Church (R-1)
  - Cottage bakery (R-1).
- West of the property are rural residential lots and the Emerald Plantation subdivision (R-1)
- South of the property is the Emerald Plantation subdivision (R-1) & proposed subdivision (R-5)

Zoning Development Standards for AR-1

Minimum lot area A maximum of two residential units are permitted per lot. These may consist of two principal dwellings, or one principal dwelling, and one accessory dwelling unit (ADU)	5 acres 2 units
Minimum lot road frontage	100 feet
Minimum lot width at building line	150 feet
Minimum front yard setback	50 feet
Minimum rear yard setback	50 feet
Minimum side yard (interior) setback	25 feet
Minimum side yard (street/road easement) setback	50 feet

Zoning Classification

Agricultural Residential 1 (AR-1) *is designed to preserve the county's rural character while protecting natural resources and supporting both active and passive recreational uses. This district emphasizes land conservation and resource protection, minimal pedestrian activity, ample open space, and a high degree of separation between structures.*

Intensity of Use

The proposed rezoning from R-1 (Single-Family Residential) to AR-1 (Agricultural Residential) would result in a lower-density residential zoning classification that is generally appropriate for the ±5.71-acre parcel. The AR-1 district requires a minimum lot area of five acres and accommodates low-density residential and agricultural uses consistent with the surrounding area's rural character. While the rezoning would provide greater flexibility for agricultural activities and could permit an additional dwelling subject to applicable development standards, the overall development intensity would remain low and is not anticipated to substantially increase traffic, infrastructure demand, or impacts on neighboring properties.

Infrastructure

The property is served by **county water and a septic system, consistent with the** surrounding development.

Roadway Classification: Blue Jay Road is classified as a Major Collector and is a designated truck route within Effingham County.

Public Health, Safety, and Welfare

The proposed rezoning from R-1 (Single-Family Residential) to **AR-1 (Agricultural–Residential)** is not anticipated to adversely affect the public health, safety, or welfare. The 5.71-acre parcel satisfies the minimum lot-area requirement of the AR-1 district, and the rezoning would maintain a low-density development pattern. The request is not expected to substantially increase traffic, create excessive demand on public services or infrastructure, or negatively affect surrounding properties. Any future residential or agricultural activities would remain subject to applicable zoning, building, and environmental health. Therefore, the proposed rezoning is not anticipated to adversely affect the public health, safety, or welfare of the surrounding community.

Consistency with Comprehensive Plan

The subject property is designated **Agricultural Residential** on the **Future Land Use Map (FLUM).** This designation supports agricultural activities, rural residential development, and low-density housing while preserving the County's rural character. The requested rezoning from R-1 (Single-Family) to AR-1 (Agricultural Residential) is generally consistent with the Agricultural Residential land use designation, as both zoning districts accommodate low-density residential development. The proposed rezoning remains compatible with the Comprehensive Plan's intent by supporting rural residential growth while maintaining the area's agricultural-residential character.

*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. The intent is to ensure residential development patterns that are compatible with surrounding densities, building types, and established neighborhood character (Effingham County 2020–2040 Joint Comprehensive Plan, p. 37).*

PLANNING BOARD RECOMMENDATION

At the **September 8, 2026,** Planning Board meeting, the Planning Board conducted a public hearing regarding the requested rezoning application to rezone approximately ± 5.71 acres from R-1 to AR-1 to allow permitted uses in AR-1.

During its discussion, the Planning Board considered the proposed zoning classification.

- No one present in opposition.

Planning Board Action

Following the public hearing and deliberation, the Planning Board voted to **approve** the rezoning request.

Staff Summary

Staff finds that the requested rezoning is compatible with the surrounding land use pattern and consistent with the intent of the **AR-1 (Agricultural Residential)** zoning district. The request is also consistent with the Agricultural Residential designation of the Future Land Use Map and supports the Comprehensive Plan's objective of accommodating low-density rural residential development while preserving the rural character of the surrounding area.