



Staff Report

Subject: 2nd Reading – Zoning Map Amendment
Author: Jennifer Rose, Planner I
Department: Development Services
Application: RZN-26-13
Meeting Date: July 21, 2026

Existing Zoning: Parcel: 352-74: AR-1 (Agricultural Residential; 5+ acres)
Parcel: 352-73: AR-2 (Agricultural Residential; 1+ acres)

Proposed Zoning: **AR-1 to AR-2** (to facilitate subdivision compliance)
AR-2 to B-2 (General Commercial) for ±1.0-acre tract

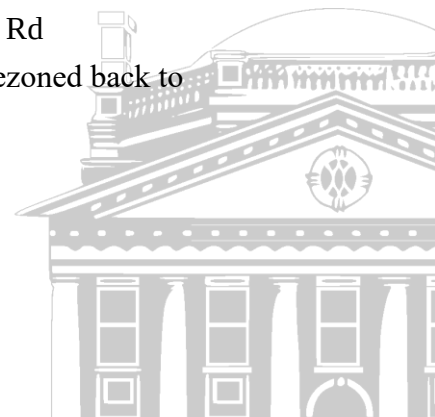
Map & Parcel(s): 352-74 & 352-73
Total Acreage: ±6.99 Acres (±1.0 Acre Subject to B-2 Request)
Location: Noel C Conaway Road
Commissioner District: 1st District

Proposed Use: **Automotive service shop (mechanic shop) on ±1.0 acre**

Applicant/Owner: Lynn Jeffers Jr.
489 Noel C. Conaway Road
Guyton, GA 31312

Rezoning Summary:

Item	Description
Request	AR-1 to AR-2 (compliance) and AR-2 to B-2 (±1 acre commercial use)
Purpose	Facilitate subdivision and allow limited commercial use
Proposed Use	Mechanic shop (auto maintenance services)
Existing Use	Residential accessory structure / garage
Future Land Use	Agricultural–Residential
Utilities	Private well & septic
Location	Noel C. Conaway Rd (GA Hwy 30) / Zittrouer Rd
Zoning History	Property rezoned to B-2 on June 6, 2006 and rezoned back to AR-2 on September 22, 2014
Planning Board Recommendation	Approval (Unanimous – May 12, 2026)



REQUEST OVERVIEW

The applicant is requesting a two-part rezoning to facilitate a parcel reconfiguration and allow limited commercial use.

The request includes:

1. AR-1 to AR-2 Rezoning (Parcel 352-74)

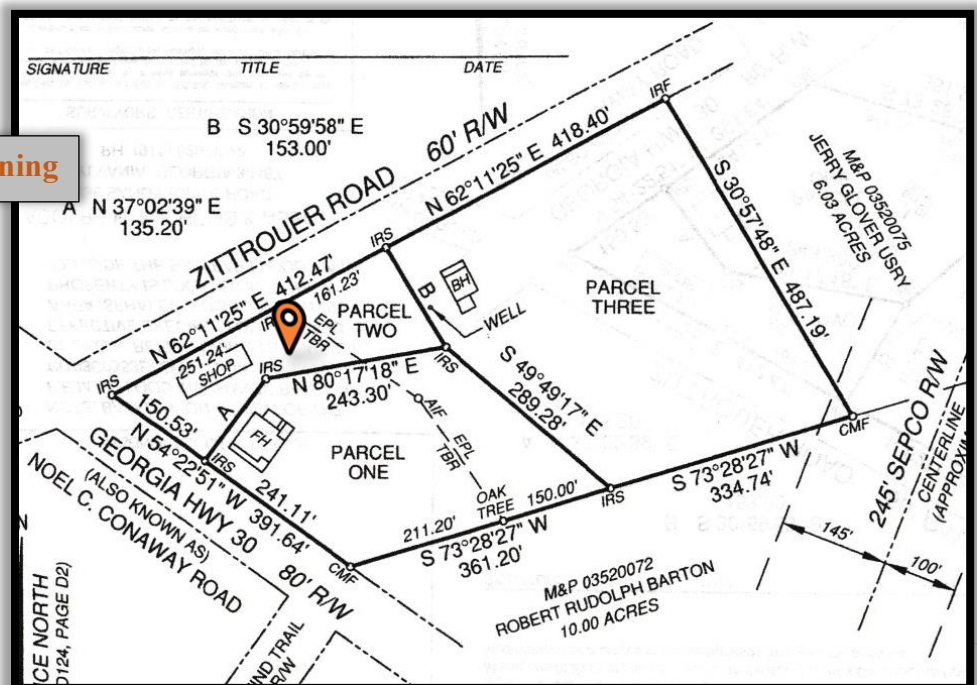
This rezoning is required to bring the parcel into compliance with zoning standards following subdivision. The proposed division would reduce the parcel below the minimum 5-acre requirement of the AR-1 district.

2. AR-2 to B-2 Rezoning (±1.0 Acre)

The applicant proposes to rezone approximately one acre to B-2 to allow operation of a small-scale automotive service shop, including:

- Tire services
- Oil changes
- General vehicle maintenance

Parcel Two – Requesting B-2 Zoning

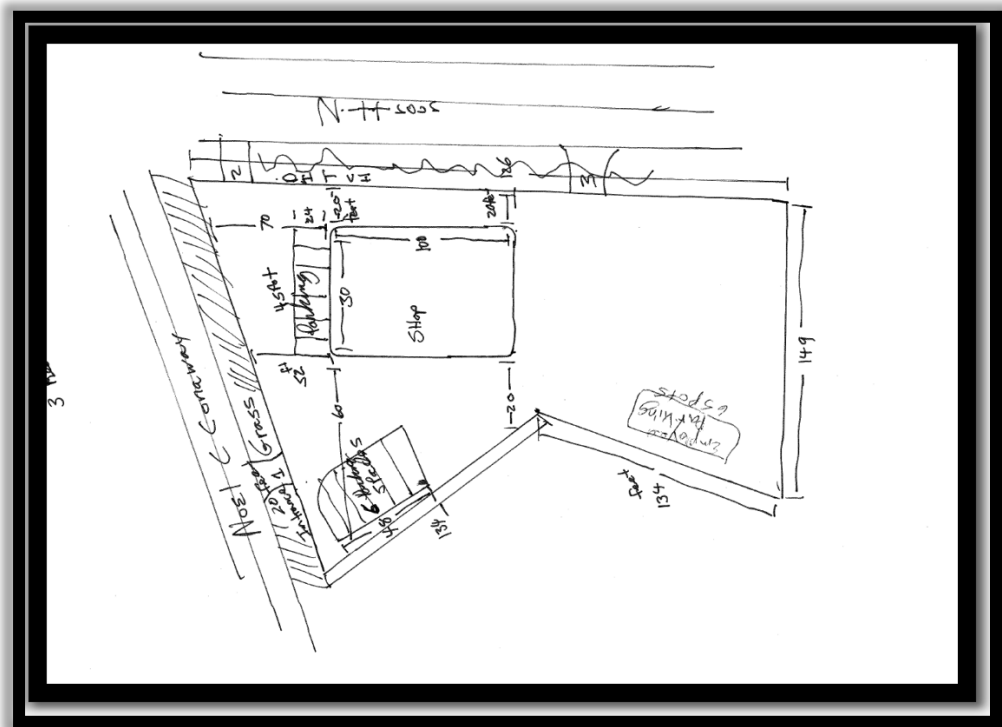


(Survey)

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(Site Plan)

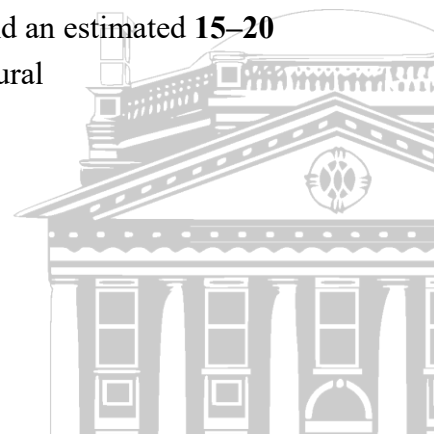


(Aerial View)

The proposed operation is limited in scale, with approximately **four employees** and an estimated **15–20 customers per day**. The remainder of the property will continue to function in a rural residential/agricultural capacity.

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SITE & AREA CHARACTERISTICS

The site is located at the intersection of Noel C. Conaway Road and Zittrouer Road within a predominantly rural residential area characterized by large-lot development and limited non-residential uses.

While there are indications of growth in the broader vicinity, the immediate area surrounding the site is characterized by:

- Large-lot residential and agricultural parcels
- Low-density development patterns
- Limited non-residential uses

The existing structure on-site was originally constructed as an accessory building and will require upgrades to meet commercial standards.

EXISTING ZONING & SURROUNDING AREA

Subject Property Zoning

- **AR-1 (Agricultural Residential – 5-acre minimum)**
- **AR-2 (Agricultural Residential – smaller lot pattern)**

Surrounding Zoning Pattern

Based on the zoning map and legend, the surrounding area includes:

- **North:** Primarily AR-1 (Agricultural Residential) with pockets of AR-2, consisting of large-lot residential and undeveloped agricultural tracts.
- **South:** Predominantly AR-1, with scattered AR-2 parcels and emerging residential subdivisions further south and southwest.
- **East:** Mix of AR-1 and AR-2, with some planned residential subdivisions and transitional lot patterns. Limited proximity to more intense zoning districts occurs farther east along established corridors.

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- **West:** Transition to more developed areas, including R-1 (Single-Family Residential subdivisions), along with some AR-2 parcels and localized neighborhood development patterns.



(Zoning Map)



(Zoning Legend)

Planning Analysis – Zoning Pattern

The zoning pattern reflects a **commercial uses are generally concentrated along established corridors rather than within interior residential areas**

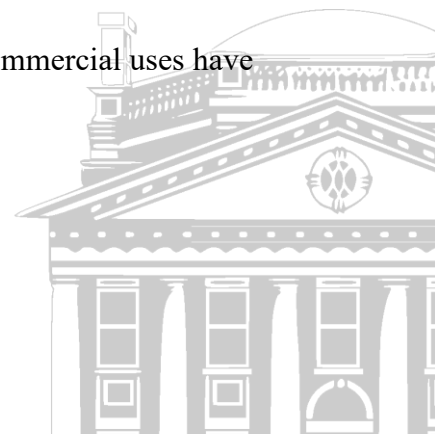
Key observations:

- Commercial zoning in the area is **not dispersed**, but instead **concentrated in designated locations**
- The subject property is located within a **continuous block of residential/agricultural zoning**
- Introduction of B-2 zoning would represent an **isolated commercial designation** (“spot zoning” concern)

This would create a **non-uniform zoning pattern** that is inconsistent with how commercial uses have historically been distributed in the area.

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- The request introduces a **higher-intensity land use into an area planned for low-density development**

Approval would therefore represent a **departure from the adopted Future Land Use framework.**

DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Public Health & Utilities

- The property is currently served by a **private well and septic system**
- Environmental Health has advised that:
 - A **minimum of 1 acre of suitable soils** is required for septic use
 - Commercial use may place **additional demands on septic capacity**

Traffic & Access

- Access is provided via **Zittrouer Road and Noel C. Conaway Road**
- The use is expected to generate **traffic generation typical of a small-scale service use**

Noise & Compatibility

- Automotive service uses introduce:
 - Intermittent mechanical noise
 - Increased vehicle activity

Given proximity to residential properties, **operational impacts such as noise and hours of operation are relevant compatibility considerations.**

BUFFER, LANDSCAPING & SITE REQUIREMENTS

Buffer Requirements

- **30-foot buffer required along Zittrouer Road**
- **15-foot buffer required along Noel C. Conaway Road**

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Aerial observations indicate:

- Approximately **17 feet available**, creating a constraint
- Buffer may be reduced to **20 feet with installation of an approved privacy fence**

The applicant has submitted a **variance** request to address buffer deficiencies.

Landscaping Requirements

- Minimum **15% greenspace required**
- At least **50% of street frontage must be landscaped**

Sidewalk Requirements

- Sidewalks required along both road frontages
- If no network exists within 500 feet, **payment in lieu may be permitted**

The proposed commercial zoning is **not directly supported by the FLUM designation**, as the area is not identified as a commercial node or corridor.

TECHNICAL REVIEW & STAFF COORDINATION

The applicant attended a Technical Review Committee (TRC) meeting and a pre-application meeting. Discussions included:

Building Compliance

- Existing structure must be upgraded to meet:
 - ADA accessibility standards
 - Commercial building codes
 - Fire and life safety requirements
 - Utility limitations
 - Buffer and site design requirements

Staff has advised that:

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- The existing structure must be upgraded to meet commercial occupancy standards
- Development requirements will apply regardless of project scale
- Variances will be necessary to address site constraints

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Consistency with Area Character

- The area remains **predominantly rural-residential** in nature
- The proposed use introduces a **commercial activity into a low-density residential setting**

Policy Alignment

- The Future Land Use Map designates the property as **Agricultural–Residential**
- Proposal represents a departure from adopted land use policy, which does not identify this location for commercial activity

Site Constraints

- Limited area for buffers and infrastructure
- Direct access to **Noel C. Conaway Road is subject to GDOT review and approval**
- At this time, access cannot be assumed and may be **restricted or modified based on GDOT requirements**
- This introduces uncertainty regarding site circulation and ingress/egress feasibility

Parking & Development Compliance

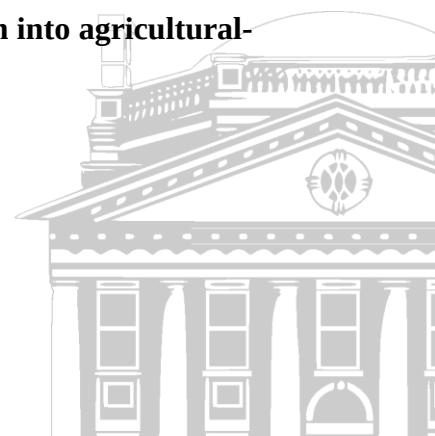
- Any proposed commercial use must comply with **County parking standards**, including:
 - Required number of parking spaces
 - Layout and circulation requirements
 - ADA-accessible parking provisions
- Given the size of the proposed tract, **meeting parking, buffering, and site design requirements simultaneously may present constraints**

Precedent Consideration

- Approval may establish precedent for **incremental commercial expansion into agricultural-residential areas**
- Encourage similar requests along nearby roadways

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- Gradually shift land use patterns outside designated nodes

PLANNING BOARD RECOMMENDATION

The Effingham County Planning Board considered the rezoning request at its regularly scheduled meeting held on May 12, 2026.

During the public hearing, the Board discussed several planning and land use considerations associated with the request, including:

- Traffic circulation and turning movements associated with future commercial development;
- The introduction of B-2 commercial zoning within an area that remains predominantly agricultural-residential in character;
- Potential spot zoning considerations related to the size and location of the proposed commercial tract; and
- The presence of nearby Planned Development (PD) zoning and adjacent townhome development within the surrounding corridor.

Board discussion also included the evolving development pattern within the area and the relationship between the proposed B-2 zoning request and nearby residential and mixed-use growth occurring along the corridor.

Following discussion, the Planning Board voted to recommend approval of the request.

Planning Board Action

Motion	Approval
Vote	Unanimous Approval
Meeting Date	May 12, 2026

FINAL STAFF SUMMARY

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Staff reviewed the request in relation to the Effingham County Zoning Ordinance, surrounding land use patterns, infrastructure availability, traffic considerations, and the policies outlined within the Effingham County Comprehensive Plan.

The request involves rezoning a portion of the property to B-2 (General Commercial) to allow small-scale commercial activity utilizing an existing accessory structure located on the site. The proposed operation includes automotive-related services intended to function within the existing building footprint rather than through new large-scale commercial construction.

The subject property has a history of both commercial and residential zoning classifications. County records indicate the property was **previously rezoned to B-2** (General Commercial) at the **June 6, 2006** Board of Commissioners meeting. Subsequently, at the **September 22, 2014** Board of Commissioners meeting, the property was **rezoned back to AR-2** (Agricultural Residential).

The B-2 zoning district is intended to accommodate a broad range of business activities serving the general public and is generally associated with moderate- to high-intensity commercial uses operating within established commercial corridors and compatible business areas.

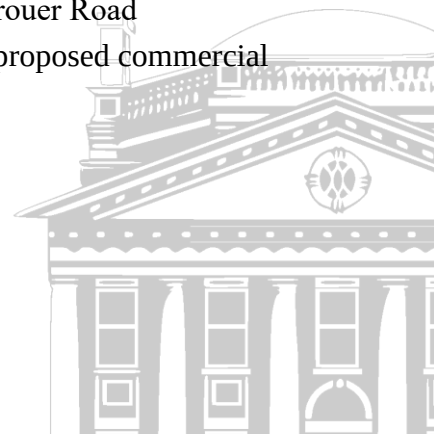
The request proposes to introduce a B-2 (General Commercial) zoning classification within an area that remains predominantly agricultural-residential in character, while also containing nearby Planned Development (PD) zoning and adjacent townhome development. Although the surrounding corridor has experienced continued residential and mixed-use growth, the subject property is not located within an area specifically identified for commercial expansion under the County's Future Land Use Map.

Primary considerations associated with the request include:

- The request is **inconsistent with the Agricultural-Residential Future Land Use designation**
- The site is **not located within a designated commercial node or corridor**
- Compatibility with nearby residential and mixed-use development
- The introduction of commercial zoning would create a **non-uniform zoning pattern within a residential block**
- **Access to Noel C. Conaway Road is subject to GDOT approval**, and may not be feasible as proposed without modifications
- Traffic circulation and access management along GA Highway 30 and Zittrouer Road
- Potential spot zoning considerations related to the size and location of the proposed commercial tract

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- The broad range and operational intensity of uses permitted within the B-2 zoning district
- Long-term corridor transition and development patterns within the area

Collectively, these factors indicate that the request is a policy-level decision regarding the extension of commercial zoning into a rural area.

Additionally, approval may establish a **precedent for incremental commercial encroachment along the corridor**, potentially leading to future land use patterns that are inconsistent with the County's adopted planning framework.

The Board of Commissioners may approve the request, approve the request with conditions, or deny the request.

RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS (IF APPROVED)

Should the Board choose to approve the request, the following stipulations would be necessary to mitigate impacts:

1. Installation of a 6-foot screened privacy fence to reduce visual and noise impacts.
2. Access to Noel C. Conaway Road shall require GDOT approval. If access is not approved, an alternative compliant access plan shall be required.
3. All automotive materials shall be properly stored and handled in accordance with applicable environmental regulations. No outdoor storage shall be permitted unless fully screened from view.

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