



LEE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

T. PAGE THARP GOVERNMENTAL BUILDING

102 STARKSVILLE AVENUE NORTH, LEESBURG, GEORGIA 31763

Tuesday, February 11, 2025 AT 6:00 PM

T. PAGE THARP BUILDING
OPAL CANNON AUDITORIUM

WWW.LEE.GA.US

MEETING MINUTES

Work Session

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Luke Singletary, Chairman District 2
Chris Guarnieri, Vice-Chairman District 4
Dennis Roland, Commissioner District 1
Billy Mathis, Commissioner District 3
George Walls, Commissioner District 5

COUNTY STAFF

Christi Dockery, County Manager
Kaitlyn Good, County Clerk
Jimmy Skipper, County Attorney

The Lee County Board of Commissioners met in a work session on Tuesday, February 11, 2025. The meeting was held in the Opal Cannon Auditorium of the Lee County T. Page Tharp Governmental Building in Leesburg, Georgia. Those present were Chairman Luke Singletary, Vice-Chairman Chris Guarnieri, Commissioner Dennis Roland, Commissioner Billy Mathis, and Commissioner George Walls. Staff in attendance were County Manager Christi Dockery and County Attorney Jimmy Skipper. County Clerk Kaitlyn Good was absent. The meeting was also streamed on Facebook Live. Chairman Singletary called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

2. **INVOCATION**

- A) Pastor Robin Chaplin, Victory Baptist Church, to lead the invocation.
Pastor Robin Chaplin led the invocation.

3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- A) Consideration to approve the minutes from the January 28, 2025 Board of Commissioners meeting.
Commissioner Mathis made the **MOTION** to approve the minutes from the January 28, 2025 Board of Commissioners meeting. Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Guarnieri and Commissioner Walls voting yea.

5. **CONSENT AGENDA**

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

7. **PUBLIC HEARING**

- A) **(Z25-002)** Lanier Engineering Inc. has submitted an application to the Lee County Planning Commission requesting to rezone a portion of the 14.5 acres from C-1 (Neighborhood Commercial District) and R-1 (Single Family Residential District) to C-2 (General Business District). The property owner is Artesian Holdings, LLC and the applicant is Lanier Engineering, Inc. The subject property fronts Marlow Lane just southwest of U.S. Hwy 82 W, parcel number is 029B020, in Land

Lot 262 of the Second Land District of Lee County, Georgia. ***Planning Commission recommends denial.***

Commissioner Mathis informed the public that this application has been withdrawn. He stated that the Board is careful about zoning and rezoning requests. This rezoning request was near residential lots, which the Board has denied applications like this in the past. Commissioner Mathis said that they try to protect the homeowners in the County.

- B) **(Z25-003)** Pinewood Solar has submitted an application to the Lee County Planning Commission requesting a conditional use under Section 70-313 (i), of the Lee County Code of Ordinances, to construct transmission poles over 100 feet tall. The property owner is Jimmy C Smith. The subject property consists of 23.28 acres, is zoned AG-1 (Active Agriculture District), and is located at 237 E Lumpkin Road, Leesburg, GA 31763, parcel number 035076, in Land Lot 242 of the Third Land District of Lee County, Georgia. ***Planning Commission recommends approval.***

Chairman Singletary stated that items 7B through 7H are all regarding the Pinewood Solar Project. He asked that all of these items be done as one single Public Hearing. The public hearing opened at 6:04PM.

Kelsey Joyce, Senior Project Manager at Exterior Energy Resources, stated that she is one of the developers working on Pinewood Solar. A few years ago, a Conditional Use permit was received for Pinewood Solar for solar panels, gentie, substation, and other associated equipment. She said that when this application was filed, it was stated that if the gentie should need to exceed 100 feet in height then the proper variances would be requested. As they are preparing to file for their land development permit and moving closer to construction, they have refined the design of the gentie which is the transmission line. The gentie will connect the solar panels to the substation and the grid. Ms. Joyce stated that it was determined that these poles need to be taller than 100 feet due to critical habitat that needs to be avoided and at the request of landowners. Commissioner Mathis asked if they currently have a contract to sell their electricity. Ms. Joyce stated that due to contract negotiations she is unable to disclose that information, but they are moving forward with the permitting process. She said that they are confident in the ability to reach a contract. Commissioner Mathis asked when they plan to get to the point of finishing negotiations to sell their power. Ms. Joyce stated they hope to have it completed in the next few months. Commissioner Mathis mentioned hearing about this Friday. Ms. Joyce stated that they may hear from a customer on Friday. Commissioner Mathis stated he would not vote for this variance if information couldn't be shared with the Board. He asked why they are just now seeing the poles, because when the Board first heard about this project it was stated that you would not be able to see anything. Ms. Joyce said that the route is set back from property lines. They are requesting the additional height at the request of the homeowners. The landowners are requesting this due to irrigation equipment. If they are not allowed to adjust the heights of the poles, then the ability to irrigate the property would be reduced. Commissioner Mathis asked how much height they would need. Ms. Joyce stated they would need 135 feet above the ground. The poles will be distanced further and not have support wires, meaning that they have to be stronger poles. Commissioner Mathis asked how many landowners there are and if they all requested this. Ms. Joyce stated that two landowners are requesting it for irrigation purposes and one is requesting it due to critical habitat.

Jonathan Wells, Attorney for West Era, discussed the standards for a conditional use permit and why those are met. Firstly, it is not contrary to the ordinance as transmission lines are considered essential services under section 70-312. Second, it is not detrimental to the use or development of adjacent properties if the height of the poles is over 100 feet. Mr. Wells stated that this would not have an effect on the health and safety of the public. The change in height does not change the functioning of the electrical transmission lines. He said that it is not a nuisance due to traffic, noise,

or fume generation. The lots are sufficiently sized, they have 150-foot easements and will not have to change those due to the height.

Sam Johnson asked why they are putting the poles up before they do the solar panels. He asked what it would cost the County to keep chemicals away from the creeks and land. Chairman Singletary stated that the County is not responsible, the EPA and EPD will work with the contractor and it is the contractors' responsibility.

With no further comments or questions from the public, staff or Board members, Chairman Singletary closed the Public Hearing closed at 6:16PM.

- C) **(Z25-004)** Pinewood Solar, LLC has submitted an application to the Lee County Planning Commission requesting a conditional use under Section 70-313 (i), of the Lee County Code of Ordinances, to construct transmission poles over 100 feet tall. The property owner is Griffith Farms, LLC. The subject property consists of 73.71 acres, is zoned AG-1 (Active Agriculture District), and is located at the intersection of Lumpkin Road E and Smithville Road N, Leesburg, GA 31763, parcel number 035079, in Land Lot 244 of the Second Land District of Lee County, Georgia. ***Planning Commission recommends approval.***
- D) **(Z25-005)** Pinewood Solar, LLC has submitted an application to the Lee County Planning Commission requesting a conditional use under Section 70-313 (i), of the Lee County Code of Ordinances, to construct transmission poles over 100 feet tall. The property owner is R & S Farms, Inc. The subject property consists of 130.97 acres, is zoned AG-1 (Active Agriculture District), and is located at Lumpkin Road West, Leesburg, GA 31763, parcel number 035100, in Land Lot 244 of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Land District of Lee County, Georgia. ***Planning Commission recommends approval.***
- E) **(Z25-006)** Pinewood Solar, LLC has submitted an application to the Lee County Planning Commission requesting a conditional use under Section 70-313 (i), of the Lee County Code of Ordinances, to construct transmission poles over 100 feet tall. The property owner is Michigan Homes. The subject property consists of 202.5 acres, is zoned AG-1 (Active Agriculture District), and is located at U.S. HWY 19 N, Leesburg, GA 31763, parcel number 035113, in Land Lot 245 and 246 of the Thirteenth Land District of Lee County, Georgia. ***Planning Commission recommends approval.***
- F) **(Z25-007)** has submitted an application to the Lee County Planning Commission requesting a conditional use under Section 70-313 (i), of the Lee County Code of Ordinances, to construct transmission poles over 100 feet tall. The property owner is Wingate WD & Mary E & Cross Creek Plantations, LLC. The subject property consists of 2,000 acres, is zoned AG-1 (Active Agriculture District), and is located between State Route 195 and Old Leslie Road, Leesburg, GA 31763, parcel number 044002, in Land Lots 145,10,176,11,43,44,21,12,20S1/2 of 22 of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Land District of Lee County, Georgia. ***Planning Commission recommends approval.***
- G) **(Z25-008)** Pinewood Solar, LLC has submitted an application to the Lee County Planning Commission requesting a conditional use under Section 70-313 (i), of the Lee County Code of Ordinances, to construct transmission poles over 100 feet tall. The property owner is Wingate WD & Mary E & Cross Creek Plantations, LLC. The subject property consists of 689 acres, is zoned AG-1 (Active Agriculture District), and is located at 1305 State HWY 195, Leesburg, GA 31763, parcel number 045001, in Land Lots 145,175, and 208 of the Third Land District of Lee County, Georgia. ***Planning Commission recommends approval.***
- H) **(Z25-009)** Pinewood Solar, LLC has submitted an application to the Lee County Planning

Commission requesting a conditional use under Section 70-313 (i), of the Lee County Code of Ordinances, to construct transmission poles over 100 feet tall. The property owner is Griffith Farms, LLC. The subject property consists of 317.48 acres, is zoned AG-1 (Active Agriculture District), and is located at 608 State HWY 195, Leesburg, GA 31763, parcel number 046001, in Land Lot 016 of the Second Land District of Lee County, Georgia. **Planning Commission recommends approval.**

8. **DEPARTMENTAL MATTERS**

- A) **Building Inspection** - Consideration to approve an alcohol license for Mr. Albert Butterfield, Regional Director for Chili's Grill & Bar, located at 2821 Ledo Road.

County Manager Christi Dockery stated that this is a change in ownership.

Commissioner Guarnieri made the **MOTION** to approve an alcohol license for Mr. Albert Butterfield, Regional Director for Chili's Grill & Bar, located at 2821 Ledo Road. Commissioner Mathis seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Roland and Commissioner Walls voting yea.

- B) **Fire & EMS** - Consideration to ratify the repair of Fire Engine Three.

Commissioner Walls made the **MOTION** to ratify the repair of Fire Engine Three. Commissioner Roland seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Guarnieri and Commissioner Mathis voting yea.

- C) **Planning, Zoning & Engineering** - Review of the January 9, 2025 Planning Commission meeting minutes.

The minutes were reviewed as presented.

- D) **Public Works** - Discussion of Lumpkin Road Pipe Project.

Public Works Director Mike Sistrunk stated that he has been getting prices for piping on this road. However, they have a portable pump and would like to see about using it during the next event. Mr. Sistrunk stated that it takes Public Works around two hours to set everything up. He would like to see what the pump can do for this road before having to invest almost \$40,000 on piping. Chairman Singletary stated that this could be a trial to see if it works, then look into permanent piping. Mr. Sistrunk said this would be the same size of piping and hose, the only difference is that it is portable. This will not be able to control the flooding of the home, but it will control the amount of time that the water stays.

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to authorize Public Works staff to install a temporary pipe and pump on Lumpkin Road. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Mathis and Commissioner Roland voting yea.

9. **CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS & GOVERNMENTAL BOARDS/AUTHORITIES**

10. **COUNTY MANAGER'S MATTERS**

- A) Update on County projects.

County Manager Christi Dockery discussed the following updates to County projects: (1) The E-911 Center renovation project has been completed; (2) the Smithville Fire Station tower has been constructed, currently awaiting the FCC license and equipment; (3) the Westover Extension will be opened in March; and (4) currently awaiting the Coston Road engineer to complete the utility

easements, they will add 10 feet to the existing 60 foot easements.

B) Consideration to declare vehicles and equipment surplus.

Commissioner Roland made the **MOTION** to declare vehicles and equipment surplus. Commissioner Walls seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Guarnieri and Commissioner Mathis voting yea.

C) Consideration to purchase vehicles and equipment with surplus funds.

County Manager Christi Dockery stated that Public Works Director Mike Sistrunk has been successful in selling surplus vehicles and has around \$54,000.00 for purchasing new equipment. Public Works gave the Fire Department mowers which will allow them to handle the mowing for their stations.

Commissioner Mathis made the **MOTION** to purchase vehicles and equipment for \$44,987.60 with surplus funds. Commissioner Guarnieri seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** was unanimous with Commissioner Roland and Commissioner Walls voting yea.

11. **COMMISSIONER'S MATTERS**

12. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

13. **COUNTY ATTORNEY'S MATTERS**

14. **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

15. **PUBLIC FORUM**

Sam Johnson - Discussed paving Old Leslie Road.

Paul Clayton- Discussed paving Old Leslie Road.

Alex McColon - Discussed speeding and the possibility of speed tables on Old Stage Road.

With no further comments or questions from the public, staff or the Board. The Public Forum was closed.

16. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

A) The next meeting of the Lee County Board of Commissioners will be February 28, 2025.

Chairman Singletary corrected that the next meeting is February 25, 2025.

17. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 6:30PM.

CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

COUNTY CLERK