

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM

SUBJECT: REZ-2024-01 Gresham Event Venue, 8415 Old Valdosta Rd., E-A to PD-R, ~10.3 acres, Well & Septic

DATE OF MEETING: March 12, 2024

Work
Session/Regular
Session

BUDGET IMPACT: N/A

FUNDING SOURCE:

- Annual
- Capital
- N/A
- SPLOST
- TSPLOST

COUNTY ACTION REQUESTED ON: REZ-2024-01 Gresham Event Venue, 8415 Old Valdosta Rd., E-A to PD-R, ~10.3 acres, Well & Septic

HISTORY, FACTS AND ISSUES: This request represents a change in zoning on the subject property from E-A (Estate Agricultural) zoning to PD-R (Rural Planned Development) zoning. The general motivation in this case is for the applicant to utilize the property as a club, lodge, meeting or event facility, primarily for weddings, family reunions, birthday parties, corporate events, community gatherings, etc., with the ability to accommodate overnight guests. The subject property possesses road frontage on Old Valdosta Road and Salem Church Road, a collector and local road respectively, and is within the Rural Service Area and Agricultural/Forestry Character Area.

The TRC analyzed the request, the standards governing the exercise of zoning power set forth in 10.01.05 of the ULDC, and factors most relevant to this application, including: 1) The nature of the request as it pertains to a rural setting, 2) Current trends of event venues in rural areas, 3) Surrounding agricultural and clustered residential use of lands, and is therefore supportive of the following staff-recommended conditions:

1. Uses permitted in the Estate Agricultural (E-A) zoning district, and
 1. A club, lodge, meeting or event facility, with overnight accommodations, where the operation of the facility is limited to meetings, retreats, celebrations, and weddings for groups no larger than the fire code allows for the proposed buildings/area. Outdoor performances by bands or ensembles that are accessory to a meeting, retreat, celebration, or wedding shall be allowed.
 2. Unless otherwise noted on the Lowndes County Board of Commissioners approved site plan, the use of the property shall be subject to all standards applicable to properties in the E-A zoning district.
 3. The operation of the event facility shall adhere to the Lowndes County Noise Ordinance.
 4. Exterior lighting shall be shielded to avoid direct illumination of adjacent properties.

During the Greater Lowndes Planning Commission (GLPC) meeting, Mr. Holland noted the applicants' venue in neighboring Cook County as a comparable style and size to the proposed operation for this property, and stated that while the site plan shows future buildings allowing flexibility in growth, there was no definitive

timeline for their construction. Conversely, concerns were raised about the potential future growth of the venue and its maximum capacity, if the existing ingress/egress was sufficient to prevent traffic on Old Valdosta Road, and the ability to enforce the noise ordinance. A broader question was raised by the GLPC about how many venues were needed in the county, noting the four approved venues were already booked for the remainder of the year, while acknowledging that others were operating without proper authorization, one in particular in this same area. The GLPC motioned for approval with conditions initially, but the motion failed to pass (3-5); it was then motioned to table for six (6) months to allow a study committee to assess the need for more venues, again failing to pass (4-5). Ultimately, the GLPC made a motion to Deny which passed (5-3).

The following Occupant Loads and Square Footage of other rural event venues are listed below for reference:

Quail Branch – Occupant Load of 296; Total of 11,016 sf

Hallabrook Hill – Occupant Load of 214; Total of 4,812 sf

Fox Hill Plantation – Occupant Load of 250; Total of 5,258 sf

Highgrove Farms – Occupant Load of 467; Total of 5,428 sf (among 4 buildings, highest Occupancy of 250)

- OPTIONS: 1) Approve
2) Approve with Conditions
3) Table
4) Deny

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Board's Pleasure

DEPARTMENT: Planning/Zoning

DEPARTMENT HEAD: JD Dillard

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: