



LUMPKIN COUNTY
Board of Commissioners
Public Hearing Minutes
99 Courthouse Hill
Dahlonega, GA 30533

February 18, 2025
4:30 PM

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 pm. Present were Chairman Chris Dockery and Commissioners Tucker Greene, Bobby Mayfield, Rhett Stringer, and Jeff Moran.

PRESENTATION - Assistant County Manager Rebecca Mincey

1. Presentation

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Joey Homans, 272 GA-9 Dawsonville, came to speak on behalf of his client, DiVine Village. He asked the Commissioners to please consider declining the proposed amendments involving campgrounds, especially extensive campgrounds. He said these changes will not affect anyone besides his client, and it will render even more of their property unusable. He said his client will no longer have pre-meetings, because they came up with the phrase "semi-permanent structures," and discussed things like tent density. Now, it is being proposed to combine RV and tent density and limit it to a certain acreage. Mr. Homans said his client estimates he has lost millions of dollars since the ordinance in 2022, and at least five million out-of-pocket. We have no choice but to file suit, said Mr. Homans. He asked the Commissioners to avoid implementing these proposed revisions regarding campgrounds because this is not balanced.

Robin Hall, 5764 Porter Springs Road, said he came to speak as a citizen and not as a member of the Planning Commission. He thanked Ms. Mincey and staff for their work on these regulations. He had three points to raise regarding the presentation of the proposed revisions. On slide 6 regarding the preliminary and final plat procedures, Mr. Hall said there should be an opportunity for feedback from the Planning Commission after the first approval if there is a significant change in what is being proposed. Second, regarding the division of tracts as laid out in section 26-68, he said the two-year waiting period for tract division should be extended to prevent unscrupulous developers from taking advantage. Mr. Hall's third concern was regarding the proposed regulations on transitional housing and homeless shelters, specifically the stipulation that a maximum of four people could be in each building. He said four may sound like a lot, but there are plenty of families with children that have more than four people.

Pam Dietz had some comments about the plat procedures. She said if staff performs the approval and not the Planning Commission, what ensures that the proper checks and balances are in

place? What procedures are in place for follow-up? She said she knew of at least one instance where a developer lied to the Planning Commission and said something had been done when it had not been.

Melissa Line, the Director of Community Helping Place, wanted to address the issue of homeless shelters and transitional housing. CHP serves about 93 families who have some type of displacement or homelessness, some of which have more than four people in the family. She asked the BOC to please consider it on a case-by-case basis rather than a strict four-person limit. She said CHP would love to be a part of this conversation.

Clinton Crane made some comments regarding subdivision lot sizes and greenspace subdivisions. He said he has been trying for years to make it so that houses have to sit on a minimum of one acre. He said we need to curb growth by limiting the number of new houses that are put in. We also need only one house per acre of land, even if it is in a greenspace subdivision. Mr. Crane said he is against multifamily housing, and we don't want to end up like some of the houses in Dawsonville where they are so close that you can spit on your neighbor's house from your own window. Mr. Crane also said that anyone who is homeless should be able to get help, regardless of whether they have a criminal history or not.

Dave Dietz thanked the Commissioners for addressing cryptocurrency mining operations and compute centers. However, he fears that these regulations will not be enough to protect the community. Several surrounding counties have completely banned crypto-mining businesses because of the noise, water pollution, power usage, and low number of jobs created. The investment just isn't worth all the problems they cause. Mr. Dietz said crypto-mining operations exaggerate their benefits while ignoring water overconsumption, emissions, and high power use. He urged the Commissioners to ban cryptocurrency mining completely.

Alison Faulkner, 368 TS Jarrard Road, said she is also concerned about compute/data centers. Data centers are power and water hogs. After consuming enormous amounts of water to use for cooling, they have to discharge the hot water somewhere. Cooling ponds take up a lot of space. Ms. Faulkner said from what she read online, data centers only create about thirty permanent jobs on average, while the average McDonald's creates about fifty jobs. This is a small benefit for the amount of resources they use.

Steve Sylvester, 215 Stancil Dyer Road, asked for the same subdivision requirements for Agricultural Preservation to be applied to Rural Places. That would make it a 3-acre lot requirement for houses.

Dana LaChance offered some insight from her perspective as a developer. She said certain things are beyond a developer's control, like weather events or utility installation delays. She said the process should have more flexibility to account for these delays. She also said the final plat approval should be with the Planning Commission and not Planning staff because it gives more of a chance for neighbor input. Ms. LaChance also agreed with the concerns about cryptocurrency mining. She said Lumpkin County should just prohibit them entirely like some other counties have done. Ms. LaChance also brought up special easements that would allow people access to travel down creeks or trails. She also agreed with the importance of having resources for homeless people so they can transition out of that horrible situation. Ms. LaChance

ended her comments by saying that Rebecca Mincey and the Planning Department have been very helpful and patient.

Tom Vincent, 95 Porter Springs Drive, commented on the campground regulations. He said it is pretty clear that Mr. Homan's client's main concern is monetary. He does not want increased restrictions on campgrounds because it is a monetary loss for him. If you give him a free pass on this, it will come back to bite you. Future developers will look at what happened and say "You allowed them to do it." Mr. Vincent said it is a monetary issue for the developer, but it is a quality-of-life issue for everyone else.

Michael Mirabella, 148 Piazza Pomino in Montaluce, had some concerns about how the changes to Class VI subdivisions might affect existing subdivisions that are developer-owned or under declarant.

James Brady said he agreed with Mr. Crane's points about too many houses. He used the recent wildfires in California as an example of the devastation that can occur when there are too many houses packed in together. Even one house per acre can be an increased fire hazard. Mr. Brady said we also need to ensure people aren't building too close to the Chestatee River. He traveled to North Carolina to help people affected by the floods from the hurricane, and he witnessed the destruction firsthand. He said something similar could happen here and we need to make people aware.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:43 pm.