

**MINUTES
PUBLIC HEARING
WARE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MONDAY FEBRUARY 10, 2025
4:30 p.m.**

The Ware County Board of Commissioners held a Public Hearing, Monday, April 14, 2025, at 4:30 p.m. in the Ware County Commission Chambers, 305 Oak Street, Suite 201, Waycross, Georgia 31501 with Chairman Elmer Thrift presiding.

CALL TO ORDER	Chairman Elmer Thrift
COMMISSIONERS PRESENT	Commissioner Barry Cox, Commissioner Leonard Burse, Commissioner Timmy Lucas, Commissioner Jon Tindall
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT	None
STAFF PRESENT	County Manager James Shubert; Assistant County Attorney Jennifer Dorminey Herzog; County Clerk Melinda Brooks
PRESS	Danny Bartlett - WJH
INVOCATION	The invocation was waived from Work Session
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE	The Pledge of Allegiance was waived from Work Session

Call to Order:

Chairman Thrift called to order the public hearing for: a) request to name a private roadway, b) request to close/abandon alley in block 234 of Emerson Park subdivision, c) request to adopt zoning for unzoned parts of Ware County, and d) rezoning request for Frontier Estates.

Request to Name Private Roadway

This is a request to consider the naming of a private roadway to "Dead End Road". This private road is located approximately 1200 feet west of the intersection of Elmer Thrift Road and Banks Lane and extends approximately 700 feet to the south ending at the dead end/cul-de-sac.

County Manager Shubert explained that this section of road had inherited the name Elmer Thrift. There are no more address numbers available, and it has become confusing for 911. The County sent out letters to the residents asking for name suggestions. Only one resident responded and suggested either Dead End Road or his family name as the road name. Due to there being multiple land owners on this road, the name Dead End Road was selected.

Support

When the Chairman asked if anyone supported the name change to Dead End Road, no one spoke.

Oppose

When the Chairman asked if anyone opposed the name change, no one spoke.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

Request to Close/Abandon Alley in Block 214 of Emerson Park Subdivision

This is a request to close abandon approximately 500 feet of the alley that runs southwestwardly from New Mexico Avenue to Nevada Avenue located in block 214 of Emerson Park Subdivision. Interim Planning Director Dustin Minchew told the Commission that he contacted by one of the property owners asking to close this alleyway. He said it was put in with the subdivision in 1913 and the County does not maintain it.

Chairman Thrift asked if there is a canal or any public utilities running down the alley, or if anyone uses it. Interim Director Minchew answered no to both questions. Commissioner Burse asked to clarify that the County does not maintain this alley was told he was correct. The Chairman asked for the width of the alley. Interim Director Minchew responded the alley is 10 feet wide. Commissioner Tindall asked if the 10 feet width would be split down the middle between the property owners on either side. Mr. Minchew said it would.

Support

No one spoke to support the closing of the alley.

Oppose

No one spoke in opposition of closing the alley

**Commissioner Cox noted that he just realized that he may have a piece of property adjoining this section of alley way and wondered if that would pose a problem. Assistant County Attorney Herzog stated if Commissioner Cox was agreeable, he would not participate in the public hearing or participate in the vote.*

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

Request to Adopt Zoning for Parts of Ware County not Currently Zoned

This is a request to adopt zoning for the areas of Ware County that are currently unzoned per a map that was approved by the Waycross-Ware County Planning Commission at the January 9 meeting. Interim Director Minchew showed the Commission a map on the monitors showing the areas of the County and all of the City which has been zoned. He also pointed out the areas of the County which are not currently zoned. He said they are wanting to fill in the gaps and ensure that Ware County is in compliance with the requirements of the Comprehensive Plan and eligible for Plan First Enrollment.

He mentioned the following areas and the new zoning: Wahoma and Pine Island would be R-75 MH. Josephine Park is more rural and would be zoned A-Agriculture Forestry. Areas in Jamestown with smaller parcels such as the Spring Street area would be R-75 MH. The area off Jordan Drive would be R-90, and it would be mostly agriculture by the side of railroad. Where the old roller rink is located would be C-1, but an area behind that would be R-75 MH 9 because there are mostly mobile homes there with a few site-built homes. Off Hwy 82, the area by Millwood Plantation would be site-built only and agriculture, which fits that HOA requirement. CDD (Corridor Development District) has been added along Valdosta Highway because it was left off of the previous CDD zoning. That area would have to go through GDOT for driveway requirements.

Chairman Thrift asked what would the zoning would change. Interim Director Minchew explained that it would put basic requirements in for the area and to prevent mixed uses, which could be a nuisance or cause trouble. For an example, he said it would prevent industrial use near a residential use.

Commissioner Cox asked how the department determined what zones to use. Mr. Minchew stated they pretty much used what was in the area. Agriculture Commerce would allow roadside stands or blueberry packaging. For subdivisions with smaller lots, they used R-75 MH to note that livestock should not be in the small lots. Commissioner Cox asked if someone could still request a zoning change, and Mr. Minchew said yes. He gave an example of a junkyard in the Dixie Union area that is zoned GI for general industrial. That would ensure that the appropriate zone is used.

Commissioner Tindall asked if the zoning in place would prevent the data mining boxes from going in without permits. Mr. Minchew responded that currently there are no ordinances in place to prevent them, but the department is currently working on that and will presenting in the future. County Manager Shubert stated the County had previously applied to be a Plan First Community, but was denied due not having Countywide zoning. Being a Plan First Community would allow the County to apply for CDBG grants every year instead of every two years.

Support

No one spoke in support of the rezoning request.

Oppose

Jeff Barbee – Sweat Road

Mr. Barber said some people live in small subdivisions because that is what they can afford. They may have a couple of chickens in this small yard. He feels to change the zoning and not allow that would be overreach by the government. Chairman Thrift asked about the people who do have a goat or couple of chickens. Mr. Minchew said those homeowners with livestock would be grandfathered in and allowed to keep their livestock. This is just in the residential areas. County Manager Shubert said there have been complaints in the past regarding chickens in the residential areas, mostly regarding roosters crowing or the chickens running free through the neighborhood. He said there has been consideration regarding changing text amendments to allow the chickens in the residential areas as long they are in a pen. No one else spoke in opposition.

Added to Regular Meeting Agenda

Request to Rezone Frontier Estates from R-90 & CN to RS and RS FDP

This is a request to change the Ware County Official Zoning Map by the rezoning of Frontier Estates area (Frontier Estates, Dixie Oaks, Woodlands, and Rolling Hills Estates subdivisions from R90 – Residential District and CN – Conservation District to RS – Residential District (single family/site-built) to RS FDP Residential Flood Damage Prevention Overlay District (single family/site-built).

**County Manager stated he would refrain from participating in this public hearing as he lives in the area being discussed.*

**Commissioner Lucas, who was participating via phone, was asked by Assistant County Attorney if he had anything to declare. Commissioner Lucas stated he has property in this area and will refrain from participation.*

Interim Planning Director Dustin Minchew stated the applicant for this item is Patricia A. Lee who brought a petition for this item with the signatures of approximately 64.5% of property owners in the area. The landowners wish to protect the investments of their property and the character of their neighborhood. The Ware County Planning Commission voted unanimously to approve the request. They want to assure that vacant land is developed with similar neighborhood residential and/or other compatible uses that conform to Ware County's land use plan and development principles. In 1977, the area was zoned R-90, which allows multi-family housing.

Support

Henry Taylor agrees with the rezoning. He said the added traffic from multi-family homes would affect the area especially in situations when the trains block the streets. This would only add to the increase in traffic caused by the opening of the through road (Tanner Lane) in Jamestown.

Patricia Lee – 204 Frontier Dr – She said current zoning would allow duplex, triplex, and multi-family units. There are 220 physical addresses, and she was able to get 142 signatures on the petition to get rezoned. Having multi-family housing units could affect the character of the neighborhood and decrease the value of the current properties. An influx in the population would affect the enrollment at Wacona School which is already full. Ms. Lee stated the traffic would certainly increase and the neighborhood has already been experiencing that since the opening of Tanner Lane.

Mr. Jordan – Lawhorn Dr. He does not want multiple unit housing. He moved from Kingsland where he was a police officer to get away from the multi-unit areas because of the population density which can bring increased crime

Tim Corey – 2502 Winchester Dr. He has lived in Waycross off and on for 20 years. His children can ride bikes safely on the street. His neighbor has a deaf child, and population and traffic density could cause unsafe conditions for him. He agrees with the statement that crime can increase along with population density

Assistant County Attorney Herzog told the Chairman that rather than have a lot of duplicate testimony, he could call for a show of hands from those who wish to show support, and this can be noted in the minutes. Chairman Thrift asked for those to raise their hands in support. A quick count showed thirty residents (all in attendance) were in favor of the rezoning.

Oppose

No one raised their hand or spoke up.


CLOSURE

Commissioner Tindall made a motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner Burse seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The public hearing adjourned 6:48 p. m.

Date proposed to be approved: July 14, 2025


Elmer Thrift, Chairman

ATTEST:


Melinda L. Brooks, County Clerk

7-16-2025
Date

