

**Lamar County Board of Commissioners**  
**Workshop Meeting**  
**February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022**  
**2:30 p.m.**

Chairman Glass called the Special Called Meeting to order at approximately 2:30 p.m. Present for the meeting were Chairman Glass, Vice-Chairman Heiney, Commissioner Horton, Commissioner Traylor, County Administrator Townsend, and County Clerk Davidson. The meeting was available via Zoom.

**Development Regulations Update**

Planning and Community Development Director Buice presented a current water system map for the City of Barnesville and the City of Milner. The current Development Regulations allow 1-acre subdivisions where there is a public water line. There has been feedback from the public and the board that this may not be the right fit for Lamar County and the next step is to see if any new regulations change that. There has been discussion about centering the 1-acre subdivision around the water lines inside areas known as circles or bubbles.

Chairman Glass stated that the discussion from the board was prompted by the number of large subdivisions that have come into Lamar County. The 1-acre size is determined by having public water and you need 1-acre to have a septic tank because there is no sewer in the County. Since the nature of the County has been mainly rural, the discussion is about continuing to allow 1-acre lots for major subdivisions in the County or tie them to the circled/bubbled areas in the cities closer to the water lines and change the acreage in the County for major subdivisions to a 5-acre minimum.

Vice-Chairman Heiney said that Planning and Community Development Director Buice conceived the plan to have the higher density in the city areas and preserve the rural areas of the County. Vice-Chairman Heiney said that he moved to Lamar County because it is rural and would like to see it stay this way. It is a quality-of-life issue for the people who live in Lamar County. He does not want Lamar County to have hundreds and hundreds of houses in the rural areas like Henry County and the concept plan gives developers leeway to construct buildings in the city and preserves 5-acre zoning outside the city limits.

Commissioner Traylor said that it is about the infrastructure and the ability to provide public safety to these areas as well as to preserve the fabric of Lamar County.

Commissioner Horton said that this allows the community and Lamar County to have 1-acre lots inside the cities and outside the cities to have 5-acres. The goal is to not stop subdivisions from coming into Lamar County but to slow it down so that it gives the community an opportunity to come together.

Chairman Glass said that he heard for larger landowners outside the bubbles that they perceive it as restricting their property rights because they cannot sell to the developer at a higher price. They only can sell to people who want larger acreage.

**Public Comments**

Bowen Jones of Barnesville Road, Spalding County addressed the board. Mr. Jones said that he is hearing that inside the bubble there will be 1-acre allowed and outside the bubble, there will be 5-acres allowed for zoning. Mr. Jones said that currently, 5-acres is Agricultural Zoning (A-R) so with this proposal he has concerns. He said that 90 percent of what he does is custom homes for people who own the land. He has developed land in the past and was recently on the docket for the Eady Creek Project. Mr. Jones said that he has had the conversation with Planning and Community Development Director Buice for years that 1-acre is too small for a rural setting and below the standards of the surrounding counties. He said that most counties have 3-acres in A-R and nothing greater than 3-acres. With the Eady Creek Project the Department of Transportation stated that they had to have turning lanes and they were told not to come to the meetings because the board would not even consider it. He said that now the property will become 15 driveways instead of a subdivision on a state highway and Eady Creek Road. Mr. Jones said that this is not healthy for the County. He said that as far as the bubbles are concerned, he would want them to follow the corridors on Hwy 18 or Hwy I-75. You are forcing the developers to come within the city limits or a certain radius. The subdivisions such as Riata Equestrian subdivision in Monroe County could come to Lamar County but with the board's proposals, they would not be able to come to Lamar County and apply for zoning. Mr. Jones challenged the board to look at the growth coming from Atlanta and look at what is working and not working. His biggest concern is land value because 99 percent of the people in Lamar County have no idea what is going on in this meeting or even if they have inherited land or even know the value of the land. If 10-acres and a lot are worth \$40,000.00, and the zoning is 5-acres then the land is worth \$80,000.00 but if it was zoned where it was 3-acres then the value goes from \$80,000.00 to \$120,000.00 because you get 3 lots out of 10-acres. However, if was 2-acre zoning then the value would go to \$200,00.00. Mr. Jones said that if you are going to have 5-acre zoning you are cutting the value of the land for everyone outside of the circle. Land is the ultimate asset and there are ways to encourage the types of development that you want such as conservation neighborhoods. Mr. Jones said that having the circles in the cities is forcing people to ride by everyone's house on the way to Barnesville and creating congestion that you do not want to see like they have in McDonough.

Bobby Key of 1064 Five Points Road addressed the board with his objections to the development regulations in comparison to Henry County. Henry County is chaotic. They will build anything and anywhere because they do not care about the infrastructure. The infrastructure did not have a chance to catch up and the perception was there was not enough fire and rescue or police. Mr. Key said that he would propose to limit the lots inside the circles to 2-acres and 5-acres outside of the circles so that it preserves the quality of life for the people in Lamar County. Mr. Key stated that he is not a zero-growth person and would love to see all of the shops in Barnesville full and the merchants prosper but he does not want to see them overrun.

Melissa Stephens of 499 McKenzie Road Milner, Georgia addressed the board. Ms. Stephens stated that she is a realtor and a local businessperson. She has been in Lamar County for a little over 2 years and she lives on an 80-acre tract with her family. It scares her that any of their 8 children may not have the land inherited to them based on restrictions from the board. The land was bought so that their children could have a better quality of life. Their children are in the Lamar County School system and her son plays baseball. Ms. Stephens requested that the board think about any restrictions that are placed on landowners in the County. There are subdivisions in rural

areas in nice communities so limiting subdivisions to circles/bubbles in the cities would be the wrong choice. Subdivisions such as Riata Equestrian subdivision should be a model as to what could be potentially allowed in Lamar County because they are large-acre tracts. Ms. Stephens said that instead of thinking about rules and regulations she wanted the board to think outside of the box. Ms. Stephens said that the Lamar County School System is an open district and anyone from any county can attend so this should not be considered a roadblock. Pushing the circle/bubble area towards the I-75 corridor is a good idea because of the growth along the interstate. Ms. Stephens spoke about the moratorium placed on subdivisions and the issues with the sewer system in Milner. She spoke about homeowner and landowners' rights to their property and the values of their property. Ms. Stephens spoke about tracts of land being broken up with rows of houses and individual driveways. She said that she came from Henry County and wants to see the growth controlled but does not want the growth to stop.

Chip Gardner of 240 Wilson Road addressed the board. Mr. Gardner was the former Chairman of the Spalding County Board of Commissioners. He moved from Spalding County to Lamar County 2 years ago after buying seventy acres of land on Wilson Road so that he could have a farm to raise his grandchildren. He grew up in Henry County in Locust Grove and said that growth happened because of developers annexing property. Mr. Gardner said that you have to have a good relationship with the cities. Mr. Gardner suggested that Lamar County charge impact fees to the new residents so that new services can be paid for out of the impact fee account. Mr. Gardner suggested that they work with the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) on the development regulations and zoning.

Ron Smith of 428 Grove Street addressed the board. Mr. Smith is a Lamar County School Board member and a resident of Lamar County for over 71 years. He said that he has seen a lot of growth over the years and over the last 2 years the growth has been an eye-opener and somewhat troubling. He stated that the Elementary and Middle Schools are almost full. Mr. Smith stated that they are blessed to have all of the schools close together but with the growth, it gets a little tricky. He said that small cracker box houses that are being built in Lamar County are an area of concern because they bring in a family with kids. If you have the larger lots this typically brings in people who are looking for a life without traffic and crime. These families usually do not bring kids so they are not a burden on the school system. They do enhance the property when they build the bigger houses which bring in more taxes for the County. Mr. Smith said that he is very proud of the school system in Lamar County and is one of the greatest schools in the State of Georgia. Mr. Smith said that he is honored to have served in the school system for the last 26 years. Mr. Smith said that he hears the same concerns at their meetings and he agrees with the boards' proposal. You have to have the population in the higher density areas because of the water, sewer, electricity, fire, and police services. Mr. Smith said that he appreciates the Board of Commissioners and appreciates the relationship he has with them.

Ashely Gilles of 425 Abbott Road Barnesville, Georgia addressed the board. She stated that most of the houses that catch on fire in the County burn to the ground and bringing in subdivisions are not good for this reason. Ms. Gilles said that she preferred subdivisions to be more spread out.

Vice-Chairman Heiney stated that good points had been brought before the board that need to be considered. The overall picture is that they have seen a large influx of new homes and there is no

infrastructure to support this. Vice-Chairman Heiney said that it is a big mistake to allow this type of growth to occur when you have not caught up. He said that as he travels to Atlanta for work and is in a steady stream of cars all the way to I-75. Vice-Chairman Heiney said that the Road Department, the Fire Department, the Law Enforcement, and the School System. will be stretched because of the influx of all the new homes.

Penny Hutson of 131 Creek Drive Milner, Georgia addressed the board. Ms. Hutson said that there are 2 new subdivisions in the City of Milner; Vintage Park and Woodall Estate subdivisions. Ms. Hutson stated that Vintage Park was slated for 300 houses and acreage started at .19 of an acre and then changed to .14 of an acre for 95 percent of the lots. There is only one way in and out in the Woodall Estates subdivision. The houses range from 1500 to 1800 square ft. There were several meetings held in Milner about the fire hazards and the issue with the closeness of the houses in the subdivisions. Ms. Hutson said that there are issues with the mailboxes and the narrowness of the streets in the Vintage Park subdivision. Ms. Hutson said that they do not have a stoplight in Milner and they just got railroad crossings. The traffic in Milner, Georgia has increased tremendously and they are going to need more services such as a fire and law enforcement and the City of Milner does not have the money to pay for it.

Laura Jones of 211 Needleleaf Drive addressed the board in regards to an issue with code enforcement and her house. Ms. Jones said that she is a widow of a Veteran and a Law Enforcement Officer and 2 years after her husband passed away, she purchased a home in Needleleaf Subdivision. Ms. Jones wanted to know how her house passed the code inspection because her house was never sealed and her dryer vent piping was deemed a fire hazard. She said that she has spent over \$23,000.00 on repairs because the builder has not been held responsible. Ms. Jones said that her issue is with the Code Inspector. She said that there are also septic issues in the Needleleaf subdivision. Ms. Jones said that her house was never sealed and the grass is growing inside her house. Chairman Glass said that he would address this issue outside of the meeting and would give her a call tomorrow and at the latest on Wednesday.

Commissioner Traylor said that they heard some good comments including 3-acres and the impact fees. He said that they just recently hired 9 firefighters and they just passed the Transportation Special Local Options Sales Tax (SPLOST). Commissioner Traylor said that he worked in Henry County and remembers the traffic on Hwy 155 in McDonough. He said that he bought forty acres in a subdivision that is now growing and they never thought it would. Commissioner Traylor said that this is why they are trying to get it right.

Commissioner Thrash joined the meeting via Zoom. She said that in the 1800s when Commissioners first started their primary roles were Public Safety and Roads. This is one of the things that they have taken into consideration and they are not trying to reduce anyone's property values or homeowners' rights. They are trying to do what is best for a County as a whole and they are doing the citizens an injustice if they allow buildings to outgrow the safety infrastructure.

Commissioner Horton said that they need to put more time into the development regulations after hearing everyone's comments. He said that he reports to about 18,500 constituents including Lamar County, the City of Barnesville, and the City of Milner. Commissioner Horton said that his

job is to hear everyone and make the best decision according to his ability and make the best out of what they are trying to do.

Ms. Stephens said that she has heard the comments about traffic and infrastructure and asked if they were just pushing the building to higher density areas on 1-acre lots. She said that by pushing this all into the inner cities, where everyone lives, they are still going to have to commute to Hwy 36. Chairman Glass said that they do not have any authority within the city limits. Ms. Stephens said that if they allow all of the growth in the inner cities, they are still going to have the traffic problems where people are traveling on Hwy 18, Hwy 341, and Hwy 36 and since they are pushing the growth out of the rural areas into the cities and wondered how this would fix the problem.

Vice-Chairman Heiney said that they would take all of this into consideration and said that his goal is to reduce traffic.

Commissioner Traylor stated that currently 1-acre lots are allowed everywhere in the County and if they had done this 10 years ago those 1-acre spaces might be full. The idea is to have a larger density population like they have in Atlanta.

Ms. Stephens said that she loves living in the community and thanked the Commissioners for hearing her voice and announced that she is opening a restaurant within the next 2 weeks.

Chairman Glass said that this meeting was about bringing the proposal to the citizens so that they could have something to draw feedback from to make the best decision. They need all the right facts to rely on to make the right decision and having this input is a great benefit. Chairman Glass said that the next step is to pull the thoughts in from the citizens and look at all the alternatives. The goal is still the same, control the growth while making sure it works for the citizens of the County, the culture of the County, and the future of the County. Chairman Glass said that they will speak to other counties, citizens, and ACCG to get more specifics and to help them make the right decision.

### **Adjournment**

Commissioner Horton made a motion to adjourn the Special Called Meeting at 3:35 p.m. Commissioner Traylor seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

THE LAMAR COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Charles Glass, Chairman

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Robert Heiney, Vice-Chairman

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Bennie Horton, Commissioner

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Ryran Traylor, Commissioner

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Nancy Thrash, Commissioner

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ Carlette Davidson, County Clerk