

WHITE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
PUBLIC HEARING: LAND USE REGULATION

Wednesday, December 27th, 2023
6:00 pm

White County Senior Center
1239 Helen Hwy, Cleveland, Ga. 30528

Those present were Larry Freeman, R.K. Ackerman, Dona K. Burke, Charlie Thomas, and Brad Ash.
Staff members present were Tammy Carter, John Sell, and Mercedes Dodd.

Chairman Thomas called the meeting to order. Mr. Ackerman gave the invocation. No changes made to the agenda.

Application of Dahai “Ocean” Zhang to request a conditional use permit located at 2414 Duncan Bridge Road, Sautee Nacoochee, Georgia, 30571. Tax map and parcel 073-056. Total acreage is 1.32. Proposed use is to place in “Short Term Rental” program. Present zoning is R-1 Residential Single Family.

Ms. Carter gave a summary of the application. The applicant nor a representative was present. Chairman Thomas stated the item would be moved to the end of the agenda if a representative were present before closing the public hearing.

Application of Tamara and Lawrence Adelberg to redistrict property located at 37 Thornblade Trail, Cleveland, Georgia, 30528 from to C-1 Community Commercial District to R-1 Residential Single Family District. Tax map and parcel 017-094C. Total acreage is 1.16. Present zoning is C-1 Community Commercial District.

The applicants, Tamara and Lawrence Adelberg of 37 Thornblade Trail, were present. Ms. Carter gave a summary of the application. Mr. Adelberg explained the request is to convert the zoning to residential since it is a residential building. When asked if the property is part of the subdivision, Ms. Adelberg said not according to the plat or the county. She said the property is hard to sell as commercial zoning.

Chairman Thomas asked if anyone would like to speak for the application, there was no response. He asked if anyone would like to speak against the application, there was no response. Chairman Thomas closed the hearing. Ms. Carter advised the applicant of the next meeting on January 2nd.

Application of David Fain to request a conditional use permit located at 220 Black Road, Cleveland, Georgia, 30528. Tax map and parcel 062-032. Total acreage is 23.32. Proposed use is a telecommunications tower. Present zoning is A-1 Agriculture Forestry District.

The applicant, David Fain of 372 Black Road, was present. Ms. Carter gave a summary of the application. Mr. Fain explained that he lives on the adjacent parcel and was approached by a tower company who asked him to represent them in the land use meetings and do the due diligence for a new cell tower site. He said this area does not have coverage for the community, which consistently drops calls along Highway 115, and that he had been approached multiple times asking why he could not provide service near his existing telecommunications business, to which he would explain that it is up to the carriers to fund that expense. When asked if the tower location had been determined, Mr. Fain explained it may not end up on this particular parcel due to the lengthy federal and county involved processes but this is the first step to find out if it would be possible. When asked if any structures would be in the fall zone, he said the barn he owns would be and said the proposed tower would meet all county code criteria.

Chairman Thomas asked if anyone would like to speak for the application.

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Thomas Kennedy of 586 Mountain Meadows Road said he loses cell signal going down Highway 115. He stated that nobody wants infrastructure built next to them but they have to have it. He explained he would rather it not be built anywhere, but you cannot use technology without it so it will be built at some point. He said, related to the impact of telecommunication towers, there are a lot of studies on the pro and con for them, but there is no definitive study.

Chairman Thomas asked if anyone would like to speak against the application.

Tim Puckett of 76 Homestead Drive said he understands there is a need, but he built his home 25 years ago to face Yonah and Pink Mountain. He said he has no desire to have a cell tower view and there is a lot of rural property in the area, whereas this one abuts to R-1 Residential that has others who enjoy the mountain views. He explained you have to have progress, but said there needs to be long thinking about this before taking steps to go this far.

Ann Puckett said she is Tim Puckett's wife and shares his concerns and understands progress has to happen. She explained they built their home where they did because it is a safe community and they love it there, but they do not want to look out to see a cell tower or have complications related to the tower. She expressed health concerns for her and her family.

Shane Betterton of 347 Antioch Church Road said he strongly disagrees with the tower. He explained he purchased an EMF reader and visited many areas in the county, including the high school, and was surprised by his findings. He said he does not want to be anywhere near a tower where that is happening and referenced EMF readings from Duluth and Buford Highway, adding that he understands the need for communication. He stated he does not want this to turn into the city and believes towers are strategically being placed to kill them, explaining there are a lot of tests and research conducted on the impacts of towers.

Jodi Woodall of 207 Mountain Meadows Road said she is opposed and agrees with the others. She said she is more concerned with the health issues and does not want them to be guinea pigs. She explained there is a church next door and children nearby, adding that she bought there because of the view of the mountains.

Doug Hochstetler of 347 Hidden Meadows said this is in his front door and explained there are many others that have children who are more susceptible to radiation. He asked what A-1 Residential meant, to which Mr. Sell responded is Agricultural zoning and that the request is for a conditional use permit for the purpose of a cell tower. Mr. Hochstetler said these towers are heavy duty with 5G and a lot of this needs to be thought out because of the many pros and cons. He said he feels there will be a lot of controversy once people figure out what is going on.

Chairman Thomas asked Mr. Fain if he had anything to add.

Mr. Fain explained he likes the country too, that he has been here his whole life, and purchased his 23 acres to keep from having homes built next to his property. He said everybody needs to do their part to

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keep the area rural and the community does not need to do without what other communities have. He said cell towers are a necessary evil and they should not do without because of people moving in for the views. In reference to the Radio Frequency (RF), he said he has been in this business for 30 years and would know if there was something dangerous for children. He explained there is no difference between concentrations from the tower to next to your ear, aside from concentrations being higher at the discharge but they dissipate to levels that are minimal in a matter of 100 feet. He said his workers have RF readers on their chests and it is rare for one to go off when working on a tower.

Mr. Fain stated companies look for areas in their search range and this area is, so it could go across the street but there is not a tract any more conducive than this one. When asked if the company would be willing to make the tower blend better, such as making it look like a tree, Mr. Fain said no, a 190-foot tree would not blend in for that area and the tower would meet the tower application criteria as it is. When asked how close he lives to the site and if he is worried about the tower, Mr. Fain said he lives 600 feet from it and he is not worried about the effects of this on him or his family.

Chairman Thomas closed the hearing. Ms. Carter advised the applicant of the next meeting on January 2nd.

Motion to adjourn made by Ms. Burke and seconded by Mr. Ackerman. Motion was unanimous.