

MINUTES

Valdosta-Lowndes Zoning Board of Appeals
*Valdosta City Hall Annex Multi-Purpose
Room 300 North Lee Street,
Valdosta, Georgia*

Tuesday September 2, 2025, 2:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

John “Mac” McCall
Allan Strickland
Victoria Copeland
Nancy Hobby
John Hogan

MEMBERS ABSENT

Nathan Brantley
Keith Godfrey
Marion Ramsey

STAFF PRESENT

Lauren Hurley
Margaret Torres
Trinni Amiot
J.D. Dillard

VISITORS PRESENT

Paul McNeal (Williams Investment Co.)
Mike Williams (Williams Investment Co.)
Rick Williams (Williams Investment Co.)
Steve Williams (Williams Investment Co.)
Bryan Reno (Reno’s Collision)

CALL TO ORDER

John “Mac” McCall

Calling of meeting to order at 2:32 p.m. and explanation of meeting process to all those in attendance.

CITY OF VALDOSTA CASES:

APP-2025-13-Williams Investment Co. (W. Hill Ave) Request for a Variance to LDR 230-9 (E)(5) as it pertains to Billboards in the C-H (Highway Commercial) Zoning District. The subject property is located on W. Hill Ave in Valdosta GA (all or part of Tax Parcel 0088B 016).

Lauren Hurley presented case of request for variance for a billboard. She stated that the owner is requesting to replace a billboard that was blown down by the hurricane, but they are proposing to move the billboard 125ft to the east closer to the parcel line. She gave regulations in LDR concerning billboards stating that they must be 1250 radial feet from another. She showed on the overhead that there is a billboard directly across W. Hill Ave. and another that is owned by the applicant further down on the same side of the street.

Nancy Hobby verified that there was another billboard on the same side of the road.

Lauren Hurley stated that it was and that it is also owned by the applicant. She then gave the definition of billboard in LDR and explained that sign regulations for freestanding signs state that they must be on a lot with a building, but this is vacant property. Lauren then gave specific regulations pertaining to billboards in the LDR. She explained that erecting a new billboard within the City of Valdosta would require a variance to all these regulations. She stated that the billboard itself is a non-conforming use and that to alter, enlarge or move the sign would then increase the non-conformity. She then outlined what the LDR states about non-conforming uses of structures and time limits of those. She stated that the moving of the sign makes it difficult to consider the variance at all. She then stated that if the sign were to stay in its same spot, it would need a variance to the distance requirements from any other billboard.

Allen Strickland asked if the billboard was grandfathered because it was there before the LDR was in place.

Lauren stated that it was and that was why she included all the other regulations so that it could be discussed.

Chairman McCall asked if the sign were to go back in the same place that it was, that they could do that if they did it within the 12-month limit of September 27th.

Lauren Hurley stated that they would still need a variance because of the distance to another billboard.

Chairman McCall clarified that even if they were to put the sign back exactly as it was and whether the reconstruction clause was to apply.

Lauren Hurley stated that 50% would also apply. She then stated that the sign that was there was gone now so if they were to reuse materials that were there, that would be unsafe and would not be recommended.

Chairman McCall clarified that if they could reuse 50% of what was there, then they could.

Lauren Hurley stated that it was correct. She then stated that the hardship is the hurricane, which is a fair argument, but with the applicant going far beyond the circumstances, that means more of a variance.

Chairman McCall stated that the hurricane would be enough of a hardship to reconstruct it as it is, but not to completely relocate it. He then brought up a concern that if they were to be able to rebuild the sign utilizing at least 50% of the materials in the same place that this would still be the primary sign for that piece of property which would mean if that property if further developed that they could not put any other signage there because of that one being the freestanding sign for the site without a variance.

Lauren stated that it was correct and stated that each lot is allowed one freestanding sign and showed the LDR. She then stated that this would be the freestanding sign for this lot meaning a tenant that would come in would not be able to have a freestanding sign of their own. She stated that if they wanted to erect their own freestanding sign, they would have to request a variance.

Chairman McCall asked for clarification that even if this variance to move this sign 125 ft that this will not override the variance process if the piece it is on is then parceled out and developed, that this variance would not override their need for their own variance.

Nancy Hobby asked if moving the sign 125ft where it would be on the map.

Lauren Hurley showed the site plan on the aerial and showed the proposed location. She stated it is close to the eastern property line.

Chairman McCall stated that it is right behind the existing warehouse located on the property adjacent.

Lauren Hurley stated that raises the question as to whether it will be visible going westward. She then shows a street view of where it will be located.

Chairman McCall noted that there were no pictures of the proposed sign and asked if it was a single-faced or double-faced sign.

Allen Strickland stated that it appears to be a double-faced sign.

Lauren Hurley stated that it is double-faced but would be a reduction in the square footage of the sign.

Chairman McCall clarified that it was the new sign and asked if it was a double-faced back-to-back.

Lauren Hurley stated it was and that it what is proposed is 360 sq ft.

Chairman McCall asked if there were any other questions for staff.

Nancy Hobby asked if they were to put the sign back where it was and they requested a variance; would staff be opposed to it.

Lauren Hurley that she would recommend denial only because there was an inventory done in 2007 of all billboards and a lot of the billboards like this one were non-conforming structures. When it came down, they did not want them replaced as far as Council was concerned at that time. She stated that as far as she knows, Council has not changed their minds on changing the regulation. She stated that when they come down, they do not want them to be erected again. She then shows a street view showing the density of signs on W. Hill Ave. She stated that the purpose of the section in the LDR was to make it impossible to put up a new billboard.

Nancy Hobby asked if that only pertains to non-conforming billboards.

Lauren Hurley stated that it pertained to any billboard. She then stated there are specific rules for non-conforming billboards.

Nancy Hobby asked if they were limiting the number of billboards based on rules set in 2007.

Lauren Hurley agreed and stated there have been no additional billboards since 2007.

Nancy Hobby asked even with the tremendous growth that has happened since that time. She then asked what route they prefer for businesses to go with for advertisement.

Lauren Hurley stated they can have their own freestanding signs and wall signs.

Allen Strickland stated that they can have a freestanding sign on site, but not a freestanding and a billboard.

Lauren Hurley stated that it was correct.

John Hogan asked if the applicant also owns the land.

Lauren Hurley confirmed that was correct.

Chairman McCall asked if staff knew what the DOT distance requirement was.

Lauren Hurley stated that she did not.

Mr Williams stated from the audience that it is 500 ft on the same side of the road.

Chairman McCall asked if the applicant or applicant's representation would wish to address the board.

Rick Williams steps to the podium and gives the property history and the history of the area. He stated that they are requesting to replace the sign with a smaller single-pole sign and move it 125ft to the east to approximately 25 ft from the corner of the property line so it will be out of the way of future development. He stated that if they want to subdivide some of that property in the future, it was his understanding that he would need to block out approximately 4000 sq ft of land for that billboard. He stated that Lauren had said a lot and would have to have a 60 ft frontage so that is

where he came up with the figure. He stated that it would ruin the development of the property left of the current driveway entrance into the property. He stated that the property is pretty viable for the community and what they are wanting to accomplish there. He then stated that they are asking for two things. One to put the sign back up which is a sign that they erected in 1989 and was a DOT and City approved sign. He stated that at that time it was a conforming sign. He stated they understand that since that time, some rules have changed. He stated that they are requesting the opportunity to be able to put the sign back up and move it to the corner of the property with something more attractive that has been there.

Mike Williams stepped up and stated that the parcel to the right is under contract right now to be developed with Auto Zone. He also stated that Dunkin Donuts is under construction in front of the Holiday Inn on the west side of Hospitality Dr. He stated that the parcel between there and Waffle House has been purchased, and they have 29 acres that they plan on developing. He stated that if they must block out that area for the sign, that is the only 60 ft road frontage that they have left with 29 acres left to develop. He stated that realistically the sign needs to slide to the east to not be in the front door of a potential development.

Chairman McCall clarified with the applicant that if they put the sign back and develop the piece of property for Auto Zone, that Auto Zone cannot have their own freestanding sign.

Mike Williams stated that Auto Zone will be on the west side of that driveway. He stated that the sign was on the east side of the driveway.

Chairman McCall stated that it was still one piece of property.

Mike Williams stated that it was incorrect and that they were selling Auto Zone one-acre tract.

Chairman McCall clarified that they are carving out Auto Zone their own piece.

Mike Williams confirmed that was correct.

Chairman McCall stated that because they are on their own piece of property, they would be allowed their own sign.

Rick Williams stated that the piece they are parceling out would be to the right of the driveway entrance.

Chairman McCall clarified with the applicant that were they are proposing the sign to go is further down the road next to the metal warehouse building.

Mike Williams stated that it was correct. He also stated that they are under contract with Auto Zone in the due diligence phase. He then stated that for future development of the remaining property, the sign really needs to move further east to accommodate that.

Chairman McCall clarified that they are moving the sign to cut down visual clutter to further develop the property by moving the sign, thus adding back visual clutter and then when they go to develop the remaining property, they would need to add more signage.

Mike Williams stated that they would at that time come back from another variance.

Rick Williams stated that they recognize that they need to separate that sign out on a parcel of its own into a 4000 ft lot and lose the dirt to develop to have the sign and allow for other parcels to have signs of their own.

Lauren Hurley stated that it would not meet that property would not be developable in any way.

He stated that you could park on it and plant flower beds.

Lauren Hurley stated that a building could be built on it.

Chairman McCall stated that they just could not erect a pylon sign and that they would need a variance for another sign.

Mike Williams asked what size sign is allowed on the parcel to the east.

Lauren Hurley stated that if there is a building there, that sign regulations stated that the maximum size is 24ft high and 75 sq ft for freestanding signs.

Chairman McCall stated for clarification that is if the other sign is not there.

Lauren Hurley stated that it is correct.

Rick Williams stated that billboard they are requesting is just more attractive than the one that was there, has less square footage and will be tucked over in the corner.

Nancy Hobby addressed Lauren Hurley. She stated for standards for DOT versus City standards, that DOT is stricter on non-conforming signs. She then asked her where the City came up with the guidelines that were established in 2007 for the sign inventory and their requirements such as the 1250 radial feet from another.

Lauren Hurley stated that it was probably from other cities. She stated that the LDR was taken from a similar city and then altered to fit what was wanted in our city and specifically for billboards so that they could not be on every corner. They felt that 1250 radial feet was a good enough distance between billboards.

Nancy Hobby asked if she knew if they were cities in the State of Georgia.

Lauren Hurley stated that she was not sure.

Chairman McCall asked if there were any other questions for the applicants. He then asked if there was anyone in support of the case who would like to speak. Then he asked if there was anyone in opposition. Then asked staff if their office was contacted. Lauren Hurley stated that no one had contacted her office. Chairman McCall then asked if anyone would care to make a motion.

Allen Strickland made a motion to grant the variance to move it 125 ft east and meet all setbacks, height and size requirements.

Lauren Hurley stated that maximum square footage for a sign is 75 sq ft. She asked for clarification on the motion by saying that there are 3 variables to this variance for location, moving it 125ft and size.

Chairman McCall clarified that what he thinks Allen Strickland is saying is to grant the variance to move it but limit the size.

Allen Strickland clarifies that his motion is to allow the sign to be moved, meet all setback requirements and whatever size is allowed in that position. He stated that he was not saying that they could have additional height or square footage.

Lauren Hurley asked if that meant 75 sq ft.

Chairman McCall clarified that and 24 ft in height along with the other constraints required but allow the movement.

Allen Strickland stated that was the motion he was going to make.

Rick Williams spoke up and stated that what he understood was 360 sq ft, but that the verbiage stated something around 400 sq ft.

Lauren Hurley clarified that it is for replacement billboards in the same location.

Rick Williams stated that it was the premise they were going by and that is why they came back with a 12x30 which was less than the larger size that is allowed. He stated that the stacked billboard that was existing was 384 sq ft. and they were going to downsize it. He stated they were going to a single face pole sign which was their request.

Lauren Hurley clarified that by moving the sign, it becomes a brand-new sign.

Rick Williams asked if it was possible to stay with the 12x30 back-to-back sign.

Lauren Hurley stated that was the vote was for and that the board will have to make the motion.

Nancy Hobby stated she understood what he was motioning, but thought they were requesting an 8x24.

Rick Williams stated that was what he was requesting.

Allen Strickland stated that was what they were asking for, but the motion that he made was that he would let them move it 125ft, meet all requirements per regulation in that new location as a new construction which means it is limited to 24ft in height and 75 sq ft and they would go from there and see.

Chairman McCall stated they have a motion and asked if anyone would care to make a second.

Nancy Hobby seconded the motion. Vote: 4-0 Unanimous

LOWNDES COUNTY CASES:

VAR-2025-14-Reno's Quality Collision and Repair LLC Request for a Variance to Chapter 4-01-02 (E) of the ULDC as it pertains to the standards for building location and heights (setbacks). The subject property is located at 2421 Highway 41 South (all or part of Tax Parcel 0166 095).

Trinni Amiot presents the case for applicant requesting variance for a setbacks. Property sits on a corner on Hwy 41S. She stated that he was granted a variance in 2019. She stated he is requesting 9 feet. She showed street view and aerial of the property. She stated that the structure was built and did not know that his contractor did not pull permits and was stopped. TRC did not have problems except for the outdoor storage and screen of the property.

Chairman McCall clarified that technically the variance should have been requested previously.

Bryan Reno stepped forward and stated that Walker's Construction was hired to build it for him and did not pull the proper permits and he was unaware.

Chairman McCall if there were any questions for staff. He then asked if there was anyone there in support or opposition. He then asked if their office was contacted.

JD Dillard stated that the adjacent property owner had contacted them just curious about what the variance was for.

Chairman McCall then asked if anyone would care to make a motion.

John Hogan made motion to approve siting criteria D. Nancy Hobby seconded the motion. Vote: 4-0 Unanimous

OTHER BUSINESS:

Meeting Minutes:

John Hogan made motion to approve meeting minutes as presented. Victoria Copeland seconded motion. Vote: 3-0 in favor-1 abstain. Motion approved.

Attendance Review:

Keith Godfrey-work obligations

Nathan Brantley-son had medical appointment

Marion Ramsey-work obligations

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 3:17 p.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John MacCall", written over a horizontal line.

John "Mac" McCall, Chairman

10-7-25 Date

