CITY OF LAVONIA PLANNING COMMISSION

PLANNING & ZONING – MINUTES

August 31, 2026

5:30 PM

Present: Laurie Whitworth, Pam Stone, Bruce McGee, Ben White, and Morris Rivers

Media: Shane Scoggins, Franklin County Citizen

Staff: City Manager – Robert Ogburn
Planning and Zoning Administrator – Alexandria Gunter
Mayor – Courtney Umbehant

Item 1. **Call to Order**
Ben White called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

Item 2. **Invocation/Pledge**
The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, followed by an invocation led by Board Member Bruce McGee.

Item 3. **Approval of Minutes – July 27, 2026**
A motion to approve the minutes of the July 27, 2026 meeting was made by Board Member Pam Stone and seconded by Board Member Morris Rivers. The motion carried.

Item 4. **Old Business**

a. R-2026-004 – Rezone

Stanton Porter (73 Church St Winder, GA), representing Ponder Development LLC, and Ed Ficky (115 Sunset Dr Tiger, GA) presented the application to rezone approximately 20 acres on Highway 17 from B-2 to R-1B for single family residential development. The Commission had previously held a work session and developed a list of recommended conditions to accompany the approval. The applicant expressed agreement with all proposed conditions and noted a willingness to partner with the City going forward.

The conditions recommended by the Commission included sidewalks with square curbing, street lamps, speed risers, green space with playground or recreational area of approximately 2 to 3 lot sizes, a well-designed entrance with landscaping, an HOA to be established and recorded prior to final plat approval, privacy and security fencing of 6 to 8 feet along the I-85 border and adjacent commercial properties, a 50-foot green buffer on the exterior perimeter, a centralized bus stop coordinated with the school system, and Hardie or cement board siding on all homes. The Commission noted this was an opportunity to set a quality standard for future residential development in Lavonia.

No public comments were received.

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Motion to approve R-2026-004, rezoning from B-2 to R-1B with the stated conditions, was made by Board Member Bruce McGee and seconded by Morris Rivers. The motion carried unanimously.

Item 5. New Business

a. R-2026-005 – Rezone

Kenneth Gary (5550 Golf Club Dr Braselton, GA), applicant, presented a request to rezone approximately 13.60 acres on Cornog Road from B-3 to R-1A for a single-family residential subdivision of approximately 53 homes. Mr. Gary proposed a "country road" design without curb, gutter, or sidewalk, relying on graded ditches and a retention pond for stormwater management, citing cost savings and aesthetic preference. The Commission debated this approach, with Board Member Bruce McGee expressing preference for curbs and sidewalks consistent with the standards set in the prior agenda item, noting aesthetic and city identity concerns. Ultimately, the Commission included sidewalks as a condition of approval.

Additional conditions agreed upon included speed risers, green space with a fenced dog park and play area, an HOA established prior to home sales, cement fiber or Hardie board siding, a monument entrance, street lighting, crepe myrtle landscaping, a safety fence along the railroad boundary, and a 50-foot right of way. Board Member Morris Rivers noted a personal connection to the area and expressed a responsibility to be transparent with nearby residents, recommending that the community be informed and directed to attend City Council meetings to voice any concerns.

No public comments were received. Board Member Morris Rivers recused himself from the vote.

Motion to approve R-2026-005, rezoning from B-3 to R-1A with the stated conditions and a 50-foot right of way, was made by Pam Stone and seconded by Laurie Whitworth. The motion carried 4 to 0 (Morris Rivers abstained).

b. V-2026-002 – Variance

Mr. Gary requested a variance to reduce the required side setback in the R-1A district from 15 feet to 10 feet on the Cornog Road property, allowing a minimum of 20 feet between structures. The applicant cited land cost as the primary reason for seeking the additional lots. No public comments were received.

Motion to approve V-2026-002, reducing the side setback from 15 feet to 10 feet, was made by Bruce McGee and seconded by Pam Stone. The motion carried 4-0 (Morris Rivers abstained).

c. AX-2026-003 – Annexation

The Commission first addressed the companion rezoning item R-2026-006 prior to the annexation vote, as required by procedure.

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d. **R-2026-006 – Rezoning**
Michael Grizzle (526 Capri Pt Lavonia, GA), applicant, presented a request to rezone approximately 4 acres at 387 Wright Street from Rural Residential under the Franklin County Unified Development Code to R-1B. Mr. Grizzle noted that two of the three parcels comprising the overall site were already partially within the city and effectively zoned R-1B, and that the subject parcel is accessible only via a City street. The proposed development would consist of single-family homes arranged around a cul-de-sac. No public comments were received.

Motion to approve R-2026-006, rezoning the property to R-1B, was made by Laurie Whitworth and seconded by Morris Rivers. The motion carried unanimously.

e. Returning to: AX-2026-003 – Annexation
With the rezoning approved, the Commission considered the annexation of the 4-acre parcel identified as Franklin County Tax Parcel 062B 013 into the corporate limits of the City of Lavonia. The property is surrounded by City-zoned land and has access only from a city street. No public comments were received.

Motion to approve AX-2026-003, annexing the subject property into the City of Lavonia, was made by Pam Stone and seconded by Bruce McGee. The motion carried unanimously.

Item 6. **Closing Comments**
There were no closing comments.

Item 7. **Adjourn**

Meeting was adjourned at 6:49 PM.

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Ben White, Chairman Alexandria Gunter, Planning and Zoning Administrator

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