

HABERSHAM COUNTY
GEORGIA | Est. 1818

HABERSHAM COUNTY

Planning & Development

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MINUTES
HABERSHAM COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
Public Hearing
Tuesday, August 4, 2026

The Habersham County Planning Commission held a public hearing on Tuesday, August 4, 2026, at the Habersham County Courthouse, located at 295 Llewellyn St. in Clarkesville, Georgia.

Planning Commission Members Present: Greg Hill, Larry Phillips, D. Higgins, Mike Roberts, Ronald Lewallen, & Jason Smith.

Also present was Mike Beecham, Planning & Development Director, & Troy Dills, Planning & Development Assistant Director, and Habersham County Attorney Paul Frickey.

Commissioner Emily Herrin was unable to attend.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

Chairman D. Higgins called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

INVOCATION:

The invocation was given by Commissioner Jason Smith.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Approved without change.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Approved without change.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None.

OLD BUSINESS:

CU-26-04: Mitchell Payne is seeking a Conditional Use to be allowed to operate a Gas-Powered Go Kart Track and RC Electrical Go Kart Track on his property. The tract is located at 155 Ponderosa Rd. and is further identified as Map 023 Parcel 132.

Before the proposal was discussed it had to be untabled.

A motion was made by Commissioner Jason Smith to untable CU-26-04.

It was seconded by Commissioner Mike Roberts. All were in favor.

The results of the votes were as follows:

Commissioner Greg Hill – Yea
Commissioner Mike Roberts – Yea
Commissioner Jason Smith – Yea

Commissioner Larry Phillips – Yea
Commissioner Ronald Lewallen – Yea

Since the proposal was presented in the previous monthly Planning Commission meeting, public comment was never opened.

The Planning Commission had concerns with the items below:

1. Adequate Parking – a more detailed site plan of parking needs to be provided.
2. Environmental Health regulations on public restrooms.
3. Fire and EMS services requirements at such events.

Planning staff presented new information regarding those issues and the Planning Commission was then ready to discuss and vote on the proposal.

Due to the additional information that was provided by Planning Staff, Commissioner Ronald Lewallen made a motion to deny CU-26-04.

It was seconded by Commissioner Larry Phillips. All were in favor.

The results of the votes were as follows:

Commissioner Greg Hill – Yea
Commissioner Mike Roberts – Yea
Commissioner Jason Smith – Yea

Commissioner Larry Phillips – Yea
Commissioner Ronald Lewallen – Yea

NEW BUSINESS:

V-26-02: Randall Black is seeking a Variance to reduce the side setback on his property to be allowed to turn an old existing garage into a new garage with apartment. The tract is located at 291 Old Habersham Mills Rd. and is further identified as Map 072 Parcel 017.

After the proposal was presented, the applicant was given a chance to speak.

Mr. Black began to lay out his intentions and reason for the Variance. The Variance request is to reduce the side setback on the applicant's property. The applicant wants to be allowed to turn an old existing garage into a new garage with apartment. The existing old garage has been there for years and is approximately only (3) feet from the property line. The proper setback for an accessory building from the side property line that does not touch the road, or an easement is only (5) feet. However, the owner has added another level and wants to turn it into a garage/apartment. This will now make the setback from the side property line (15) feet since it will now be considered a residence. Therefore, a Variance will need to be granted.

The following people were in attendance to speak in favor of the proposal.

1. Louise Hatfield 331 Robert Burke Rd. Demorest, GA. 30535
2. Doug Porter 506A Old Habersham Mills Rd. Demorest, GA. 30535
3. Shirley Terrell 201 Robert Burke Rd. Demorest, GA. 30535

Even though the above do not live directly beside the applicant, they had no problem with what he wanted to do and were in support of it. They said that Mr. Black has always been a great and respectful neighbor and has done a lot of improvements and repairs on his properties that helped the overall look of the community.

Due to no one in opposition to the proposal being in attendance, public comment was then closed so the Planning Commission could discuss the proposal and vote.

A motion was then made by Commissioner Mike Roberts to approve V-26-02 with the following conditions:

1. New garage/apartment must be attached to primary structure.
2. Applicant must adhere to all requirements imposed by Environmental Health.

It was seconded by Commissioner Ronald Lewallen. The motion carried by a 4-1 margin.

The results of the votes were as follows:

Commissioner Greg Hill – Nay
Commissioner Mike Roberts – Yea
Commissioner Jason Smith – Yea

Commissioner Larry Phillips – Yea
Commissioner Ronald Lewallen – Yea

CU-26-05: Lizandra Mora is seeking a Conditional Use to be allowed to operate an Event Venue that will include but not limited to weddings, birthday parties, family reunions, and corporate/community events. The tract is located at 3505 S STHWY 197 and is further identified as Map 108 Parcel 154.

After the proposal was presented, the applicant was given a chance to speak.

Ms. Mora began to lay out their plans for the property. The Conditional Use request is to be allowed to operate an Event Venue. This will be a multi-purpose Venue that will serve both private events and community gatherings. The proposed venue will provide a beautiful and functional space for weddings, birthday parties, baby showers, anniversaries, family reunions, corporate events, and other special celebrations. Their goal is to create a welcoming destination where families and community members can gather to celebrate important milestones and create lasting memories. The venue is intended to support local economic growth by creating opportunities for local vendors, caterers, photographers, florists, musicians, rental companies, and other small businesses that serve the event industry. The applicant believes this project will contribute positively to the local economy while providing residents with a convenient and attractive location for events and community engagement. Adequate on-site parking will be provided for guests, and the property will be maintained year-round to ensure a clean, safe, and attractive environment for visitors and the surrounding community. The venue is intended to provide a needed event and community gathering space for residents of Habersham County while preserving the rural character of the property.

Since no one was in attendance in favor of or in opposition to the proposal, public comment was then closed so the Planning Commission could discuss and vote.

Due to the following concerns and issues the Planning Commission had with the proposal it was suggested it be tabled until the October 6, 2026, meeting so the applicant would have time to address them and it could be re-advertised.

1. The Planning Commission would like to see an enclosed Venue which would have to be addressed and agreed upon by the property owner.
2. Permanent bathrooms will need to be installed, which will have to be addressed by Environmental Health.
3. A better plan for parking must be put in place.
4. Approval or recommendation from GADOT on the driveway needs to be provided.

Commissioner Greg Hill then made a motion to **table CU-26-05**.

It was seconded by Commissioner Jason Smith. All were in favor.

The results of the votes were as follows:

Commissioner Greg Hill – Yea
Commissioner Mike Roberts – Yea
Commissioner Jason Smith – Yea

Commissioner Larry Phillips – Yea
Commissioner Ronald Lewallen – Yea

REPORTS TO COMMISSION:

None.

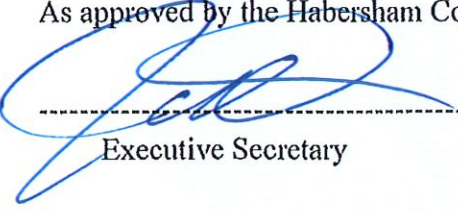
ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

Planning Director Mike Beecham updated the Planning Commission on the approval of the new UDO.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 PM.

As approved by the Habersham County Planning Commission:



Executive Secretary

10/6/26

Date