

**Georgia Public Hearing Meeting**  
**Chris Letourneau Meeting Room**  
**Thursday, March 3, 2022**  
**6:00 p.m.**

**Approved:**      Unapproved

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**Board Members Present:** Kyle Grenier, Carolyn Branagan, Sara Nadeau, Dawn Penney, Gary Wright

**Board Members Absent:** None

**Staff & Other Board Members Present:** Amber Baker, Town Administrator; Ashley Sterling, Selectboard Clerk; Cheryl Letourneau, Town Clerk; Emily Johnson, Zoning Administrator; Suzanna Brown, Planning Commission Chair

**Public Present:** Ray Bouffard, Georgia Market; Vinton Gaudette, Sarah Mahoney, David Vincent, Peter Muzurek, Justin Holmes, Jessica Fike, Mark Bock, Ken Minck, Veronica Fallon, Rich Palmer

Amber Baker, Town Administrator opened the Public Hearing Meeting for Thursday, March 3, 2022, for the Town of Georgia in person and via Zoom at 6:01 p.m. to discuss Selectboard Reorganization and Proposed Zoning Regulations.

Amber informed the Selectboard that a vote for Chair, Vice Chair and Selectboard Clerk needed to take place. Amber asked for nominations for Selectboard Chair. Sara Nadeau nominated Kyle Grenier for Chair. Dawn Penney seconded. Amber asked if there were any other nominations for chair. Hearing none, Amber asked all those who were in favor of Kyle Grenier to be Chair of the Selectboard to signify by saying aye. All were in favor. Amber congratulated Kyle on becoming Selectboard Chair and turned the meeting over to him for votes on Vice Chair and Selectboard Clerk.

Kyle Grenier asked for nominations for Selectboard Vice Chair. Dawn Penney nominated Gary Wright. Kyle Grenier asked for a second. Carolyn Branagan seconded. Kyle asked if there were any other nominations. Sara Nadeau asked if you could nominate yourself. Amber Baker responded yes. Sara Nadeau nominated herself as Vice Chair. Kyle seconded that nomination. Kyle asked if there were any other nominations. None were received. Kyle closed the nominations and went into voting for Selectboard Vice Chair. Kyle asked for all in favor of Gary Wright for Vice Chair to say aye. Gary Wright, Dawn Penney, & Carolyn Brangan said aye. Kyle asked for those opposed to say aye. Sara Nadeau said aye. Currently, the Vice Chair is Gary Wright.

Kyle asked for nominations for Selectboard Clerk. Sara Nadeau nominated herself for Selectboard Clerk. Carolyn Branagan seconded. Kyle asked for any other nominations for Selectboard Clerk. Hearing none, all were in favor of Sara Nadeau for Selectboard Clerk. Currently, Sara Nadeau is Selectboard Clerk.

Kyle turned the meeting over to Emily Johnson, Zoning Administrator, for the Public Hearing Development Regulations.

Emily started off the meeting by informing the Selectboard that the Development Regulations in front of them have been in process since the summer of 2019 and the Planning Commission had been working hard on these with the majority of the work being done during their regularly scheduled public meetings as well as their publicly warned hearing for public comment in August 2021. Emily stated that tweaks have been made to the regulations based on feedback received and that all of this has been approved through Northwest Regional Planning and the Town attorney. Emily stated that the copy in front of the Selectboard is the final version presented by the Planning Commission.

Kyle asked if there were any questions. Carolyn Branagan asked Emily for a quick review. Emily stated that this has been in the works since July 2019. State statute had been followed by the Planning Commission and Selectboard regarding duly warning public hearings for public comment on the draft regulations. The document also showed the brief history of the South Village (SV). Emily stated the SV was included in the Development Regulations as far back as 2010, and the regulations surrounding the SV had not changed much from 2010 to the currently proposed version. The only notable change with the new version is the requirement of commercial uses on the first floor. Suzanna Brown added that beforehand, it was only a suggestion to have non-residential on the first floor, but now it is mandated. Emily explained that the requirement for commercial on the first floor would only impact new and future structures being built in the SV and not pre-existing single-family dwellings. Carolyn followed up with asking if all hearings were held on time and if the public had opportunity for input. Emily said yes and Suzanna stated that all the meetings held about the regulations are open meetings. Suzanna let the Selectboard know that when they are reviewing each regulation and start to use them, they compile a list of questions, comments, and suggestions they have received from the public as well, or if they notice something isn't working as intended, they sit down with Northwest Regional Planning Commission and get insight regarding state regulations, and if other municipalities have had success trying different approaches. Carolyn asked Emily and Suzanna if they had ever received any feedback from the developers or residents that this change was going to affect them. Emily responded that only 1 person participated in both the hearings, and they did incorporate some of their suggestions into this final edit.

Gary asked for confirmation that what he was understanding is that there was lack of participation at these hearings. Suzanna said yes and Amber said that this is the most participation they have ever had (at this current meeting).

Ken Minck asked for an explanation of 9.3 1B. Suzanna stated that they have changed from Buffers to River Corridors and River Corridors are no longer measured from the edge of the bank away from a river where Buffers are. River Corridors consider the movement of the water when making the measurement. This section states that they will look at the measurement of the Buffer and the River Corridor and if the Buffer is wider, that will be the area of the River Corridor and anything extra that falls off the side which protects a little bit more than the River Corridor in some areas. Ken then asked what would happen if the drainage were less than a half a square mile or greater than two square miles? Suzanna said she believed, but did not know for sure, that there are no areas that are greater than two square miles and the ones less than they would use the River Corridors that mapped by the state which are updated frequently. Suzanna stated she would look into adding the language for a better explanation on this.

Ray Bouffard asked in the event that a residential home in the SV burned down are they able to rebuild under the new regulations. Emily answered stating that you can rebuild the nonconforming structure and that you have 12 months to do so with the ability to request a one-time 1-year extension, if it is shown that there has been a good faith effort to complete the rebuilt in the initial 12 months. And that a nonconforming structure can be rebuilt, but it cannot be rebuilt bigger, increasing the degree of nonconformity. Suzanna added that the 1-year extension was put in place due to the Covid Pandemic and how hard it is to get builders and supplies. Ray asked, what if a homeowner wants to build a garage? Emily responded stating it is considered an accessory structure and they can do that if the setbacks are met for the South Village. Mark Bock asked about adding a mudroom. Emily said if it is not living space, that you can add it, like a porch. Dawn Penney asked when the regulation came into effect for the South Village. Emily said April 12, 2010. Mark stated that he is unsure why the Highbridge area with single family residential homes was included in the SV as that area is not Route 7 nor an area for building commercial properties. Emily stated she was not privy to that information as she was not an employee at the time the decision was made. Suzanna stated that most villages are more than one street and they looked at the land in that area to make the decision. Dawn stated that Emily is here and willing to work with people on this. Mark asked if language could be added to clarify that those with existing single-family homes are grandfathered as the language in the document is not clear. Emily stated that this does not impact existing structures, but it does limit what some residents can do when making changes to their homes, as they are not able to make them more nonconforming. Suzanna added that for example, you cannot split your lot in half and cannot add a new single-family home. Emily explained that you can not change the footprint of the structure by adding an addition. Kyle asked if you could build a second floor and Emily said yes, you can go higher.

Vinton Gaudette noted his concern for having to build residential on the second floor and handicap persons and that that would require an elevator to be incorporated in every building. He said that elevators are very expensive and that could stop someone from using their building. Suzanna said you don't have to add one. He asked if there was going to be something added stating a handicapped access or a handicapped person could stay on the first floor or is this something not involved by the town. Suzanna said they could possibly look into this.

Justin Holmes gave thanks to Emily and Suzanna for their hard work with the regulations. Justin said that he agreed with Vinton, stating there is an aging population in Town as well as disabled folks and restricting residential to the second floor is problematic to them and is more costly. He also stated that ground floor residential is more desirable as somebody raising a family would not want to live on top of a business. Justin stated that there should be an exemption for the existing single-family dwellings in the South Village from these regulations.

Justin stated his concerns on the wastewater and Municipal Services in the area. Suzanna agreed that Municipal Services should be on the Town's radar.

Gary Wright asked why additions to nonconforming structures would not get looked at by the amount of square footage being added. Suzanna clarified that additions are looked at as units not by amount of square footage being added to the structure.

A discussion was had between Justin and Suzanna about the verbiage in section 2C could be added to section 6.6- and 5-unit buildings and mixed used.

Emily added that Accessory Dwelling Buildings are allowed in all zoning districts, per state statute.

Jessica Fike asked a question for a friend about adding an attached garage with a first-floor mudroom and bathroom, with a living room above the garage. Suzanna explained that you cannot enlarge the footprint of the living space of the house. Dawn explained that coming into the Town Office and meeting with Emily to find out what can and cannot be built by the Town's regulation is the best practice.

Peter Mazurak started a discussion about Article 6 section 1 – Accessory Dwelling Units. He also stated he believes the measurements should be based on square footage. Peter said he agreed with Justin's concern of the wastewater supply. Peter stated that the state has a 4-year time frame to replace a dwelling that was voluntarily removed and asked why the Town has a 1 year plus 1 year extension timeframe. Emily responded that these regulations have been run by the proper channels to ensure appropriate compliance with state regulations and Suzanna said was actively searching for the regulation Peter was referring to but not able to find it at the moment. Sherry Hanson asked if existing homes and garages could build up on both. Emily confirmed this.

Justin commented that it would be good to help residents in pre-existing single-family dwellings in the SV somehow be exempt from these regulations. Carolyn commented that she really liked the idea. Emily referenced section 5.5 Nonconformities. Amber explained that the hearing would need to be continued to allow the regulations to be updated, if needed, and the continued hearing would need to be publicly warned 15 days prior to meeting, etc. Emily told the Selectboard to do this that they need to pick a date and time certain at this meeting in order to continue the hearing. Kyle commented that if an exemption was included, it would reverse something that has been in place for 12 years now and that it may not be fair to the residents that have been abiding by the zoning regulation.

Discussion was had on wetlands section 5.3 and Project Review Sheets between Peter Mazurak, Emily, and Suzanna about changing it to the state's Permit Navigator Results.

The Selectboard agreed to continue the hearing to date and time certain on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022, at 7:00 p.m.

A discussion was had between the Selectboard, Emily, and Suzanna on what to address with the attorney and items to research:

- Swapping the term "Project Review Sheet" for the state's new equivalent "Permit Navigator Results".
- Definition of "attached"
- ADA and the SV
- Timeframe for rebuilding structures, including nonconforming structures
- Section 9.3 regarding buffers and drainage areas

At 7:33 p.m. Kyle Grenier asked for a motion to continue the meeting to April 11<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 p.m. Motion made by Carolyn Branagan. Seconded by Sara Nadeau.