

Seminole County Planning and Zoning Board Meeting
Seminole County Courthouse, Superior Courtroom
Monday, October 13, 2025
6:00 P.M.

The Seminole County Planning and Zoning Board held a public hearing on Monday, October 13, 2025. The meeting was held at the Seminole County Courthouse, Superior Courtroom. Those present were Stan Kennedy, Wanda Rykard, Angela Myrick, and Debbie Odom. Reed Rognstadt was absent.

Mr. Stan Kennedy called the meeting to order. The invocation was given by Commissioner Brenda Williams followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll call was conducted, those present were Stan Kennedy, Debbie Odom, Wanda Rykard, and Angela Myrick. Reed Rognstad was absent. A quorum was established.

Mr. Kennedy stated the purpose of the Public Hearing was to provide an opportunity for citizens to comment regarding the proposed request from Luu Trinh Joint Spousal Revocable Living Trust for a "conditional use permit for the construction of three commercial chicken breeder egg houses" on 30.75 acres of a 104.374-acre tract zoned as Agricultural located at 5423 Scott Road in Iron City.

Public Comments

Mr. Gordon Rodgers, IV

Gordon Rodgers, Riverkeeper for the Flint River from Taylor County, spoke on behalf of neighbors opposing the proposed project. He referenced two documents already in the record: a memo from him and a court order from a similar case in Coffee County.

Mr. Rodgers stated that water flows downhill and can carry pollutants including nitrates, phosphates, trace metals, and pathogens. He explained that the proposed chicken houses would produce approximately 40,000 pounds of feces and other waste every 8 weeks, totaling at least 720,000 pounds of waste per year that must be handled to prevent runoff into the aquifer and Dry Creek.

He emphasized that state and federal regulations of chicken CAFOs are "very, very light to nonexistent," noting that stormwater ponds and stack houses are not required but are merely best management practices. Mr. Rodgers cited findings from the Coffee County court case, including that air emissions can contain pathogens such as salmonella and campylobacter, and that contaminants can travel airborne up to 6 miles, with 1 mile being a critical zone.

The court case also found that adjacent property values were lowered by approximately 20% in Banks County and 30% in Elbert County after chicken production facilities were established. Diseases in the critical zone can include cardiovascular, kidney, and respiratory issues, with some studies indicating low birth weights in infants near chicken facilities.

Mr. Rodgers concluded by stating that Lake Seminole is already showing "very strong signs of overloading of nutrients," experiencing toxic blue-green algae blooms, and "can't handle any more particularly direct connections from a known site like this that has direct connectivity."

Dr. Mandy Moulton / Dr. Willette Crawford

Dr. Amanda Moulton spoke about the Coffee County court ruling where a judge blocked Perdue's 60 chicken houses along the Satilla River due to overwhelming citizen opposition and scientific evidence of likely harm. She noted the similarity to the current situation, though with only 3 houses proposed "at this time and who knows how many to come."

Dr. Moulton referenced expert testimony from Dr. Willette Crawford, a microbiologist and technical consultant in environmental and public health who has spent her career working on environmental public health hazards related to agricultural operations. Dr. Crawford's testimony explained how tens of thousands of pounds of feces per house would be produced and, along with particulates, dead birds that contaminate runoff and serve as vectors for pathogens like salmonella and campylobacter, particularly affecting the immunocompromised.

Dr. Moulton emphasized that they have "2 immunocompromised individuals that reside within 1000 feet of this proposed site." She cited testimony that poultry farm emissions can be detected for many miles. Appraiser Michael Biggers' testimony indicated that the operation would affect property marketability by 20 to 30 percent, creating a stigma where "nobody given a choice is going to want to buy next to a chicken broiler operation."

She also referenced Dr. Khambaty testimony that poultry operations pose significant public health risks within a mile radius, and environmental scientist Mark Laroo's testimony about drainage into wetlands and eventually to the lake "which we're already trying so desperately to save."

Dr. Moulton concluded by stating that Seminole County has not completed any scientific analysis for the proposed location and that such analysis must be completed prior to approval. She noted they have over 300 signatures opposing the project out of their city's 400 citizens and recommended denial of the conditional use permit, saying "Put the chicken houses somewhere else."

Mr. Matt Spooner

Matt Spooner thanked the board for their due diligence in looking into and hearing their concerns. He questioned why, if this was truly in Seminole County's heart to do, the opportunity was not offered first to "the farmers of Seminole County, the ones that have farmed this land for years and, you know, created Seminole County?"

Mr. Spooner expressed concern about reaching out to "a company that we know nothing about" and offering them to come into their home. He stated that there are "plenty of people here with land that probably would be willing to put the houses in" and questioned why they had to seek out an outside company to get the land and put the houses on it.

Mr. Richard Spooner

Richard Spooner addressed the Seminole County ordinance section 10.04 regarding location requirements, which states that all chicken house facilities must be located at least 1,250 feet from any residential dwelling, excluding dwellings belonging to the owners of the poultry operation.

He stated that "The chicken breeder farm does not meet section 10.04" because there is a mobile home residence that is "a little over 500 feet from it." Mr. Spooner also raised concerns about the proximity to local cattle and ranchers, noting there is a water trough "not a hundred foot from the dirt road and the chicken house is going to be just across the dirt road."

He explained that "all the particles, if you can smell the chicken manure, there's particles in the air. They're airborne particles." Mr. Spooner concluded by asking if the board has done their homework on it, not to pass the conditional use permit.

Mr. Neal Spooner

Neal Spooner thanked the zoning board and all county commissioners and county manager who took time to come and look at the issue firsthand, stating "It means a lot when you see it firsthand. I appreciate all everyone of you that did come and look."

He questioned the need for a change in the rules to accommodate this project, saying "if y'all follow the rules, I don't understand why we needed to have a change in the rules to get this in when we got a set of rules to go by." Mr. Spooner emphasized "Just follow the rules. That's what this country's about. It's a republic. It ain't a democracy."

Mrs. Amy Scott

Amy Scott presented numerous deficiencies with the Trenh Joint Spousal Revocable Living Trust application for conditional use permit. She stated they had provided various county officials with documents including a September 2, 2025 report demonstrating that both the original June 3 application and the updated application were deficient.

Ms. Scott criticized the Reliable Engineering letter, stating "it's not a study" and that their September 2 report provides a comprehensive breakdown of why the letter from Mr. Brent Davis is "misleading, deficient, and not an engineering study." She pointed out that Mr. Davis has a vested interest in the approval since he paid the \$100 conditional use permit application fee, demonstrating "a propensity to be biased in his letter to Mr. Long."

She detailed multiple deficiencies in Mr. Davis's work: providing only a preliminary site plan subject to change with no contractual obligation to comply; no information about his expertise in evaluating stormwater runoff; no information about the property's susceptibility to stormwater runoff; no interviews with adjacent property owners about real-world knowledge of stormwater runoff; no soil tests completed; no on-site visits during or after significant rainfall; and no maps, drawings, diagrams, or illustrations supporting stormwater runoff statements.

Mrs. Scott also noted the county has completed no due diligence about the chicken breeder company, including questions about ownership, location, financial stability, expertise, reputation, complaints, regulatory compliance capability, trustworthiness, management structure, staffing, and whether they would sign a contract limiting the number of houses to three. She concluded that "this entire application process has been deficient from the beginning and the application for the conditional use permit should be denied."

Ms. Willamenia McCoy

Ms. Willamenia McCoy expressed concern for the health and wellbeing of individuals residing near the proposed chicken breeder farm, particularly her elderly family members that have lived in the area for over 100 years.

Mrs. Tammy Reese Grimsley

Mrs. Tammy Reese Grimsley emphasized that their main concern is location, noting that people living near the property will see their property values "significantly reduced" and their quality of life will be "terrible with the odors, the noise and the pollution." She expressed concern about increased predators and the quality of natural resources, specifically mentioning "ravine R4SBC which leads into Dry Creek which leads into Spring Creek which leads into the lake that we're trying to protect."

Mrs. Grimsley stated that the current county ordinance regarding chicken breeder houses is deficient and does not include regulations that will protect residents and the environment. She noted they provided the county with additional information on September 28, 2025, and recommended the Board of Commissioners establish a group including community members to develop better regulations.

She suggested the group should include county commissioners, the county attorney, code enforcement, river keepers, farmers, and community members, saying "let's talk about it. Let's have a discussion." Ms. Grimsley stated they believe "a comprehensive fair ordinance and regulations can be developed if we all work together" and reiterated their main concern is "the location of the chicken houses being that close to the water."

Mrs. Grimsley closed by stating her group has provided the county with extensive information and intentionally did not use all of their information in the public hearing. She stated her group is fully prepared to discuss any topic or concern the group has presented to the county. Ms. Grimsley's group believes the evidence is overwhelming and recommended the planning and zoning board should deny the application for the conditional use permit.

Dr. Casey Ritz

Dr. Casey Ritz is employed by the University of Georgia and introduced himself as a poultry extension specialist for 32 years, 25 of them in Georgia, with expertise in coproduct management including manure management and dead bird disposal. He has conducted studies on ammonia emissions and air quality and has spent 15+ years working with county commissions and planning boards across Georgia on poultry house siting and code enforcement and code development.

Dr. Ritz emphasized that Georgia "leads the world in poultry production" and that poultry is the number one commodity in the state's number one industry, agriculture. He noted that North Georgia has had poultry production for over 70 years and that counties there work well with the industry through "sensible ordinances and setbacks."

He provided information on typical setbacks in Georgia poultry counties: 200-400 feet from property lines, 400-600 feet to residences not on the property, and 1,000-1,500 feet from public spaces. Dr. Ritz noted that most North Georgia counties do not require conditional use permits for poultry operations.

Regarding the proposed operation, Dr. Ritz clarified it is a family farm, 3-house breeder farm with only 42,000 chicken capacity, which does not meet the federal designation as a CAFO (concentrated animal feeding operation). He explained these are dry manure operations, not

liquid manure, and therefore don't fall under federal NPDES regulations. He stated "There isn't an opportunity for stormwater to enter these chicken houses and flush manure out. That's not how they're designed." He stated there is no evidence of cattle being negatively impacted by the poultry industry because these are dry manure operations.

Dr. Ritz addressed concerns about avian flu, noting Georgia produces 1.5 billion chickens annually but has only had 2 cases in the last 10 years, attributing this to biosecurity procedures and industry dedication. He explained avian flu comes from wild waterfowl, not the industry itself.

He also clarified that predators are not an issue with commercial poultry since "these are enclosed houses. These chickens are not accessible to outside predators."

Mrs. Grimsley asked Dr. Ritz to revisit her group's concern regarding runoff into the creek and lake.

Dr. Ritz stated he observed that the property was planted in peanuts and "certainly not a wetland" and reiterated that with enclosed houses and properly graded manure storage facilities, "There's not going to be an opportunity for manure to flow from the site into Dry Creek."

Mrs. Grimsley then asked Dr. Ritz to revisit her group's concern regarding dead birds.

Regarding dead bird disposal, Dr. Ritz noted Georgia allows incineration or composting, with composting being the preferred method that has been used since the 1980s, producing a natural product similar to chicken litter and meeting "best management practices for disposal of dead birds." Dr. Ritz stated he believed a composting shed was scheduled to be constructed for the proposed site.

Mr. Billy Shingler

Mr. Billy Shingler introduced Mr. Luu as the applicant, clarifying "This is a small family farm that they intend to bring to Seminole County and they intend to move their primary residence to Seminole County and be a part of this community." He expressed confidence they would maintain compliance with the law.

Mr. Shingler addressed various concerns raised, noting that cow manure also contains nitrates and phosphates, and that "some of these people in this room have cows that walk in and through Dry Creek on a daily basis." He attributed toxic algae blooms to conventional fertilizer in South Florida rather than chicken operations.

He emphasized that Dry Creek "is dry at least 9 months out of the year. It's dry as of today." Regarding dust concerns, he stated he couldn't think of "anything else that would create more dust than the harvesting of peanuts, corn, and cotton that we are seeing right now during harvest season" and doubted three breeder houses would create noticeable dust.

Mr. Shingler distinguished the Coffee County case as "apples and oranges," involving 60 broiler houses on the Satilla River versus 3 breeder houses on Dry Creek. He stated "No one lives within a thousand feet of the proposed poultry farm site contrary to what we've heard tonight" and that engineering designs show it could be put within required setbacks.

Addressing Richard Spooner's mobile home, Mr. Shingler argued that Mr. Spooner "created the nuisance because prior to him putting it there, everything was in compliance with the law. Can't complain of something that you created." He referenced Georgia's right-to-farm law and nuisance law factors.

Mr. Shingler stated the land was on the market for several months before Mr. Luu purchased it, refuting claims it wasn't offered locally is as "disingenuous as it is false." He reiterated this is "not a company" but a small family farm like others in Seminole County.

He concluded by pointing out existing chicken manure piles on Lanes Bridge Road and Whites Dairy Road and piles "sitting less than 300 feet from a house that has a no chickens sign in their front yard." He stated there is no less than 4 tons sitting in one pile that is "less than 600 feet from the creek," none of it covered or contained, questioning why regulated chicken houses are considered more problematic.

Mr. Shingler deferred the remainder of his allowed speaking time to Mr. Ray Spooner.

Mr. Ray Spooner then spoke as the real estate agent who sold the property. He stated he contacted many local property owners, including some individuals present in this meeting. He clarified the property was on the market for 149 days in an "unpending" status, then "pending for

98 days” during which backup offers could be accepted. "No one approached me during that time. No one that I contacted made a reasonable offer." He confirmed Mr. Luu was "the only person to come up to me with the asking price therefore he is the one who bought the property.”

Mr. Spooner also clarified that people wanting to build chicken houses must approach the company providing chickens, "not the other way around."

Ms. Moulton requested permission to comment on behalf of local land owners and the purchase/sale of the property being discussed. “When we were contacted about buying this land, \$6,000 per acre is what Tammy was told and it was sold for about \$3,000 per acre.”

Mr. Spooner confirmed online records indicate the property was originally advertised for approximately \$350,000 which comes out to about \$3,000 per acre. Ms. Grimsley directly addressed Mr. Spooner and stated Susan and Jeff told her \$6,000 per acre originally. Mr. Kennedy redirected all parties to direct comments to the board, not each other. He directed Mr. Spooner and Mrs. Grimsley to continue any further discussion outside of the public hearing.

Ms. Tammy Holcomb

Ms. Tammy Holcomb spoke about her disabled niece and nephew who have 1p36 deletion syndrome, are immunodeficient, cannot attend school, and have been life-flighted multiple times for seizures. She noted they live "4.4 miles from the location" or "less than 3 miles" going straight through, expressing "huge concern with airborne illnesses."

Ms. Holcomb also expressed concern about the 20-30% drop in property values, having doubled her property value through sweat equity over 5 years. She noted there are "at least 3 properties within 30 miles that are for sale that have a lot more land that are not near anywhere else" where these could be located.

She distinguished peanut dust from chicken operations, stating peanut dust "doesn't carry airborne pathogens that have salmonella and other things in it where chickens can." Regarding Mr. Spooner's mobile home, she clarified it "was put in after this was brought up, but it was also approved and put in before this was approved."

Mr. Tom Maureau

Mr. Tom Maureau identified himself as a property owner in Seminole County for over 18 years and in Fannin County, North Georgia for over 20 years. He challenged Dr. Ritz's assertion that setbacks in North Georgia are working well, stating "the setbacks in the different counties in Georgia are political. A lot of them are not based on science. They are not based on research data. They were political decisions." He noted there are "current fights going on regarding the chicken industry" in North Georgia. Research indicates things are not going well regarding the chicken industry in North Georgia.

Mr. Maureau emphasized that while best practices are great, "the county has no contract, no guarantee from the chicken breeder company that they will abide by all those best practices." He stated the county has "a very, very weak, deficient ability to hold anybody accountable for different regulations."

He referenced Gordon Rodgers' letter describing how the chicken lobby has influenced federal and state regulations, stating "It is up to the county to protect the citizens of the county, the environment, the wetlands, the water... You can't look for the state of Georgia or federal government regulations. It is now up to the counties to protect their resources and their people."

Mr. Maureau challenged assertions about no opportunity for pollution control, saying "You don't know that. There's no guarantee. There is absolutely nothing in writing, no contract, nothing that you can hold them accountable to that says they are going to have the type of facility that will incinerate dead birds." He recommended doing independent research and developing and implementing strong ordinances before making any decision on the permit.

Finally, he defended Richard Spooner's right to put a mobile home on his property, stating "That's his property. He absolutely has a right to use his property as he wants to and put a mobile home on there. That shouldn't even be an issue."

Zoning Board Comments

After the conclusion of public comments, the zoning board members had the opportunity to discuss the conditional use permit application and the concerns raised during the public hearing.

Mr. Stan Kennedy stated as a member of the Development Authority he has concerns about the location of the chicken farm due to “possible” runoff and the layout of the land having sinkholes. Mr. Kennedy indicated the chicken industry is very welcome in our area and the Development Authority would potentially make suggestions on a better area to place the chicken farm. However, Mr. Kennedy recommended the permit not be approved based on the layout of the land and sinkhole. He reminded everyone the ultimate authority to approve or deny the permit belongs to the Board of Commissioners. The Zoning Board can only make a recommendation.

Mrs. Debbie Odom recommends approving the current permit based upon the fact our current zoning regulations have been met by the applicant for the permit in question except for the residence. She stated sinkholes are all over Seminole County and shouldn’t be of concern relative to the property in question. She suggested county commissioners look at current ordinances and possibly update them if needed. She stated sinkholes fall under a soil and water person’s expertise. If the property is not classified as “wetlands,” there should be no concern.

Ms. Wanda Rykard stated she lives approximately 1.5 to 2 miles from the proposed chicken farm site. She stated there is a pile of chicken manure across the road from her residence and says “it eats my allergies up.” She stated she will vote like Mr. Kennedy against the approval of the permit because she represents the district and will not vote “against the people.”

Ms. Angela Myrick commented Mr. Spooner’s tour enabled her to see the possible impact of the chicken farm and influenced her decision to recommend denial of the permit.

Ms. Wanda Rykard made a motion to deny the request; motion was seconded by Ms. Angela Myrick. Mrs. Odom opposed; motion passed.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned following the zoning board's deliberations with a motion by Mr. Kennedy and second by Ms. Myrick. All in favor, motion passed.