

**MINUTES
SEMINOLE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PUBLIC HEARING
SEMINOLE COUNTY COURTHOUSE
SUPERIOR COURTROOM
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2025
6:00 P.M.**

The Seminole County Board of Commissioners held a public hearing on Tuesday, October 14, 2025. The public hearing was held at the Seminole County Courthouse in the Superior Courtroom. Those present were Chairman Sheila Williams, Vice Chairman Darius Culverson, Commissioner Brenda Williams, and County Manager/Clerk Paula Granger. Commissioners Mark Spooner and Jeffrey Braswell were not present.

Chairman Williams called the meeting to order.

The invocation was given by Commissioner Brenda Williams followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll call was conducted. A quorum was established. Commissioners Mark Spooner and Jeffrey Braswell were not present.

Purpose of Public Hearing

The purpose of this Public Hearing was to provide an opportunity for citizens to make comments 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 - (10-minute time limit per speaker)

Gordon Rodgers IV

Gordon Rodgers IV introduced himself as representing the organization Flint Riverkeeper with about 3,000 members scattered throughout 43 counties including Seminole County. He referenced two documents previously provided to the commissioners: a memo he wrote on the topic and a court order from a recent case in Coffee County. Mr. Rodgers emphasized that the Flint Riverkeepers do not have an anti-agriculture or anti-chicken stance or policy. He stated they work "arm in arm with farmers" throughout Southwest Georgia. He noted that agriculture, agribusiness, and forestry are critical to the county's economy. Regarding the proposed chicken operation, he explained that "the size and location of things matter" and that "the more sensitive an area is, the smaller a poorly placed operation can be in order to have bad effects." He cited findings from the Coffee County court case, noting that water flows downhill and the proposed site has man-made ditches flowing into natural wetlands with sinkholes that connect directly to the Florida aquifer when dry, and flows into Dry Creek, Spring Creek, and Lake Seminole when wet. Mr. Rodgers detailed potential pollutants from chicken operations including nitrates, phosphates, trace metals (including arsenic), and pathogens such as Salmonella, Campylobacter, and viruses. He noted that air emissions can be detected up to six miles away with dangerous concentrations up to a mile away and cited health risks including cardiovascular damage, kidney damage, respiratory disease, and low infant birth weights. He emphasized that because the proposed operation is small enough to fall below concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) thresholds, the Board of Commissioners becomes the environmental regulatory body, as the Department of Agriculture and Georgia EPD would not have regulatory authority unless pollution is proven after the operation is established.

Mrs. Tammy Reese Grimsley

Mrs. Tammy Reese Grimsley spoke on behalf of citizens and stated that citizens had provided the Board of Commissioners with a plethora of reports and documents concerning the proposed chicken breeder houses. She explained that the materials contained factual, objective information and outlined real-life problems that could result from placing such facilities in the proposed location. Mrs. Grimsley expressed disappointment that the county had not responded to the citizens' request document, noting that significant time and effort had gone into preparing it to include community concerns and questions. She acknowledged that a site tour had been conducted with three commissioners, three zoning board members, and the county manager, but stated that citizens still felt a more thorough “page-turn” meeting in a conference room was

needed to review all materials and information in detail. Mrs. Grimsley emphasized that the county had not conducted any independent research or verification to ensure that the chicken breeder houses would not negatively impact local residents' quality of life, or the quality of surrounding water sources, including creeks, lakes, and wetlands. Mrs. Grimsley stated that for anyone to vote yes, the board must rely on factual, objective information and then proceeded to recite the ordinance standards that must be met. Mrs. Grimsley said the proposed use must not be contrary to the purpose of the ordinance, must not be contrary to the use and development of adjacent properties or the general neighborhood, and must not adversely affect the health and safety of residents and workers. She emphasized that the proposed use must not constitute a nuisance or hazard because of the number of people who will attend or use the facility, vehicular movement, noise generation, types of physical activity, or similar impacts. Ms. Grimsley further stated that the proposed use must be placed on a lot of sufficient size to satisfy space requirements, and that parking and development standards set forth in the ordinance for the particular use must be met before a permit may be granted. She demanded that any Commissioner who intends to vote in favor of the conditional use permit explain, line by line, how the ordinance criteria have been satisfied and demonstrate that the chicken breeder houses will not cause harm to the community, property values, or the environment. Mrs. Grimsley continued her remarks and stated this is the wrong location for three or four commercial chicken houses. She emphasized, "Location, location, location," and stated that the evidence against the proposal is so overwhelming that it is shocking the discussion has continued for this long. Mrs. Grimsley urged the board to review the maps and notes provided by citizens, asserting that public opposition is clear and well-documented. She further stated that citizens believe if the property were not owned by a county commissioner and if another commissioner's business were not involved in the sale of the land, the application would have been denied long ago. Mrs. Grimsley respectfully requested that the board vote no on the conditional use permit, reminding the Commissioners that they are the guardians of Seminole County—elected by the people to serve the people. She urged them to protect the county's air, water, health, and way of life, concluding with the statement, "The people have spoken, and we say no. Thank you."

Mr. Tom Maureau

Mr. Maureau identified himself as a property owner in Seminole County for 18-19 years. He stated they had been transparent with the county from the beginning of the process, sharing information with the Board of Commissioners, Zoning Board, County Manager, County Attorney, and Code Enforcement, as well as various law firms. Mr. Maureau claimed the county had committed numerous violations of state law and county ordinance, including:

- Lack of transparency about two sitting county commissioners' involvement
- No discussion on how to proceed in a fair transparent objective manner that will demonstrate two sitting county commissioners are not receiving preferential treatment
- The commissioners not recusing themselves until citizens complained
- County officials not mentioning commissioner involvement in meetings
- Accepting a deficient application for conditional use permit
- Fast-tracking the approval process
- Not completing independent analysis on potential impacts
- Violating Georgia open records laws

He specifically highlighted that the county allowed the Planning and Zoning Board to vote knowing the proposed location violated Section 10.04, which requires chicken houses to be at least 1,250 feet from any residential dwelling. He noted that a new site plan had been submitted that day, but the public had not been given time to assess it. Mr. Maureau warned that if the board approved the application, citizens were prepared to file litigation against the county, which would be costly for taxpayers and time-consuming.

Ms. Tammy Holcomb

Ms. Tammy Holcomb addressed the board regarding her opposition to the proposed chicken breeder houses. She stated that some of her comments had been mentioned in a prior discussion but felt they needed to be reiterated for the record. Ms. Holcomb referenced statements made by Mr. Rodgers concerning airborne illnesses that can spread up to six miles, expressing concern for her niece and nephew who live near the proposed site. She explained that both children have a rare genetic condition known as the 1p36 deletion syndrome, which causes immune deficiency and severe seizures. Because of their health condition, they are unable to attend school. Ms. Holcomb noted that their teacher was present at the meeting and could verify the information. She stated that her nephew has been airlifted for medical care four times in the past five years,

and she fears the chicken houses would pose a serious health risk to the children and others with weakened immune systems. Ms. Holcomb further explained that her niece underwent heart surgery as an infant and continues to suffer from health complications. She said this issue is not simply about agriculture—it is a public health matter that must be taken seriously. Turning to property values, Ms. Holcomb stated that she purchased her home approximately five and a half years ago for around \$125,000 and has since invested significantly in remodeling and improvements, more than doubling its value. She expressed concern that studies indicate a 20–30% decrease in property value near large-scale poultry operations, which in her case could represent a loss of around \$75,000 in equity. She noted that many homes in the area are worth considerably more, and the cumulative property devaluation across the county would be substantial and detrimental to residents and the tax base. Ms. Holcomb then questioned what benefits the county would gain from the chicken houses, asking how many jobs would be created and whether there would be any meaningful economic return. She said she has not heard clear answers and has not encountered anyone publicly supporting the proposal. She added that while some had compared it to dust from cotton or peanut harvesting, those crops do not carry pathogens or pose health hazards like large poultry operations can. Ms. Holcomb stated that there are at least three other large properties in Seminole County that could accommodate such facilities without impacting residential areas. She also expressed concern about predators such as wild dogs and bobcats, explaining that their presence has already increased in the area. She shared that her household has recorded sightings of at least three bobcats and one wild dog in the past six months. In closing, Ms. Holcomb asked everyone in attendance who opposed the project to stand so the commissioners could see the level of community opposition. She stated that over 300 people have signed a petition against the proposed chicken houses, including residents unable to attend the meeting. Ms. Holcomb concluded by reminding the board that they were elected by the people to represent the people, stating firmly, “If the majority says no, then this shouldn’t even be a question.”

Dr. Amanda Moulton

Dr. Amanda Moulton spoke, stating the adjacent land has been in her family for generations, handed down from her great-grandfather, Wilson Roberts to her grandfather, Kenneth Moulton, to her father and herself, and would be passed to her sons. She recalled promising her grandfather that she would protect his farm. Dr. Moulton stated the proposed project would "directly affect the waterways through this county and negatively impact our agricultural land, decreasing its values, harm the environment causing excessive health related issues." She emphasized they are not against chicken houses, just not at this location. She noted the land is in a conservation easement and has wetlands on the property, and that the Planning and Zoning Board voted to deny the application. She questioned why a developer would select land with environmental issues and implied that Commissioner Mark Spooner's son, Ray Spooner, being involved in the real estate transaction, should have known about the protected waterways and sinkholes.

Dr. Moulton stated that as citizens and landowners of Seminole County, residents have the right to full disclosure, which they have not been given. She questioned why this particular piece of land was chosen, noting that when Commissioner Spooner was asked about it, the response given was, “We just want to help Jeffrey out so he won’t lose it.” Dr. Moulton expressed concern that other farmers would be made to suffer while one individual was being favored. She continued by addressing issues surrounding the sale and acquisition of the property. She stated that all members of their group had been approached by Mrs. Susan Braswell before the land was listed for sale. She referenced transactions involving her cousin Mrs. Tammy Grimsley, Mr. Donnie Ray Miller, and others, claiming that attempts were made to start a bidding war for the property. Dr. Moulton alleged that Commissioner Braswell overpaid for the land and that the property later ended up being purchased by Mr. Minh Luu for \$3,000 per acre. Dr. Moulton stated that on September 9th, she personally contacted Mr. Luu and offered to buy the land at fair market value to protect surrounding properties. She informed Mr. Luu that there were alternative sites available that were not residential or wetland areas. She emphasized that her opposition was not against Mr. Luu personally but against the unsuitable nature of the property proposed for the chicken houses. She stated that the land floods regularly and that runoff would affect nearby areas, noting that long-time farmers Mr. Richard Spooner, Mr. Neal Spooner and Mr. Donnie Ray Miller could attest to these issues. Dr. Moulton criticized remarks made by Attorney Billy Shingler, describing them as immature and dismissive of local concerns. She stated that residents have been open and transparent from the beginning and that their intent is to protect both themselves and Mr. Luu, who may not be familiar with the land or the community. She described

the property as one that has experienced hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and snow, emphasizing its instability for such development. She further noted that new residential trailers had recently been placed near the proposed site, within the 1,250-foot setback restriction. She stated that several residents, including the Spooners, Mr. Donnie Ray Miller, and her own family, have applied or will apply for residential trailer permits to establish a community along the property line. She asserted that as landowners, they have that right. Dr. Moulton acknowledged that poultry production is an important agricultural industry in the state but argued that this proposal does not align with standard agricultural practices and that it has been presented with inadequate information to the county and neighboring landowners. She expressed concern that there has been no clear explanation of how the operation will be run or what Mr. Luu's agricultural practices are, calling the entire transaction "questionable from the start." She urged that the permit for the proposed chicken houses be denied, suggesting that the operation be located elsewhere where water does not directly flow through the property and where homes—particularly those housing a disabled child and a resident with respiratory illness—are not directly affected. Dr. Moulton concluded by stating that their group's local commissioner could not be at the meeting to represent them because he was asked to recuse himself due to financial ties to the deal, asserting that citizens did not elect commissioners to engage in private transactions that harm their constituents.

Mrs. Amy Scott

Mrs. Amy Scott stated she saw many familiar faces in the courtroom and urged the board to "do what's right." She reminded the commissioners that the citizens are both taxpayers and landowners and asked them simply to act in the best interest of the community, stating, "Just do what's right, okay."

Attorney Billy Shingler

Mr. Billy Shingler spoke in support of the application. He addressed concerns about water runoff, noting that Dry Creek is "dry nine months out of the year" and that cows currently walk through the creek bed. Regarding dust concerns, he compared potential dust from chicken houses to existing dust from peanut warehouses and cotton gins, stating "that's what you get for living in an agricultural community." Attorney Shingler quoted Mike Giles, chairman of the Georgia Poultry Federation, who reportedly said of the three-house breeder operation, "these people down there won't even know it's there. That's how little it will affect the environment." He dismissed the Coffee County case as irrelevant, describing it as a "mega size 60 house broiler operation" which slaughters chickens compared to the smaller breeder operation being proposed which is for egg production. Attorney Shingler stated that only one party, Mr. Luu, had presented a satisfactory offer for the property, and that no one else had stepped forward to purchase it during the 149 days it was on the market. Mr. Shingler emphasized that citizens should not "hate the man because he came up with the money and stepped up when nobody else did." He explained that Mr. Luu and his family are not a large corporation but a small family seeking to establish roots in the community. He noted that Mr. Luu is an American citizen and that his son serves in the United States military. Mr. Shingler stated that the family intends to comply fully with all laws and to be good neighbors. He added that people often criticize foreign buyers, yet Mr. Luu went through the proper legal process to purchase the property and should be respected for doing things "the right way." Attorney Shingler continued by saying that the applicants had followed every required local, state, and federal regulation, submitted site surveys and proposals, and that the county had no legal basis to deny the permit. He referenced concerns about a nearby residential trailer placed within 1,250 feet of the proposed site, asserting that it had been moved there deliberately "to sabotage the Luu project," and therefore could not now be used to claim nuisance or hardship. He argued that this action devalued the neighboring land far more than any chicken houses ever could, and that a proposed trailer park in the same area would have an even greater negative effect on property values. Attorney Shingler stated that opponents had not produced credible evidence that property values would be adversely affected, describing many of the objections as conclusory statements. He shared that during recent travels through various parts of Georgia, he observed numerous subdivisions located near or adjacent to poultry farms, noting that poultry is the number one agricultural industry in Georgia and that the state produces more than 1.5 billion chickens annually. He questioned why such operations would be permitted statewide if they were as harmful as opponents claimed. He further explained that poultry operations contribute to tax revenue and economic opportunity, potentially attracting more agricultural investment and diversifying income for struggling local farmers. He stated that chicken litter has long been used by farmers as an effective and environmentally friendly fertilizer and argued that it poses less environmental risk than chemical fertilizers containing

high nitrate and phosphate levels. He also noted that much of the conventional fertilizer used in the United States is imported from Russia and Ukraine, and that rising prices have made poultry litter a practical and sustainable alternative. Mr. Shingler reiterated that there is no legal justification for denying the permit and that property owners, including Mr. Luu, have the right to use their land in lawful ways. He suggested that if the county wished to impose additional conditions or oversight, it could do so through the permit process, allowing for revocation if state or local compliance standards were later violated.

In closing, Mr. Shingler stated that Mr. Luu's family intends to live on-site and be active members of the community. He shared photographs showing existing piles of chicken litter in the county that are located closer to Dry Creek than the proposed site, noting that they have been visible on public satellite imagery for years. He concluded by urging the commissioners to approve the permit according to the law, stating that denying it would unfairly deprive the Luu family of their right to make a lawful living in Seminole County.

Mr. Tom Maureau

Mr. Tom Maureau, a North Georgia property owner from Fannin County, disputed the characterization of North Georgia as a "gold standard," stating there is "a ton of litigation, a ton of complaints" about chicken farms there. He also challenged the claim that only three chicken houses would be built, noting the applicant purchased 105 acres with no contractual limit on the number of houses they could build.

Mr. Steve Dickman

Mr. Steve Dickman spoke, identifying himself as a chemical engineer. He stated Lake Seminole has been experiencing "trophic changes" since 2018 with "higher increased flow rates of nitrogen and phosphorus." While expressing support for industry generally, he stated, "This is not, I don't believe, the right place to put this chicken house."

Dickman suggested this issue presented an opportunity for the county to develop better ordinances and regulations for these types of businesses. He mentioned unregulated piles of chicken waste sitting on farms and suggested that proper design could mitigate these issues. He recommended the county look at best practices from other areas to better regulate such operations.

Adjournment

With no further discussion, the public hearing was adjourned with a motion by Vice Chairman Culverson, seconded by Commissioner Brenda Williams, all in favor, motion passed.