

ST. JOHNS COUNTY  
Planning & Zoning Agency  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
County Auditorium  
500 San Sebastian View

Thursday, March 19, 2026, 1:30:00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dr. Richard A. Hilsenbeck, District 3, Chair  
Judy Spiegel, District 3, Vice Chair;  
Gregory Matovina, District 1  
Chuck Labanowski, District 2  
Henry F. Green, District 5

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Robert Olson, District 5  
Meagan Perkins, District 4

STAFF PRESENT:

Jacob Smith, Planning Division Manager  
Lex Taylor III, Deputy County Attorney  
Marie Colee, Assistant Program Manager  
Jennifer Gutt, Planning Coordinator

- Call meeting to order
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Reading of the Public Notice statement
- Approval of Agency Minutes: 02/05/2026 and 03/05/2026
  - Motion by Ms. Spiegel to accept 02/05/2026 minutes, motion passes 5/0, (Absent: Mr. Perkins and Mr. Olson) with the correction requesting removal of a new manufactured home.
  - Motion by Mr. Green, seconded by Mr. Matovina, motion passes 5/0, (Absent: Perkins and Olson) to accept 03/05/26 meeting minutes.
- Public Comments: NONE

**AGENCY ITEMS**

**1. PUD 2025-04 Spencer Plaza**

Request to rezone approximately 3.11 acres of land from Open Rural (OR) to Planned Unit Development (PUD) to allow for a maximum 45,000 square feet of non-residential uses, located at 10090 US-1 North.

Item was heard as item number 2 due to presenter arriving after the meeting started.

Ex parte communication was disclosed.

Mr. Justin Clark presented details pertaining to the Planned Unit Development request with details pertaining to the waivers requested.

Agency clarification and discussion regarding the open space being a water retention pond. Applicant presented a draft site plan via overhead to describe the open space for the site. Additional discussion regarding the open space aspect of this development. Discussion regarding roadway deficiency on this segment. Applicants intend to put in a deceleration lane at this site.

Staff (Mr. D'Souza) provided updates to the traffic analysis in this segment of roadway. Traffic analysis is not conducted until permits are pulled.

Agency and applicant discussion regarding vape shops as allowable use within the development.

Agency asks Staff and applicant to provide the list of allowable uses with special use permits.

Staff (Mr. Jacob Smith) provided insight into uses allowed by special use permits.

Public Comment: None

**Motion by Mr. Matovina, seconded by Mr. Green (motion passes 5/0. Absent: Ms. Perkins and Mr. Olson) to recommend approval of PUD 2025-04 Spencer Plaza, based upon nine (9) findings of fact as listed in the staff report with two conditions that it will not include vape shops and that 65 percent ISR as being the maximum.**

## **2. SUPMAJ 2025-31 T. Smith Asian Bistro**

Request for a Special Use Permit, pursuant to Section 2.03.02 of the Land Development Code, to allow for the on-site sale and consumption of Alcoholic Beverages in conjunction with a restaurant located in Commercial General (CG) zoning and specifically located at 6975 A1A South.

Item moved to first agenda item as applicant for item 1 was not present.

Ex parte communication was disclosed.

Ms. Shawna Mitchell presented details pertaining to the Special Use Permit request to allow for the on-site sale and consumption of Alcoholic Beverages.

No Agency clarification and discussion.

Public Comment: None

Additional discussion regarding parking with an expansion going on to which the applicant states the alcohol permit will not impact the parking needed.

**Motion by Mr. Matovina, seconded by Mr. Labanowski, (motion passes 5/0. Absent: Ms. Perkins and Mr. Olson) to approve SUPMAJ 2025-31 T. Smith Asian Bistro, based upon eight (8) findings of fact and eleven (11) conditions as provided in the Staff Report.**

## **3. ZVAR 2025-21 Flint Carport**

Request for a Zoning Variance to Section 6.01.03.E.3 of the Land Development Code to allow for a reduced second Front Yard setback of four (4) feet and six (6) inches in lieu of the required twenty (20) feet for a Corner Lot located in Residential, Single Family (RS-2) zoning to allow for the placement of an open-air carport; located specifically at 7200 A1A S.

Ex parte communication was disclosed.

Mr. Sid Ansbacher presented details pertaining to the zoning variance request. Mr. King presented additional insights into the proposed open-air carport / pole barn.

Mr. Peter King presented details relating to the historical permitting. Explained that the owners did not want to damage existing trees hence the reason for the proposed open-air carport. Explained the significant dune location and why there is not likely to be a street. That the applicant will plant significant heavy vegetation to screen the carport from the public walkway.

Mr. Doug Flint presented a history on the property and the reasons for needing to place the open-air carport in the location requested and to protect their vehicles and RV from extreme Florida weather. Explained in detail the vegetation that they will plant.

Agency clarification and discussion regarding the height of the carport which is just over 20 feet. Discussion regarding the eaves and there is an overhang, but not beyond the 4.6 feet requested. Staff confirmed the standard setback would be 8 feet yet for accessory structures the side setback is 3 feet.

Public Comment: None

**Motion by Mr. Labanowski, seconded by Mr. Green (motion passes 4/1: Dissenting: Mr. Matovina. Absent: Ms. Perkins and Mr. Olson) to approve ZVAR 2025-21 Flint Carport based upon six (6) findings of fact and six (6) conditions as provided in the Staff Report.**

#### **4. ZVAR 2025-33 3930 Coast Highway**

A request for a Zoning Variance to Table 6.01 of the Land Development Code to allow for a reduced Front Yard setback of 15 feet in lieu of required 25 feet and a reduced second Front Yard setback of 8 feet in lieu of the required 20 feet, for a single-family residence on a Corner Lot located next to an unopened right-of-way in Residential, General (RG-2) zoning, located at 3930 Coastal Highway.

Ex parte communication was disclosed.

Mr. Chip Mitchell presented details pertaining to the zoning variance request.

Agency clarification and discussion regarding the 60-foot unopened road to the beach and the width and dimensions of the home. Agency questioned why the house is being built so close to the street when there will be a bulkhead. Applicant explained that the setback needed to be in line with the neighboring homes.

Public Comment:

- Jim Shields – Opposed
- Susan Gentry – Clarification on house placement.
- Amy Newman - Opposed
- Jamie Shields – Opposed
- Rick Shaw – Opposed

Agency members asked Mr. Shields questions regarding the bulkhead. Agency members questioned presenter with regard to the DEP permits. Questions arose with Staff with regard to the length of the bulkhead.

Staff (Mr. Taylor) Explained the right of ways on beach communities in St Johns County and that many of the homes in this section of A1A were already approved with 15 feet setbacks.

Agency members questioned Staff with regard to the traffic on this section of A1A. Staff (Mr. D'Souza) confirmed that this section of A1A was running at 70 percent capacity and if the vacant lots were to be built then traffic capacity

would move to 72 percent capacity. Explained it is a State controlled facility and there are no current plans to improve the road other than a multiuse pathway long term and various pedestrian cross ways to the beach.

First motion by Ms. Spiegel to approve the variance with a 20-foot setback did not gain a seconder.

**Motion by Mr. Green, seconded by Mr. Matovina (motion passes 3/2: dissenting Ms. Spiegel and Mr. Labanowski. Absent: Ms. Perkins and Mr. Olson) to approve ZVAR 2025-33 3930 Coastal Highway based upon six (6) findings of fact and six (6) conditions as provided in the Staff Report.**

#### **5. ZVAR 2026-01 Coastal Highway (142310-0060)**

A request for a Zoning Variance to Table 6.01 of the Land Development Code to allow for a reduced Front Yard setback of 15 feet in lieu of required 25 feet, in Residential General (RG-2) zoning, located at the intersection of Coastal Highway and Seaside Vista Court.

Ex parte communication was disclosed.

Mr. James Whitehouse presented details pertaining to the zoning variance request. Items number 5 and 6 were presented together.

Agency clarification and discussion regarding the lot size. Presenter explained that originally these lots were platted as three very narrow lots, and the developer has now resized them as two equal lots. Agency questioned if there was a beach renourishment easement there.

Public Comment:

- David Chester: Opposed.
- Francis Upanko: Opposed.
- Edward Campbell: Opposed.
- Maggie Thompson: Questioned if the lots were up for Auction next month.

Mr. James Whitehouse provided a rebuttal.

Staff (Mr. Taylor) Confirmed that the ownership of the lots was not material to the zoning variance request being heard today.

Agency members discussed that the approval of similar variances was mainly because the DEP was requesting homes to be built further to the West of the coastal set back line as possible.

Mr. Matovina explained how the homes would need to be built to counteract and survive major storms and the difficulty to obtain these permits from the DEP.

**Motion by Ms. Spiegel, seconded by Mr. Green, (carries 5/0: Absent Ms. Perkins and Mr. Olson) to approve ZVAR 2026-01 Coastal Highway (142310-0060) based upon six (6) findings of fact and six (6) conditions as provided in the Staff Report.**

#### **6. ZVAR 2026-02 Coastal Highway (142310-0070)**

A request for a Zoning Variance to Table 6.01 of the Land Development Code to allow for a reduced Front Yard setback of 15 feet in lieu of required 25 feet, in Residential General (RG-2) zoning, located at the intersection of Coastal Highway and Seaside Vista Court.

Ex parte communication was disclosed.

Mr. James Whitehouse presented this item 6 together with item 5.

**Motion by Ms. Spiegel, seconded by Mr. Matovina, (carries 5/0; Absent Ms. Perkins and Mr. Olson) to approve ZVAR 2026-02 Coastal Highway (142310-0070) based upon six (6) findings of fact and six (6) conditions as provided in the Staff Report.**

Agency undertook a 5-minute break.

#### **7. Billboards Discussion per Agency Request**

Staff (Mr. Smith): Presented various reasons for the billboard discussion.

Explained that the St Johns County code does not allow a new billboard unless there is a trade-in on the old billboard. This is termed a swap down. New billboards need to be in a high-density zoning district and are difficult to obtain approval.

Various discussions amongst Agency members and Staff occurred around the reduction of billboards over a period of time. Billboards in St Johns County had reduced by about 50 percent in the past 20 years. Yet the billboard industry had experienced growth nationally. The buy down program had been discussed and members wanted St Johns County to be more proactive in removing them. Currently billboards are monitored by Code Enforcement. The growth of digital billboards was also discussed.

Public Comment: Ms. Barbara and Mr. Doug O'Connor presented various images of billboards on A1A scenic highway. Some had been there for up to 15 years. Recommended to have these contracts bought out or not replaced when the contracts expired.

Agency members requested more information from the DOT database.

Dr. Hilsenbeck determined that at this stage the PZA did not have sufficient information to take to the Board of County Commissioners to ask them to reduce the number of billboards. The County would need to allocate funds for a buyback program.

- Staff Reports: Next PZA meeting is on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2026.
- Agency Reports: none
- Meeting Adjourned by Dr. Hilsenbeck at 5:22pm

Minutes approved on the 16th day of April, 2026.



Chair / Vice-Chair  
Planning and Zoning Agency



Clerk, Growth Management