BEFORE THE
GEORGIA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Sandersville Railroad Company Hancock County, Georgia **In re: Sandersville Railroad Company's Petition for Approval to Acquire Real Estate by Condemnation**	Docket No.: 45045

VERIFIED APPLICATION FOR LEAVE TO INTERVENE
OF JOEL BRADFORD REED AND KATHY LYNN REED

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. §§ 46-2-59 and 50-13-14 and Rule 515-2-1-.06 of the Georgia Public Service Commission (the "Commission"), Joel Bradford Reed ("Joel") and Kathy Lynn Reed ("Kathy") (together, the "Reeds") respectfully request that the Commission grant their Verified Application to Intervene in the above-captioned proceeding (the "Proceeding"). The Reeds own one parcel of land that is targeted for eventual acquisition by Sandersville Railroad Company in its Petition for Approval to Acquire Real Estate by Condemnation that is the subject of the Proceeding. The Reeds have interests of the highest order—the preservation of their property—and they thus fit the criteria for intervention set forth in Georgia statutes and this Commission's administrative provisions.

In support of this Application, the Reeds state as follows:

FACTS PERTAINING TO THE REEDS' INTEREST IN THE PROCEEDING

1. On March 8, 2023, the Sandersville Railroad Company ("Sandersville Railroad") filed the Petition with the Commission.

2. The Petition sought approval pursuant to O.C.G.A. §§ 46-8-120 and 46-8-121 to acquire by condemnation land that is owned by Robert Donald Garrett Sr. and Sarah Veazey Garrett (the "Garretts"). The Garretts' land is identified as Hancock County Tax Parcel Number

186 013, which corresponds to 1335 Shoals Road, Sparta, Georgia 31087 (the "Garrett Parent Tract"). Petition 4.

3. The Petition sought approval to condemn the Garrett Parent Tract to build an industrial spur (the "Hanson Spur") between the CSX line near Sparta, Georgia, and a large open-air mine called the Hanson Quarry. Petition 1.

4. In the Petition, Sandersville Railroad asserts that it will require 18 parcels of right of way for the Hanson Spur, including one parcel belonging to the Reeds (the "Reed Tract"). Petition 3; Petition Exhibit "B" at 1; Petition Exhibit "C" at 1 ("Parcel 12: Joel Reed").

5. The Reeds have owned the Reed Tract since the 1990s. While the Reeds live in northern Georgia near the Tennessee border, Joel spends about 25% of the year at the property in Sparta, which he uses to hunt and grow timber. The Reeds own a home on the property.

6. The Reeds plan to leave the property to Joel's son as an inheritance and wish for the land to remain whole and intact.

7. The Reeds enjoy and make use of the Reed Tract, and the proposed condemnation will directly and negatively affect their enjoyment and use of the Reed Tract. The Reeds also intend to use the Reed Tract in the future in ways that will be directly and negatively affected by the proposed condemnation of the Reed Tract.

8. Sandersville Railroad served the Petition on the Garretts on March 10, 2023.

9. The Commission docket for the Proceeding is Docket #45045.

10. On March 24, 2023, the Commission appointed Nancy Gibson as the Hearing Officer to preside over the Proceeding pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 46-2-58.

11. On April 5, 2023, the Garretts filed an application to intervene in the Proceeding.

12. On May 2, 2023, the Garretts answered the Petition.

13. On May 2, 2023, Marvin Smith, Jr. and Patricia Smith, owners of Parcel 7 as identified in Exhibit C of the Petition, and William Blaine Smith and Helen Diane Smith, owners of Parcels 8, 10 and 11 as identified in Exhibit C of the Petition (together, "the Smiths") filed applications to intervene in the Proceeding.

14. On May 18, 2023, the Hearing Officer filed a Procedural and Scheduling Order and Notice of Hearing ("Scheduling Order"). The Scheduling Order set a hearing in the Proceeding for November 27–28, 2023.

15. On June 1, 2023, Sandersville Railroad notified the Commission, the Garretts, and the Smiths that legal notice of hearing would be published in the Fulton County Daily Report on June 2, 2023, and in the Atlanta Journal Constitution and The Sparta Ishmaelite on June 4, 2023.

16. According to the Scheduling Order and O.C.G.A. § 46-2-59(c), applications for intervention in the Proceeding are due 30 days from first date of publication of notice. Scheduling Order 1(a).

17. Thirty days from June 2, 2023 is July 2, 2023, which is a Sunday. Therefore, applications for intervention in the Proceeding are due July 3, 2023. *See* O.C.G.A. § 9-11-6(a) and § 1-3-1(d)(3).

GROUNDS FOR INTERVENTION

18. The Commission or the Hearing Officer should grant this Application for five reasons. First, the Reeds have a legal, property, or other interest of the highest order. Second, no other party can adequately protect the Reeds' interests. Third, their Application is timely. Fourth, the Reeds' proposed intervention presents identical issues of law and fact as those already raised by the Petition. Finally, because the resolution of the Proceeding will directly affect the ability of

the Reeds to protect their interests in their property in the future, to deny the Reeds the right to participate fully in the Proceeding would violate their due process rights.

The Reeds Have Important Legal, Property, or Other Interests

19. Intervention before the Commission is governed by O.C.G.A. §§ 46-2-59 and 50-13-14, Ga. Comp. R. & Regs. 515-2-1-.06 and the Scheduling Order. Under the relevant portion of O.C.G.A. § 46-2-59, the Commission or a hearing officer shall only permit a person to intervene who "demonstrates a legal, property, or other interest in the proceeding." O.C.G.A. § 46-2-59(e)(2).

20. Because they own the Reed Tract, the Reeds have a legal and property interest in the Proceeding that is of historic and continuing importance, and, as such, they meet Georgia's standards for intervention in this Proceeding.

No Other Party Can Adequately Protect the Reeds' Interests

21. In determining whether to permit intervention, the hearing officer may consider "whether the person's interest is adequately represented by other parties and whether the intervention will unduly delay the proceedings or prejudice the rights of other parties." O.C.G.A. § 46-2-59(e)(2). The Scheduling Order requires that applicants "identify other intervening Parties or intervening party applicants whose interests are similar to the applicant along with an explanation of why the identified intervening Parties or intervening Party applicant will not adequately represent the applicant's interest[.]" Scheduling Order 1(b).

22. No other parties can adequately represent the Reeds' interests in the Proceeding. To meet this standard, an intervenor need only show that his or her interests "may be" inadequately protected, a burden that is "minimal." *Trbovich v. United Mine Workers of Am.*, 404 U.S. 528, 538 n.10 (1972); *see also Sw. Ga. Prod. Credit Ass'n v. Wainwright*, 241 Ga. 355, 356, 245 S.E.2d

306, 307 (1978) (intervention was proper when intervenor had a claim adverse to the opposing party involving the subject matter of the pending suit).

23. The Reeds' status as the owners of the Reed Tract deserves vigorous legal protection. To be sure, other property owners whose property is targeted for condemnation by Sandersville Railroad, and who have applied or may apply to intervene in the Proceeding, have similar interests to the Reeds in that their property, too, will be taken against their will by Sandersville Railroad. However, that is where the similarity ends. Every piece of real property is unique. *See Cobb Cnty. Bd. of Tax Assessors v. Sibley*, 244 Ga. 404, 404, 260 S.E.2d 313, 215 (1979) (finding that the uniqueness of land affects its value). *See also Focus Ent. Int'l, Inc. v. Partridge Greene, Inc.*, 253 Ga. App. 121, 127, 558 S.E.2d 440, 446 (2001) (finding that "[l]and, under Georgia law, is deemed sufficiently unique that it is entitled to equitable remedies" to protect interests in land). Because land is unique, physical and environmental impact to each parcel may vary parcel by parcel, and condemnation of adjacent parcels of land can result in varying diminution of value for different properties and their owners. *See Gilmore v. Sandersville R. Co.*, 149 F. Supp. 725, 727 (M.D. Ga. 1955) (finding that the diminution of value to adjacent parcels varied, where various plaintiff landowners challenged a railroad's attempt to condemn their land in order to build a spur track that would run six miles from an existing track to terminate at a kaolin plant).

24. The Reeds are the sole owners of the unique Reed Tract. The railroad's impact on the Reed Tract will be unique as compared to the Garrett Parent Tract, or the other properties targeted for condemnation by Sandersville Railroad. Furthermore, no other parties have an incentive to adequately protect the Reeds' interests. Because no other intervening party or

applicant intervening party has incentive to protect the Reeds' interests as vigorously as the Reeds, the Reeds should be permitted to intervene and participate fully in the Proceeding.

25. The Reeds also have a claim adverse to Sandersville Railroad involving the subject matter of the pending Proceeding—namely, they wish to fully protect their interests in the Reed Tract and actively assert their rights under Georgia law in the Proceeding. They therefore meet the "minimal" burden for intervention.

This Application is Timely

26. O.C.G.A. § 46-2-59(c) provides in relevant part that "[a]ny other person desiring to intervene must file an application for leave to intervene within 30 days following the first published notice of the proceeding." The Scheduling Order provides that applications for intervention in the Proceeding are due 30 days from the first date of publication of notice. Scheduling Order 1(a).

27. As noted above, Sandersville Railroad first published notice of this Proceeding on June 2, 2023, triggering a deadline of July 3, 2023, for applications to intervene.

28. The Reeds have filed their application for leave to intervene well before the deadline of July 3, 2023. As such, the Commission or Hearing Officer's grant of this timely Application will not "unduly delay the proceedings or prejudice the rights of other parties." O.C.G.A. § 46-2-59(e)(2).

The Reeds Will Address the Central Issue in the Proceeding

29. The purpose of the Reeds' intervention warrants the grant of this Application. The Reeds desire to intervene in the Proceeding to protect their interests, including but not limited to protecting their rights to receive notice of any action in the Proceeding; present evidence, provide

testimony, and cross-examine witnesses; submit briefs; participate in any Commission-ordered mediation, hearings, or other proceedings; and be heard in oral argument.

30. Their interest in this Proceeding correlates with the sole issue in this case, namely, whether the Petition meets the standards for the use of eminent domain under Georgia law. As such, the Reeds present questions of law and fact identical to those raised by the Petition and their participation will not introduce any issues unrelated to those already raised by the Petition.

Denying the Reeds' Intervention May Violate Due Process

31. Finally, to deny the Reeds full participation in the Proceeding may violate their due process rights. Limiting or conditioning the participation of individuals or entities whose property will be directly affected by Sandersville Railroad's proposed condemnations would create significant due process issues. *See Mathews v. Eldridge*, 424 U.S. 319, 333 (1976) ("The fundamental requirement of due process is the opportunity to be heard 'at a meaningful time and in a meaningful manner.'" (quoting *Armstrong v. Manzo*, 380 U.S. 545, 552 (1965))); *see also United States v. James Daniel Good Real Prop.*, 510 U.S. 43, 48 (1993) ("[I]ndividuals must receive notice and an opportunity to be heard before the Government deprives them of property.")

32. According to Sandersville Railroad's own assertions, the Reed Tract would be included in subsequent condemnation attempts by Sandersville Railroad. Therefore, the Reeds have significant property interests at issue in this proceeding, especially if there is any possibility that the Commission's factual findings or legal conclusions regarding Sandersville Railroad's petition to condemn the Garrett Parent Tract could have a preclusive effect on subsequent condemnation attempts by Sandersville Railroad. *See Bd. of Pub. Safety v. Jordan*, 252 Ga. App. 577, 584, 556 S.E.2d 837, 843 (2001) (recognizing "the preclusive effect of the factual findings entered by [a] hearing officer" that are ratified by the relevant agency); *see also Forsyth County v.*

Martin, 279 Ga. 215, 217, 610 S.E.2d 512, 515–16 (2005) (holding Superior Court's affirmance of administrative law judge's fact determination that a county was an owner of a dam collaterally estopped the county from relitigating its ownership in subsequent suit by property owners to require county to assume ownership, repair, and maintenance of the dam).

33. That is, it is likely that important legal and factual issues that would arise in any proceeding by Sandersville Railroad to acquire the Reeds' property will be decided in the Proceeding. The Reeds should have a say in the resolution of those issues. In such circumstances, the Fourteenth Amendment demands a robust process guaranteed to minimize the threat of erroneous deprivation of these interests; excluding the Reeds from full participation in the Proceeding does not meet that standard.

The Reeds Intend to Provide Direct Testimony

34. The Scheduling Order provides that intervening party applications must "state the applicant's present intention to submit direct testimony and by whom and on what subject." Scheduling Order 1(b)(2). The Reeds intend to submit direct testimony on the subject of the unique features of the Reed Tract, how the Reeds use the Reed Tract, and the potential impact to the Reed Tract by Sandersville Railroad's condemnation.

REQUEST FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, the Reeds respectfully request that the Commission grant their Verified Application for Leave to Intervene in the Proceeding as a party, with full rights of participation as provided by the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure and appropriate sections of the Georgia Code on all issues of law and fact to be developed during the Proceeding. The Reeds further respectfully request that they be placed on the Commission's official service list to receive copies of all notices, pleadings, orders and other documents that are submitted or otherwise made

available in the Proceeding. All such notices, pleadings, correspondences, orders and other documents should be served on the Reeds and their counsel as follows:

Joel and Kathy Reed
5 Dogwood Lane
Chatsworth, GA 30705
jbreed48@yahoo.com
(706) 280-5864

Grant E. McBride
Smith Welch Webb & White
2200 Keys Ferry Court
McDonogh, GA 30523
gmcbride@smithwelchlaw.com
Tel: (770) 957-3937
Fax: (770) 957-9165

William R. Maurer
Institute for Justice
600 University Street, Ste. 1730
Seattle, WA 98101
wmaurer@ij.org
Tel: (206) 957-1300

Elizabeth L. Sanz
Renée D. Flaherty
Institute for Justice
901 N. Glebe Rd., Ste. 900
Arlington, VA 22203
bsanz@ij.org
rflaherty@ij.org
Tel: (703) 682-9320

DATED this 20th day of June, 2023.

Grant E. McBride
Georgia Bar No. 109812
SMITH, WELCH, WEBB & WHITE,
ATTORNEYS AT LAW
2200 Keys Ferry Court
P.O. Box 10
McDonough, GA 30253
gmcbride@smithwelchlaw.com
Tel.: 770-957-3937
Fax: 770-957-9165

/s/ William R. Maurer
William R. Maurer*
Washington Bar No. 25451
INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE
600 University Street, Ste. 1730
Seattle, WA 98101
(206) 957-1300
wmaurer@ij.org

Elizabeth L. Sanz*
California Bar No. 340538
Renée D. Flaherty*
District of Columbia Bar No. 1011453

INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE
901 N. Glebe Rd., Ste. 900
Arlington, VA 22203
(703) 682-9320
bsanz@ij.org
rflaherty@ij.org

Counsel for Intervenors
Joel Bradford Reed and Kathy Lynn Reed

**Pro hac vice* applications pending

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VERIFICATION OF APPLICATION FOR LEAVE TO INTERVENE

Grant E. McBride personally appeared before the undersigned Notary Public and stated under oath that he is an authorized representative of Joel Bradford Reed and Kathy Lynn Reed in this matter and the facts contained in the foregoing *Verified Application for Leave to Intervene* are true and correct to the best of his information, knowledge and belief.

This 20 day of June, 2023.

Grant E. McBride

Counsel for Intervenors
Joel Bradford Reed and Kathy Lynn Reed

Sworn to and subscribed
before me this 20th day
of June, 2023.

KRISTIN YOUNG NOTARY PUBLIC SPALDING COUNTY, GEORGIA My Comm. Expires June 27, 2026

Notary Public
My Commission Expires: 6/27/26


KRISTIN YOUNG
NOTARY
PUBLIC
GWINNETT COUNTY, GEORGIA

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on this 20th day of June, 2023, a copy of the foregoing *Verified Application for Leave to Intervene* has been served via electronic mail and U.S. First-Class Mail on the following pursuant to GA. COMP. R. & REGS. 515-16-16-.02; 515-2-1-.04(4)(b), (3):

VIA Electronic Mail and U.S. First-Class Mail:

L. Craig Dowdy
Steven L. Jones
TAYLOR ENGLISH DUMA, LLP
1600 Parkwood Circle
Suite 200
Atlanta, Georgia 30339
Telephone: (770) 434-6868
Facsimile: (770) 434-7376
cdowdy@taylorenglish.com
sjones@taylorenglish.com

Robert S. Highsmith, Jr.
Laura E. Flint
HOLLAND & KNIGHT LLP
1180 West Peachtree Street NW
Suite 1800
Atlanta, Georgia 30309
Telephone: (404) 817-8500
Facsimile: (404) 881-0470
robert.highsmith@hklaw.com
laura.flint@hklaw.com

Counsel for Petitioner Sandersville Railroad Company

Robert Donald Garrett, Sr.
Sarah V. Garret
1335 Shoals Road
Sparta, GA 31087

William Blaine Smith
Helen Diane Smith
823 Chatsworth Drive
Accokeek, MD 20607

Marvin Smith, Jr.
Patricia Smith
15500 Avery Road
Rockville, Maryland 20855

Leo John Briggs
Georgia Ann Briggs
4500 Hidden Stream Drive
Loganville, GA 30052

Sally G. Wells
140 Dunn Road
Sparta, GA 31087

Donna N. Garrett
154 Lakeview Drive
Sparta, GA 31087

Verne K. Hollis
373 Hamilton Street
Sparta, GA 31087

Herus Ellison Garrett
111 Brookwood Court
Eatonton, GA 31024

Thomas Ahmed Lee
8201 Brookriver Drive, Ste 246
Dallas, TX 75247

Property Owners

Nancy Gibson
Georgia Public Service Commission
244 Washington Street, SW
Atlanta, Georgia 30334
Telephone: (404) 463-0882
Facsimile: (770) 342-3054
E-mail: ngibson@psc.ga.gov

Designated Hearing Officer

Sallie Tanner
Georgia Public Service Commission
244 Washington Street, SW
Atlanta, GA 30334
Telephone: (404) 656-4501
Facsimile: (404) 656-2341
E-mail: stanner@psc.ga.gov

Executive Secretary of the Public Service Commission

Rob Trokey
Georgia Public Service Commission
244 Washington Street, SW
Atlanta, GA 30334
E-mail: rtrokey@psc.state.ga.us

Director, Electric Unit of the Public Service Commission

DATED this 20th day of June, 2023.

Grant E. McBride
Georgia Bar No. 109812
SMITH, WELCH, WEBB & WHITE, ATTORNEYS AT LAW
2200 Keys Ferry Court
P.O. Box 10
McDonough, GA 30253
Tel.: 770-957-3937
Fax: 770-957-9165
Email: gmcbride@smithwelchlaw.com

Counsel for Intervenors Joel Bradford Reed and Kathy Lynn Reed