



**TOWN OF COVENTRY, RI  
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT**

## **STAFF REPORT**

<b>Project Name:</b>	<b>Highlands at Hopkins Hill</b>
<b>Plan Type:</b>	Major Land Development
<b>Plan Review Phase:</b>	Preliminary Plan
<b>Owner/Applicant:</b>	D2 Homes, Inc.
<b>Address:</b>	Dante Blvd
<b>Plat / Lot / Zone:</b>	Portion of <b>AP 13 Lot 22</b> <b>Zone BP Lot Size</b> 13.6 acres
<b>Existing Use:</b>	Vacant
<b>Proposed Use:</b>	Single family-style dwelling units
<b>Description:</b>	The applicant proposes to develop 66 detached, single-family condominium units on the vacant portion of the subject parcel along with internal roadways and associated site amenities. Public water and sewer connections are anticipated.

Please note that this Staff Report represents an updated version of the report which was submitted to the Planning Commission in advance of its May 28, 2025 meeting, when the Public Hearing for this project was initially opened. The Hearing was kept open and the matter was continued to the June 25, 2025 meeting. This version of the report is intended to replace the previous report in order to provide all relevant planning analysis, findings, and staff recommendation herein.

### **I. PROJECT INFORMATION**

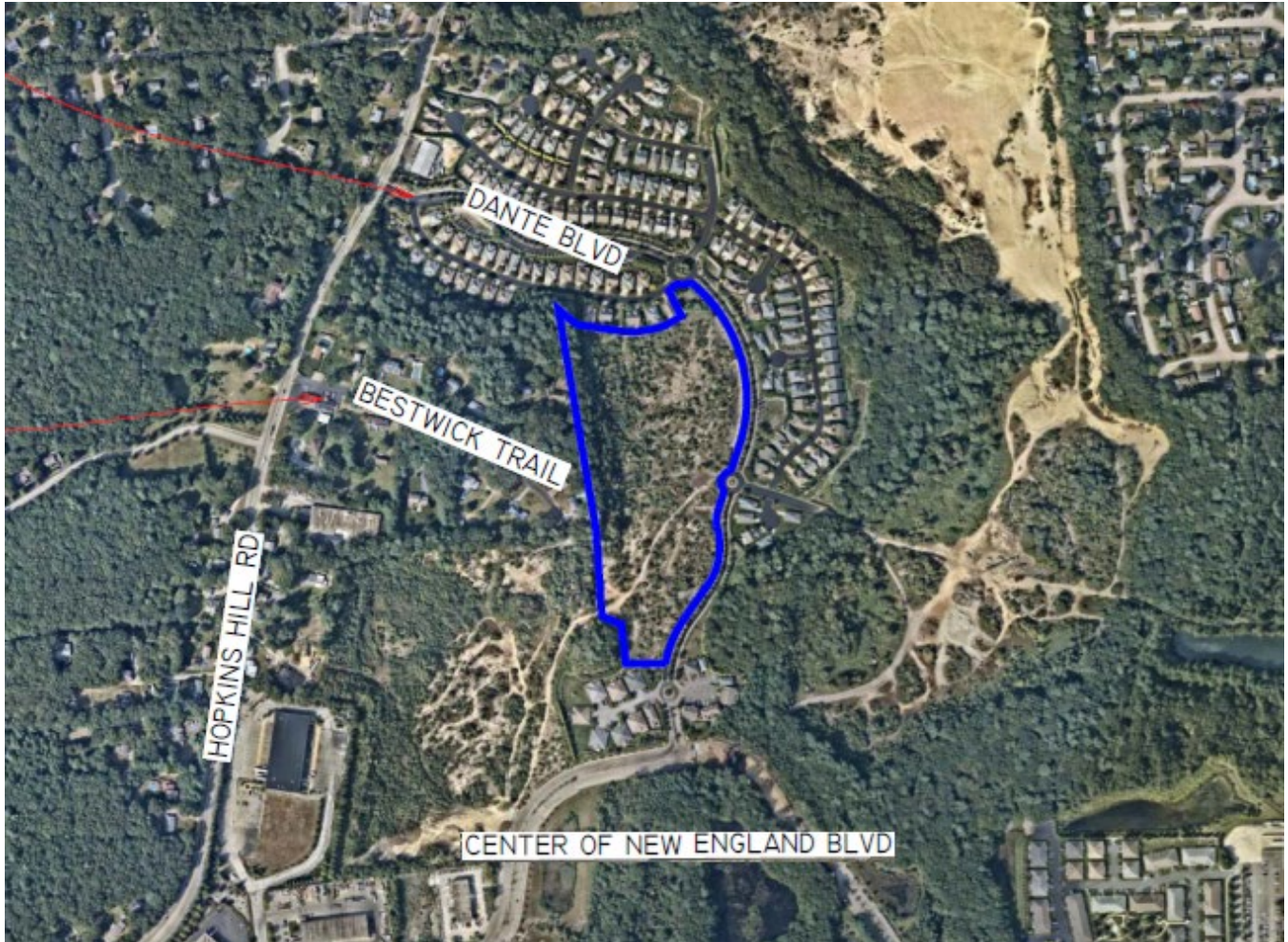
#### **Overview**

This matter is again before the Planning Commission as a Preliminary Plan Application for a proposed Major Land Development representing the (unbuilt) Phases IG, IH, II, IJ, IM, and IN of the Highlands at Hopkins Hill condominium development. In a letter dated August 15, 2024, the applicant cited provisions within a February 2019 Consent Order that indicated the subject parcel (and the other undeveloped Centre of New England parcels held in receivership) would be vested under the full development's Master Plan approval granted in November 2003. The applicant also cited provisions allowing up to 66 residential units to be developed on the parcel without the need to seek a Master Plan amendment.

In support of this proposal, the applicant has submitted substantive materials including a Traffic Impact Assessment, a Conceptual Landscape Plan, a Stormwater Management Report, a Soil Erosion and

Sedimentation Control Plan, and permitting documentation from RIDEM and Kent County Water Authority. Staff anticipates the applicant will submit additional materials pertaining to stormwater design with its Final Application submittal.

### Existing Conditions



The undeveloped portion of the subject parcel is framed by Dante Boulevard along its eastern side and existing residential development along Stephanie Drive, Greig Court, and Bestwick Trail on its northern, southern, and western sides, respectively. This area is generally flat and features intermittent patches of brush and bare earth, crossed by a few informal dirt trails.

Like all other Centre of New England parcels, the subject parcel falls within the Big River Natural Heritage Area. A September 23, 2024 Consent Judgment established that there are no jurisdictional wetlands on the property.



The existing Highlands at Hopkins Hill condominium units establish the prevailing development pattern of the immediate vicinity as dense, single-family style residential units. This pattern is somewhat replicated by the Whipple Farm condominium development to the south. The subject parcel is zoned BP (Business Park), as are most of its surroundings; a pocket of conventional single-family development along Bestwick Trail and Minda Lane is zoned R-20.

### Proposed Conditions



The applicant has submitted a site plan indicating its intent to develop 66 detached, single family-style residential units (with associated parking and utilities) on the undeveloped portion of the subject parcel. Though not explicitly addressed in any of the contemporary submittal documents, it is understood that 80% of these units will be age-restricted to 55 and up, consistent with Condition of Approval C as listed in the November 2003 Master Plan approval under which the project is vested. Architectural renderings have not been provided (these were not required checklist items in the era under which the project is vested), but the applicant verbally indicated during the May 28<sup>th</sup> meeting that 6-8 different architectural styles will be incorporated into the development to match the aesthetics and variety found in the existing Highlands development. The applicant also indicated during the meeting that an unspecified mix of two- and three-bedroom units will be built, with sizes ranging from 1,200—1,700 SF. Staff subsequently

inquired how many three-bedroom units the applicant intends to build; the answer is unknown at the time of writing this report.

Several new private roadways will provide access to the new units. Tammy Jean Drive will span the length of the site from north to south, intersecting with Stephanie Drive at its northern end and terminating in a cul-de-sac at the south. Three short cul-de-sacs will branch eastward from Tammy Jean Drive. Finally, a westward extension of Angelina Drive will link Tammy Jean Drive with Dante Boulevard by tying into the existing roundabout.

As noted in the Overview section of this report, the applicant submitted a Traffic Impact Assessment in support of its proposal, prepared by Crossman Engineering. Crossman limited its analysis of the proposed development's impacts to internal neighborhood streets (Dante Blvd and Stephanie Dr), bounded by Dante Blvd's intersections with Hopkins Hill Road and Centre of New England Boulevard; it pointed to the original, Master Plan-era traffic study as well as a forthcoming study commissioned by a separate developer for a separate project as adequately accounting for this proposal's place within the broader build-out of the Centre of New England parcels. The Traffic Impact Assessment projected this development would generate 46 two-way trips during the AM peak hour and 62 two-way trips during the PM peak hour. Based on this information and discussion at the May 28<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Planning Commission decided a peer review of the Traffic Impact Analysis would not be required for this project.

The development is proposed to be served by public water and sewer utilities. The applicant provided an approval letter from Kent County Water Authority dated February 20, 2025; the 2019 Consent Order establishes sewer availability for the project, and an application for minor alterations to the previously-approved sewer design for this project was submitted on January 17, 2025.

Regarding stormwater management, the project will make use of the pre-existing drainage basins that were constructed along the undeveloped area's Dante Boulevard "frontage" two decades ago in anticipation of future development. As documented in the September 2024 Consent Judgment, RIDEM agreed to consider the existing detention basins as "adequate for runoff control," with "no further analysis, design, or construction...required by RIDEM to satisfy the requirement for peak runoff control for the RIPDES application or permit." The RIPDES Permit was accordingly issued on January 15, 2025. In the Staff Report for the May 28<sup>th</sup> meeting, Staff expressed concerns with the question of where stormwater would overflow if the 100-year-storm capacity of the existing basins were to be exceeded. This topic was discussed further at a follow-up meeting between the applicant and staff on June 6<sup>th</sup> in which the applicant's engineer stated they would draft a written explanation of the same for the purposes of clarifying the record. However, staff have not received the engineer's written summary at the time of writing of this report.

For landscaping, the applicant is proposing to leave the existing drainage basins (and picket fencing along the ponds' Dante Boulevard sides) unaltered and to maintain existing vegetation along the site's western

edge and at the intersection of Dante Boulevard and Stephanie Drive. During the June 6<sup>th</sup> follow-up meeting, the applicant indicated willingness to provide either white picket fencing or planted hedges along the sides of the existing drainage basins that face the proposed development, aesthetically consistent with how other basins are secured elsewhere in the Highlands development. While the site is generally flat, some regrading is proposed; however, the applicant has not yet provided cut-and-fill specifications with its Grading Plan.

## **Zoning**

In its February 20, 2025 cover letter, the applicant indicated that this project is vested under the Town of Coventry's 1997 Zoning Ordinance, pursuant to the February 2004 Consent Judgment. This preserves residential development as an allowed use for the site, whose BP (Business Park) zoning otherwise would not allow residential uses by-right. The applicant is not seeking any dimensional relief in support of the proposed development.

## **Waivers**

The February 20, 2025 cover letter also specified that the project is vested under the September 13, 2000 amendment to the Town of Coventry's Subdivision and Land Development Regulations, as this was the edition in effect at the time of Master Plan approval.

The applicant requested a waiver from submitting legal documents at this time "to the extent that the checklist item includes review of the condo documents." During the May 28<sup>th</sup> meeting, the applicant verbally indicated its intent to join the existing Highlands at Hopkins Hill Condominium Association. Based on this understanding, Staff would support granting a waiver from providing legal documents at this stage of review. However, should the applicant seek to create a new Condominium Association prior to submittal of its Final Plan application, Staff would recommend that the applicant return before the Planning Commission for consideration of its Final Plan application.

In response to a Staff inquiry to confirm whether additional waivers would be sought for other design elements, the applicant indicated in its April 7<sup>th</sup> letter that waivers would not be needed for sidewalks because in the code era under which this project is vested, sidewalk requirements were tied to individual zoning districts, and the BP zone did not require their construction. Similarly, waivers would not be needed for street trees because the subdivision regulations did not require them along private roadways.

Private roadways aside, the applicant is proposing to install street lighting and curbing within the proposed development. It should be noted that the built outcome resulting from the proposed handling of these four design elements would be consistent with the existing portions of the broader Highlands development.

## **Interdepartmental Review and Comments**

Please see the attached report from the Technical Review Committee (dated May 19, 2025) for interdepartmental comments on this application.

Chief John Potvin of the Hopkins Hill Fire District provided comments two days after the meeting, in an email dated May 21, 2025, in place of Fire Marshal Mark Vincent, who was unable to attend the meeting. Chief Potvin's comments are as follows:

- *"The water supply for fire suppression must be within the maximum allowable distances as per NFPA 1, 18.5.2.*
- *"The water supply shall be capable of providing appropriate fire flows per NFPA 1, 18.4.4.1. The minimum fire flow and flow duration requirements for one- and two-family dwellings.*
- *"There shall be no obstructions within a 3' diameter surrounding a fire hydrant.*
- *"Must double check radius of cul-de-sec to ensure compliance with NFPA 1.*
- *"Street light should be provided in cul-de-secs."*

## **I. MAJOR LAND DEVELOPMENT**

### **Findings of Fact**

Staff has conducted an orderly, thorough, and expeditious technical review of this Preliminary Plan application for conformance with required standards set forth in RIGL Section 45-23-60, as well as in the Town of Coventry's Subdivision and Land Development Regulations, and finds as follows:

*RIGL § 45-23-60. Procedure – Required findings. (a)(1) states, "The proposed development is consistent with the comprehensive community plan and/or has satisfactorily addressed the issues where there may be inconsistencies."*

1. The Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use designation for the subject parcel is Business. Nonetheless, the subject parcel is subject to a Consent Judgment which explicitly allows the development of a 66-unit residential condominium as proposed for this site.

*RIGL § 45-23-60. Procedure – Required findings. (a)(2) states, “The proposed development is in compliance with the standards and provisions of the municipality’s zoning ordinance.”*

2. The subject parcel is subject to a February 2019 Consent Judgment which establishes that the proposed 66-unit development is considered vested under the existing Master Plan approval.
3. The proposal is consistent with the standards and provisions of the 1997 version of Coventry’s zoning ordinance, under which the project’s Master Plan approval was vested.
4. The proposal will not alter the general character of the surrounding area or impair the intent or purpose of the Coventry Zoning Code.

*RIGL § 45-23-60. Procedure – Required findings. (a)(3) states, “There will be no significant negative environmental impacts from the proposed development as shown on the **final** plan, with all required conditions for approval.” (emphasis added)*

5. This finding pertains specifically to the final plan; however, no significant environmental impacts are anticipated based on the Preliminary Plan level of detail required at this stage.
6. The March 2023 update of the Rhode Island Natural Heritage map shows that the subject parcel falls within a Natural Heritage Area overlay.

*RIGL § 45-23-60. Procedure – Required findings. (a)(5) states, “All proposed land developments and all subdivision lots have adequate and permanent physical access to a public street. Lot frontage on a public street without physical access shall not be considered in compliance with this requirement.”*

7. The full subject parcel enjoys adequate permanent physical access to one public right-of-way (Hopkins Hill Road). The portion of the subject parcel on which the proposed development will be located can be accessed via a private roadway (Dante Boulevard) that connects to Hopkins Hill Road.
8. The development will provide for safe and adequate circulation for vehicular traffic as well as for emergency vehicles.

## **Recommendation**

Staff finds this proposal consistent with the standards for required findings of fact set forth in RIGL Section 45-23-60 as well as with the Town of Coventry’s Subdivision and Land Development Regulations. Staff therefore recommends that the Planning Commission adopt the documented findings of fact and **approve** the Preliminary Plan application, subject to the conditions denoted below.

## **Conditions of approval**

1. The ratio of two- to three-bedroom units shall be set at 6:1 (in other words, one out of every six units built may be three-bedroom), for a maximum of 11 three-bedroom units.

2. Consistent with Condition of Approval C as listed in the original November 2003 Master Plan approval under which the project is vested, 80% of units will be age-restricted to 55 and up.
3. The applicant shall install either picket fences or hedges around the perimeters of the existing drainage basins that will abut the proposed development. Whether picket fences or hedges are chosen, the selected treatment shall match the style of the picket fences and/or hedges already in place around other basins in the developed portions of the Highlands at Hopkins Hill.
4. The applicant shall provide an approval letter from the Hopkins Hill Fire District with its Final Plan application.
5. The applicant shall submit a revised plan set with its Final Plan application containing the following edits:
  - a. Selected means of securing the perimeters of the drainage basins (picket fences or hedges) shall be shown on the Landscaping Plan sheet.
  - b. Requested changes to Sheet 3 of 14 made by Town Engineer and described in 5/19/25 TRC report.
6. Evidence of all required state and local permits shall be submitted with the Final Plan application.
7. The applicant shall submit all legal documents with the Final Plan application, including condominium documents. If the applicant elects to create a new Condominium Association rather than to join the existing Highlands at Hopkins Hill Condominium Association, then such documentation shall be brought before the Planning Commission as part of a Final Plan Application review in front of the Commission. Otherwise, the Final Plan application shall be reviewed and approved administratively.
8. The Engineer of Record shall submit a Certificate of Conformance (COC) prior to issuance of Certificates of Occupancy for the proposed buildings.
9. Upon project completion, a Certificate of Conformance (COC) from the Engineer of Record (EOR) shall be required. The COC shall certify that the constructed project meets all required standards, regulations and specifications in the permitting and construction documents. The COC shall be focused on site civil related work. Work includes, but is not limited to; all drainage system components, earth grading, roadway subbase, pavement and curbing, concrete flatwork, underground utilities (sewer, electric, water, etc.), survey markers and monuments, fire cisterns, signage, fencing and landscaping. EOR shall partner with a qualified sub-consultant to perform necessary inspection related duties if EOR does not perform these duties in-house. All coordination between EOR and inspection sub-consultant shall be finalized before construction commences. A certificate of occupancy will not be issued until COC is received and accepted by the town.

Pursuant to Article XII. Appeals, Subsection A. Procedure for Appeals to the Board of Appeal of the Coventry Subdivision Regulations, the decision of the Planning Commission herein may be appealed in writing by any party aggrieved by said decision to the Coventry Board of Appeal. Any such appeal shall be made within 20 days of the day of the decision is recorded and posted in the Town Clerk's Office.





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## **TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT**

**DATE:** May 19, 2025  
**PROJECT NAME:** "Highlands at Hopkins Hill"  
**PROPERTIES:** Portion of AP 13, Lot 22  
**ADDRESS:** Dante Boulevard  
**ZONE:** BP (Business Park)  
**OWNER/APPLICANT:** D2 Homes, Inc.

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This matter came before the Coventry Technical Review Committee at its May 19, 2025 meeting as a Preliminary Plan for a Major Land Development in accordance with Article V, § D.4. of the Coventry Subdivision & Land Development Regulations.

An application and plan were submitted for review on February 20, 2025. The initial submittal was found deficient on March 14, 2025; additional/revised materials resolving the deficiencies were submitted on April 17, 2025.

The applicant proposes to develop 66 detached, single-family condominium units on the vacant portion of the subject parcel along with internal roadways and associated site amenities. Public water and sewer connections are anticipated.

The members of the Technical Review Committee reviewed the following documents related to this application when preparing the comments below:

Highlands - 2019 Consent Order.pdf  
Highlands - Cover Letter dated 2025-02-20.pdf  
Highlands - Letter re Vested Master Plan Approval dated 2024-08-15.pdf  
Highlands - Preliminary Plan Set - Revised 2025-04-03.PDF  
Highlands - RIDEM Stormwater Permit dated 2025-01-15.pdf  
Highlands - RIDEM Wetlands Permit dated 2004-11-30.pdf  
Highlands - SESC Plan.pdf  
Highlands - Stormwater Management Report.pdf  
Highlands - Response to Notice of Deficiency dated 2025-04-07.pdf  
Highlands - Stormwater O&M Plan.pdf  
Highlands - Traffic Impact Assessment.pdf

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### **TOWN ENGINEER**

#### **General**

- 1) Upon project completion, a Certificate of Conformance (COC) from the Civil Engineer of Record (CEOR) shall be required. The COC shall certify that the constructed project meets all required

standards, regulations and specifications in the permitting and construction documents. The COC shall be focused on site civil related work. Work includes but is not limited to; all drainage system components, drainage related to retaining wall placement, earth grading, roadway subbase, pavement and curbing, concrete flatwork, underground utilities (sewer, electric, water, etc.), survey markers and monuments, fire cisterns, signage, fencing and landscaping. CEOR shall partner with a qualified sub-consultant to perform necessary inspection related duties if EOR does not perform these duties in-house. All coordination between EOR and inspection sub-consultant shall be finalized before construction commences. Separate COCs shall be required from the Structural Engineer of Record and Geotechnical Engineer of Record as applicable. A certificate of occupancy shall not be issued until required COCs are received and accepted by the town.

- 2) Submission of a Town of Coventry Soil Erosion and Sediment Control (SESC) Application will be required for the project.

## Plans

- 1) Sheet 3 of 14/ Notes and Legend – Layout and Materials/ Note 5 – Engineering takes exception to this note. House locations shall be generally fixed during the design phase. Any changes during construction shall be reflected in CEOR prepared and approved as-built plans submitted during the building permit phase.
- 2) Sheet 3 of 14/ Notes and Legend – Grading, Drainage, and Utility Notes/ Note 3 – Note shall be valid only for minor finish grading changes (at the discretion of the Town Engineer). Any grading changes during the construction phase (other than minor), shall be reflected in CEOR prepared and approved as-built plans submitted during the building permit phase and included in the CEOR Certificate of Conformance.
- 3) Sheet 3 of 14/ Notes and Legend – Grading, Drainage, and Utility Notes/ Note 6 – All retaining wall and steep slope design shall be provided during the Major Land Development Design Phase. Upon project completion, a Certificate of Conformance will be required from the structural and or geotechnical EOR to certify that constructed retaining walls and steep slopes meet all required standards, regulations, and specifications. Retaining walls and steep slopes added during construction shall be reflected in as-built plans and included in applicable EOR Certificates of Conformance.
- 4) Sheet 3 of 14/ Notes and Legend – Grading, Drainage, and Utility Notes/ Note 7 – Fill specification shall be provided during the design phase by the CEOR. All cut and fill work shall be included in the CEOR Certificate of Conformance.
- 5) Sheet 3 of 14/ Notes and Legend – Grading, Drainage, and Utility Notes/ Note 15 – Civil Engineer of Record shall certify separation of building slabs to seasonal high-water table (SHWT) and include in the CEOR Certificate of Conformance.
- 1) Stormwater management shall be provided for the site and meet state and town requirements.

## PRINCIPAL PLANNER

- For aesthetic as well as safety reasons, Staff recommends the applicant screen the existing drainage basins with treatments that are consistent with other basins elsewhere in the Highlands condominium development, such as planting hedges or installing picket fences around the basins' perimeters.
- Without the benefit of reviewing as-builts for the approved and constructed drainage basins, Staff cannot independently verify whether the basins were initially built, and remain to this day, in conformance with RIDEM's 20-year-old approval. Nevertheless, a RIDPES permit was granted, based on written certification from the applicant that stormwater practices were constructed in

accordance with the site plans. Staff will expect as-builts and written certification to be submitted prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.

- Staff seeks a peer review of the applicant's traffic impact statement to better understand the implications of the Centre of New England Boulevard/Hopkins Hill Road intersection degrading to a Level of Service F, as projected in the traffic statement. The applicant did not agree, mainly due to cost concerns and to the fact that a traffic study was submitted and accepted when the original Highlands application was made. Without the benefit of a peer review, Staff cannot state with certainty that this project does not meaningfully contribute to the projected traffic burden for this area. Staff will seek the Planning Commission's guidance as to whether a peer review is warranted at this time.
- The applicant has indicated that it does not believe waivers are required for sidewalks or street trees because A) the 2000-era subdivision regulations under which the project is vested pegged sidewalk requirements to specific zones, and they were not required in the BP zone; and B) no regulations called for street trees along private roadways.
- Staff will seek the Planning Commission's guidance as to whether a waiver should be granted for required legal documents (namely, those which would speak to whether the proposed development will be incorporated into the existing Highlands HOA) at this stage of review. The applicant indicated that they have not made a final decision on joining the existing HOA.

#### PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

- DPW concurs with Engineering and Police that a peer review of the traffic study is needed.
- The applicant should confirm whether they plan to join the existing HOA for Highlands, or establish a new HOA.

#### FIRE REPRESENTATIVE

*The representative from Hopkins Hill Fire District was unable to provide comment at this time, due to an unforeseen illness. Chief Cady of Central Coventry Fire District will reach out to another representative from Hopkins Hill to offer comments on this project.*

#### POLICE CHIEF

- With all the potential development in the area, a peer review should be completed to properly evaluate the impact this development would have on the roadways in the area.

#### PLANNING COMMISSION CHAIR

*The Planning Commission Chair recused as this item will be heard before the Planning Commission.*