

From: Terri Knox

Sent: Friday, April 24, 2020 11:51 AM

To: Rivera, Andrew <Andrew.Rivera@austintexas.gov>

Subject: Fwd: Simon-Caskey 2019-155557 C8 Getting Project Benefits Without Neighborhood Impacts

*** External Email - Exercise Caution ***

Mr. Rivera,

In planning for the April 28 Planning Commission meeting, the following is a document that we would like forwarded to the Planning Commission members for review prior to the meeting: Thank you for your efforts in communicating this to the members.

I am writing on behalf of my Little Deer Crossing, Oak Forest Lane, and Harvest Trail Drive neighbors in regards to the Simon Caskey Tract Development that was granted a postponement on March 10. We are set to meet again on April 28th.

We ask that the Planning Commission condition approval of the Simon-Caskey preliminary plan on eliminating the connection with Little Deer Crossing. We are concerned that the Little Deer Crossing connection will open all three neighborhood streets to cut-thru traffic seeking to avoid congestion on Hwy 71 to the North and Hwy 290 via Silvermine Drive and Scenic Brook Drive. The project will still have two points of access without the potential for large volumes of cut-thru traffic that a Little Deer Crossing connection would create. We believe the Planning Commission has the authority under Land Development Code Section 25-4-57 and 25-4-151 to take this action.

While we have sought to work with KB Homes to resolve our concerns, we've yet to reach agreement. Our goal is not to constrain the project, but solely to find ways of preserving the safety of our neighborhood streets.

Further detail on the points noted above is provided in the remainder of this message.

We would deeply appreciate an opportunity to speak with you prior to the next date this matter comes back before the Planning Commission. I will call shortly to confirm receipt of this message, answer any questions you have, and discuss possible dates when I and other neighborhood residents could talk with you via conference call or a video meeting.

WHY WE'RE CONCERNED FOR THE SAFETY OF OUR NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS

First of all, the following brief video shows how our children regularly play on Little Deer Crossing, Harvest Trail Drive and Oak Forest Lane: <https://youtu.be/ei6SJ5ivn7Q>

Our neighborhood lies at the intersection of two very busy highways: Hwy 71 to the North and Hwy 290 to the South. Where those highways meet is a notoriously congested intersection. During rush hour, the traffic down Hwy 71 regularly backs up over a mile from the intersection, past Jack Allens, almost back to Silvermine Drive.

Adding another route for this traffic between Silvermine and Scenic Brook - via Little Deer Crossing, Harvest Trail Drive and Oak Forest Lane - is what concerns us. These roads might be able to

accommodate the additional traffic from the Simon-Caskey project, but they cannot safely accommodate the levels of traffic that we'll see from additional drivers using our neighborhood streets to bypass congestion. On top of the existing traffic, they are supposed to start construction on 71/290 at some point, which will certainly increase the traffic substantially.

Little Deer Crossing, Harvest Trail Drive and Oak Forest Lane residents agree that none of our neighborhood streets can safely accommodate a large volume of cut-thru traffic.

We'll use Little Deer Crossing to illustrate why we reached this agreement.

The 17 homes fronting on Little Deer Crossing would be directly impacted should the connection result in a substantial increase in cut-thru traffic. Those living in the hundred or so other homes off of Chinook Drive and Rifle Bend as well as those living in the townhouse-apartment complex could face increased risk when walking, biking, skateboarding, or driving on Little Deer Crossing.

Little Deer Crossing has a paved width of just 18 feet, it lacks curbs and sidewalks, and has steep hills that obstruct sight-distance and increase vehicle speed. Harvest Trail Drive and Oak Forest Lane also lack sidewalks. The absence of curbs makes it more likely an out-of-control vehicle would travel onto the adjoining Little Deer Crossing lawns where our children play or even crash into our homes. These factors combine to make Little Deer Crossing, as well as Harvest Trail Drive and Oak Forest Lane, highly unsuited for the cut-thru traffic volume which could result from the proposed connection.

There is an elementary school bus that lets kids out at the intersection of Little Deer and Chinook. There are regularly kids from that bus that walk our streets to return home. In addition, there is a 5 o'clock school bus that lets high school students out near the intersection of Little Deer and Silvermine. Those students walk these roads with no shoulders or sidewalks every day after school during rush hour traffic. We understand the same is true for Harvest Trail Drive and Oak Forest Lane.

WHY RESIDENTS OF ALL THREE STREETS ARE CONCERNED

In their April 9th message, KB Homes asked why it would be okay to connect Oak Forest Lane and Harvest Trail Drive to the Simon-Caskey project but not Little Deer Crossing. At first blush, this is certainly a reasonable question.

The big difference though is that connecting the Simon-Caskey project to Oak Forest Lane and Harvest Trail Drive will not have the potential for opening those streets to cut-thru traffic when compared to the Little Deer Crossing connection.

Most importantly though, without the Little Deer connection neither Harvest Trail or Oak Forest would be open to cut-thru traffic from Scenic Brook Drive and Silvermine Drive.

We believe this is a very big difference.

We contacted the residents of the nine homes on Oak Forest Lane and Harvest Trail Drive. We asked if they would prefer no roads connecting their streets to Little Deer Crossing. As you can imagine, most said they'd prefer no connection at all to the Simon-Caskey project. ***However, if a connection must occur then Oak Forest and Harvest Trail residents said they'd prefer not to have the cut-thru traffic a Little Deer Crossing connection could produce.***

It is for these reasons that we respectfully asked KB Homes to reconsider eliminating the connection with Little Deer Crossing or some equally effective measure for preventing cut-thru traffic. As we previously offered, we would support KB Homes in making a request to waive the Little Deer Crossing connection. We offered to join with KB Homes in meeting with Planning and Zoning Department officials to endorse the request. We also offered to testify in support of the waiver and the project before the Planning Commission.

KB Homes did offer the following...

1. Limiting speed limit to 25mph on Little Deer Crossing, Oak Forest Lane, and Harvest Trail Drive.
2. Additional signage i.e. Slow Children at Play, Stop Ahead warning sign alerting traffic of the upcoming intersection
3. Limiting land development construction access to the Harvest Trail and Oak Forest stub streets except for final street operations

While we thanked KB Homes for these measures, they are far from what's needed to protect our neighborhood streets from cut-thru traffic. Only eliminating the Little Deer Crossing connection will accomplish this goal.

PLANNING COMMISSION AUTHORITY TO SUPPORT OUR PREFERRED OPTION

It is our lay opinion that the Planning Commission has the authority to eliminate the Little Deer Crossing connection based on the following sections of the Austin [Land Development Regulations](#).

[§ 25-4-151 - STREET ALIGNMENT AND CONNECTIVITY](#) reads:

Streets of a new subdivision shall be aligned with and connect to existing streets on adjoining property unless the Land Use Commission determines that the Comprehensive Plan, topography, requirements of traffic circulation, or other considerations make it desirable to depart from the alignment or connection.

[Section 25-4-57](#) reads:

The Land Use Commission shall approve an application for preliminary plan approval that complies with the Comprehensive Plan and the requirements of this title.

We believe the Neighborhood Plan, which would be the Comprehensive Plan for our area, is the [Oak Hill Combined Neighborhood Plan](#). This plan contains the following Goals, Objectives, And Recommendations which we believe require measures to prevent through traffic from impacting the Little Deer Crossing, Harvest Trail and Oak Forest neighborhoods:

- 7.A. Coordinate with appropriate entities to provide safe access across major thoroughfares and alleviate cut-through traffic on already overburdened neighborhood streets.
- 7.D. Provide managed connectivity between various neighborhoods while maintaining the quiet enjoyment of neighborhoods.

If the Commission is uncertain regarding their authority in this matter then perhaps the City Attorney should be asked for an opinion and an executive session discussion. In 2015, the City Attorney's office issued the memo posted at: <https://wp.me/aaUd8q-153>. We believe this memo incorrectly concluded

that the Commission's authority regarding street connections was more limited than it truly is. Hence, our request for an updated, more thorough review of this matter by the City Attorney and the Planning Commission.

We would love an opportunity to further discuss this matter with you before the Planning Commission hearing next Tuesday. Either myself, Danny Anderson or Emily Anderson will be reaching out to you in the next couple of days to followup and answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for your time.

Renee Vlahakis