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[MPC Comment] Comments regarding 6-SC-16-C and 6-J-16-UR

1 message

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Reply-To: austin.albright@gmail.com
To: commission@knoxmpc.org

Wed, Aug 10, 2016 at 12:25 PM

To the Metropolitan Planning Commission,


Attached are my comments and suggestions with regards to the purposed subdivision on North Campbell Station Rd. tentatively named "The Highlands at Hardin Valley", File/Case Numbers: 6-SC-16-C and 6-J-16-UR.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Respectfully,
Austin Albright
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This message was directed to commission@knoxmpc.org

 Pitts Spring - MPC cases 6-SC-16-C and 6-J-16-UR.pdf
1349K

To the Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission (and Developer):

In regards to – File Number: 6-SC-16-C, Associated Case: 6-J-16-UR

Pitts Spring has existed as a subtle fixture of the Hardin Valley area for over 75 years. Where is Pitts Spring? It is the spring on the farm that is the future home of a 50 lot subdivision tentatively named as "Highlands at Hardin Valley." This location has been listed on the US geological survey topographic map of this area as Pitts Spring since 1940, Figure 3. In fact in the book, "Images of America: Concord-Farragut" by Doris Woods Owens and Kate Clabough [1] there is a picture of Ms. Susan Pitts and her mailman "Walter Woods" standing in front of the spring and house that is still on the property today, Figure 1.



Figure 1. In the background of the left-hand picture of Susan Pitts and Walter Woods is the Pitts' home [1]. In right-hand picture, the same tree with its swept back tapper (behind Ms. Pitts in the left-hand image, center of the right-hand image) is visible and of course the home. Notice in the right-hand image the house is built on a rubble foundation, indicative of its significant age.

Additionally, paralleling the current Campbell Station road is the original wagon road that existed before there was ever a Campbell Station road. While not obvious from a USGS topographical map it is clear from viewing the property in person that it is 6 to 10 feet below the natural lay of the land and 10 to 14 feet in width with a relatively flat bottom – a clearly manmade feature. It also happens to perfectly align with what is marked as an unimproved road on the 1935 topographical map of the area. A fact, that is clearly evident from the high resolution digital elevation data collected for and publicly available through the Knox County Geographic Information Systems (KGIS) office. In this terrain data the resolution is of such significant quality that it is easily discernible that it is not a ravine or drainage worn by torrential rains, but a non-natural feature. The current North Campbell Station Rd. came to exist on USGS topographic maps in 1940, the same time the area began being identified as "Pitts Spring" on the USGS maps as well.

The point I would like to make is **not** that the development should be prevented, but that Pitts Spring and the wagon road should be preserved. The most recent public filings indicated that there is some consideration to protecting the spring being given, but the presence of the old roadbed has been overlooked.

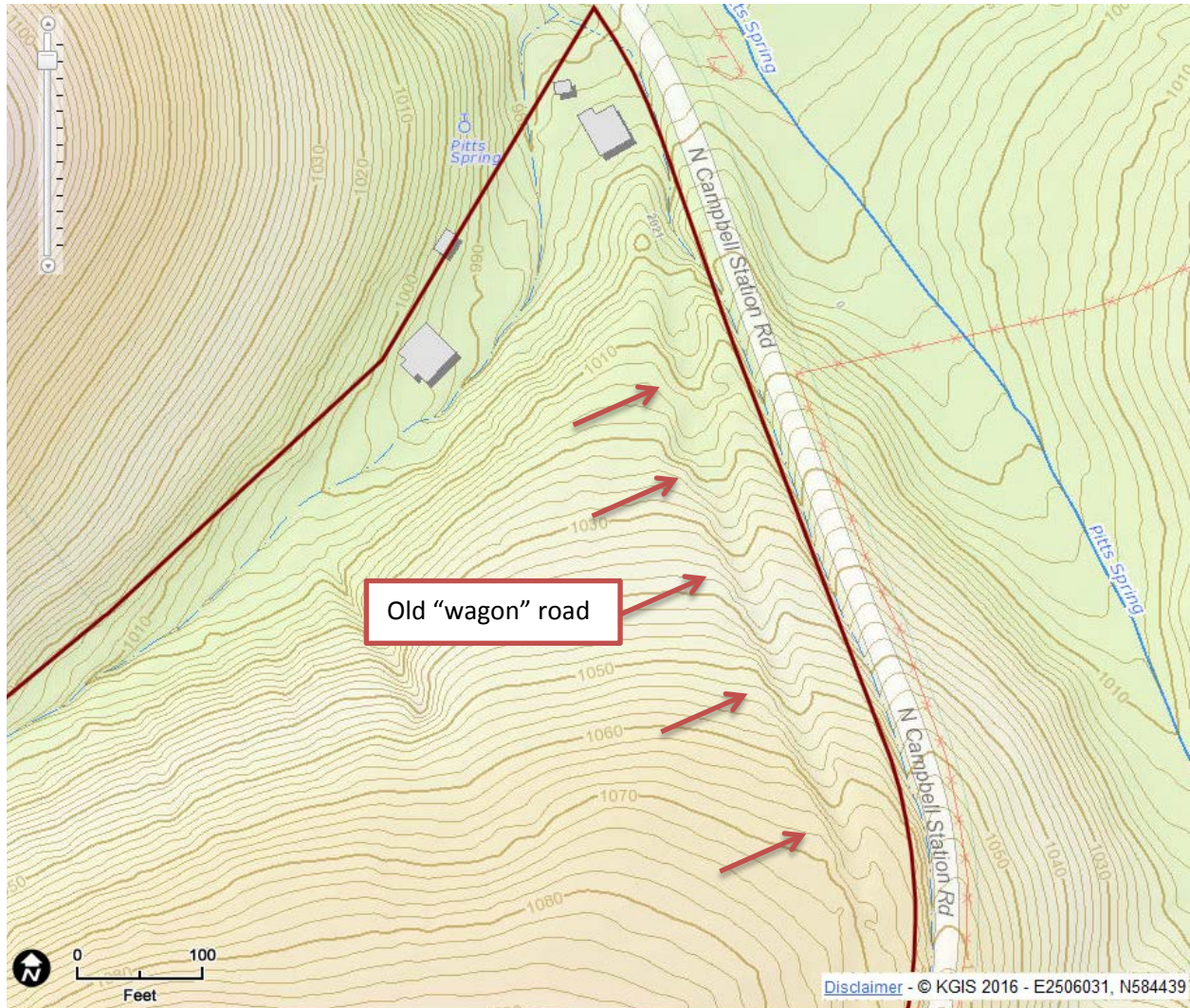


Figure 2. Digital terrain map from KGIS showing current N. Campbell St. Rd. and the historic wagon road bed.

I would like to suggest that the home site be documented to at least provide a photographic record of this founding family of Hardin Valley's homestead be made and donated to the East Tennessee Historical Society. A simple day or two to photograph and measure the home and three to four barns and their orientation to each other along with the spring and the wagon road. I myself would be more than willing to perform this survey. Not everything is worth saving, but the home site of a family that was one of the first to live in Hardin Valley and has lived (or owned at this point) the land for so long even a map created by the US Geological Survey uses their name and the spring they choose to build their life by as the name place on every map of the location since 1940 should merit a few days of attention and legally enforceable consequences for the destruction and/or contamination of the spring. The Pitts have been present

in the valley for generations; there is even a picture of the students attending the old Hardin Valley School (which stood at the location of the new Karns Fire Station) in 1929 with several of the Pitts children in attendance (Kimball and Jess Pitts) [2].

I would also suggest, based on my experience as on a homeowner association board, that the rear property lines of the proposed lots 43, 42, 33, 31, 31, 18, 17, 16, and 15 not include the "wet weather conveyance." As I have seen time and time again, HOA by-laws and covenants are regularly ignored with impunity. Future homeowners and the future, future homeowners will have no knowledge of the impact re-grading the back of their lots will have on the spring and creek. If one of these lot owners were to decide to build a retaining wall and level their yard they are going to just do it. Just like what nearly happened in my subdivision which almost resulted in the underground drainage system for half my subdivision to be filled in and walled over. I am very impressed to see the well thought out point of requiring those lots to have a note discouraging future grading, but discouraging ill-advised behavior does not stop ill-advised behavior. Eliminating the potential issue through the power of property lines will prevent this entirely.

Slicing a few feet of the back of the lots and deeding it as common area connected to the retention pond and spring buffer area will protect the spring and the drainage into the spring. The developer could even turn it into an attractive feature by adding a walking/jogging path along this margin that connects from one of the cul-de-sac running down the "wet weather conveyance" to the "mini-park" by the spring, back up the old wagon road to the subdivision's entrance. A feature similar to what is present at the Covered Bridge at Hardin Valley, but with the added appeal of preserving a bit of history. In Appendix A, is the July 25, 2016 site plan to which I have annotated the location of the old road bed, the Pitts home (for reference), and an concept idea for a walking/jogging trail.

While not necessarily the place of the MPC, but as this is my opportunity to address the developer, I would suggest that it is at least worth a mention and a nod to the past to consider the subdivision be named "The Highlands at Pitts Spring". That is its true location after all and anyone with internet access will know it is in Hardin Valley. Some of the ancient farm equipment, such as the hay rake that is currently sitting by the spring would make an attractive and interesting subdivision entrance decoration similar in nature to what has been done at the Shannon Valley Farms subdivision off Murphy Road. A new home with history.

I love history, but I am a realist. The property will be developed at some point and the significance of its history is low. But a node to the history in the name of the subdivision, a day or two with a camera, and an enticing amenity in the form of a walking/jogging path would save it from being scrubbed from history at a relative low cost to the developer as the eventual HOA would become responsible for the mini-park and walking/jogging path.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Austin Albright
austin.albright@gmail.com

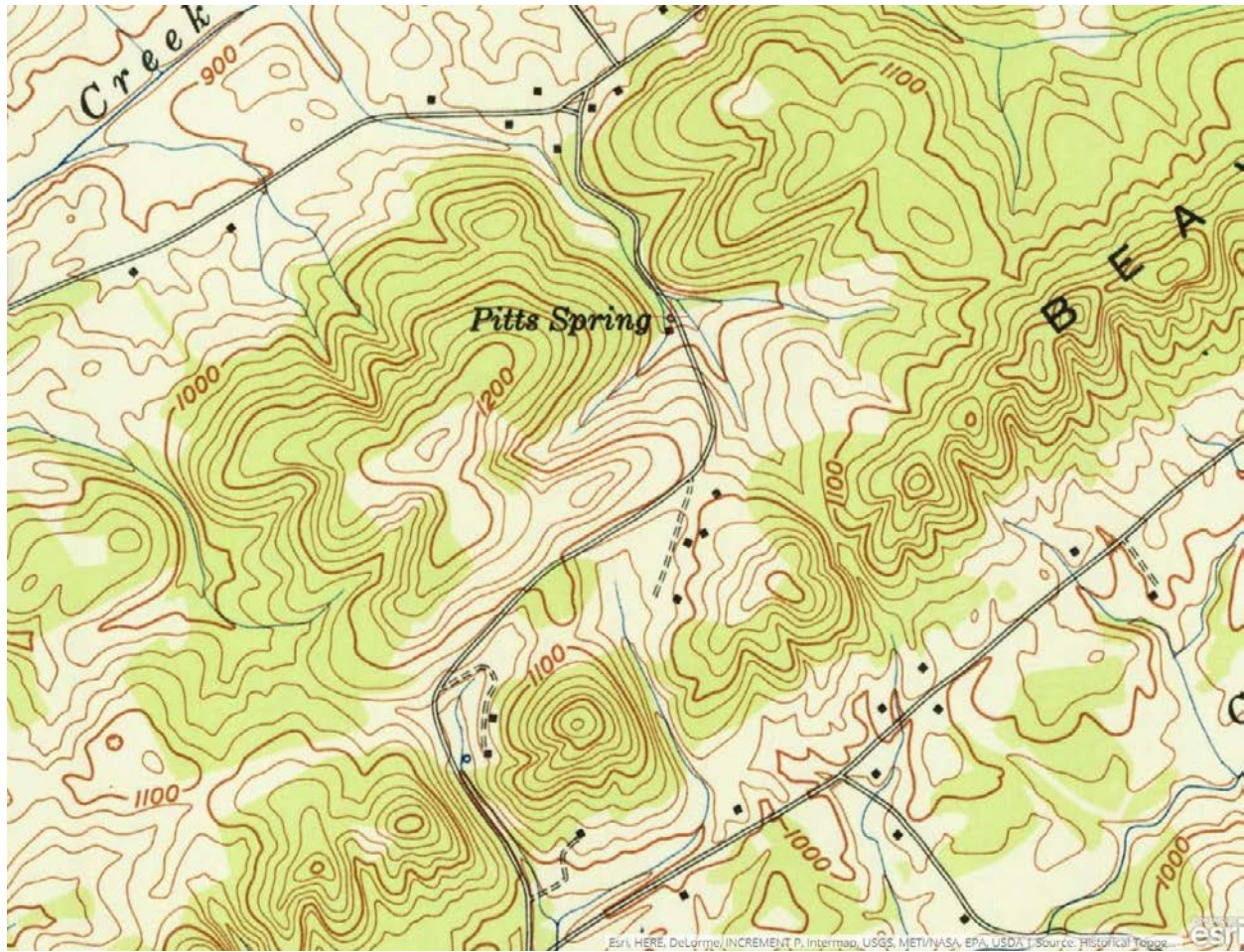


Figure 3. First publication of the place name "Pitts Spring" on a USGS map (1940 Lovell Quadrangle) [3].



Figure 4. Location of pre-N. Campbell St. Rd. "wagon road" and Pitts Spring from the 1935 USGS Lovell Quadrangle [3].

References:

- [1] D.W. Owens and K. Clabough, "Concord-Farragut", Series: Images of America, Arcadia Publishing, 2009
- [2] Haley, Susan, "Hardin Valley History", Website, <http://www.hardinvalleyhistory.com/old-places.php>
- [3] United States Geological Survey, Historical Topographic Map Explorer, query: "Pitts Spring, Tennessee", 1935 and 1940 Lovell Quadrangles, <http://historicalmaps.arcgis.com/usgs/>

Appendix A

