



Knoxville-Knox County Planning Commissioners 400 Main Street, Suite 403 Knoxville, TN 37902

RE: Opposition to File 2-A-26-HPA (3725 W. Governor John Sevier Hwy)

Dear Commissioners,

The City of Knoxville Tree Board, appointed by the Mayor to advise on urban forestry matters, strongly urges you to support the Planning staff's recommendation to **deny** the Level II Certificate of Appropriateness for the property at 3725 W. Governor John Sevier Highway. The applicant seeks to exceed their permitted Hillside Protection (HP) disturbance budget by 5.21 acres, totaling over 22 acres of clearing.

We believe upholding the Hillside Protection Ordinance is crucial for the long-term well-being of our community. Forested ridges are a defining characteristic of Knoxville's heritage, and their clearance affects many people and properties far beyond the applicant's lot. Trees play a vital role in providing essential benefits like improved air quality and effective stormwater management—services that are more important than ever in an era of severe heat and flooding.

As noted in the staff report, the applicant is already in violation of their 2019 permit, having cleared 6.12 acres beyond their limit and failing to fulfill previous reforestation requirements. Approving a request to clear nearly 60% of this site—well beyond the 25% threshold established in the Tree Protection Ordinance—would undermine the Knoxville Urban Forest Master Plan and its goal of increasing canopy through preservation.

There are no special circumstances on this site that make compliance a challenge. Approving this request would set a dangerous precedent, encouraging future applicants to seek similar exemptions and undermining the effectiveness of our Hillside Protection and Urban Forest policies. We must maintain strong safeguards to ensure responsible development and protect the public interest.

We respectfully urge you to follow the Planning staff recommendation and deny this request. This decision will reinforce our commitment to preserving the environment and upholding the values that the Hillside Protection Ordinance was designed to protect.

Thank you for your service and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Members of the City of Knoxville Tree Board