

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT TO THE HEARING OFFICER

DATE ISSUED:	July 6, 2026		
MEETING DATE:	July 7, 2026	AGENDA ITEM:	3
PROJECT NUMBER:	PRJ2022-002115-(3)		
PERMIT NUMBER:	Variance No. RPPL2022006560		
SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT:	3		
PROJECT LOCATION:	2266 North Topanga Canyon Boulevard, Topanga		
OWNER:	Shidan Taslimi		
APPLICANT:	Sean Nguyen		
CASE PLANNER:	Shawn Skeries, Principal Planner sskeries@planning.lacounty.gov		

RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendation is made prior to the public hearing and is subject to change based upon testimony and/or documentary evidence presented at the public hearing:

LA County Planning staff ("Staff") recommends **APPROVAL** of Project Number PRJ2022-002115-(3), Variance Number RPPL2022006560, based on the Findings (Exhibit C – Findings) contained within this report and subject to the Draft Conditions of Approval (Exhibit D – Conditions of Approval).

Staff recommends the following motion:

CEQA:

I, THE HEARING OFFICER, CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING AND FIND THAT THE PROJECT IS CATEGORICALLY EXEMPT PURSUANT TO STATE AND LOCAL CEQA GUIDELINES.

VARIANCE:

I, THE HEARING OFFICER, APPROVE VARIANCE NUMBER RPPL2022006560 SUBJECT TO THE ATTACHED FINDINGS AND CONDITIONS.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

This agenda item is a request to authorize the following development within the protected zone of a significant ridgeline ("Project") pursuant to County Code Section 22.336.100 (Modification of Development Standards) and County Code Chapter 22.194 (Variances):

- Construction of a new swimming pool with a spa and a retaining wall
- Approval of existing unpermitted structures, including a 315-square-foot addition to an existing single-family residence and a 69-square-foot addition to an accessory structure

The Project will also have a total of 246 cubic yards of grading (86 cubic yards cut, 160 cubic yards fill) with 74 cubic yards to be imported.

After the distribution of the Report to the Hearing Officer dated April 23, 2026, Staff received a public comment expressing concerns over unpermitted demolition and reconstruction of the single-family residence, fraudulent parcel creation, and potential cultural resource conflicts.

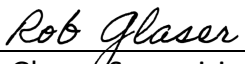
Staff recommended that this item be continued, without opening the public hearing, to July 7, 2026, to provide time for Staff to investigate the concerns and to work with the applicant as needed to address the concerns.

The applicant submitted historical images attached as Exhibit B showing the current structure in the location as depicted in aerial imagery from 1947 and 2024. Staff conducted their investigation into the claim of the fraudulent parcel creation. A Certificate of Compliance for Lot Line Adjustment was previously attached in the Supplemental Report to the Hearing Officer dated June 25, 2026, authorized as document number RLLA200400014 by LA County Planning. In addressing the potential cultural resource conflicts, CEQA does not require Tribal Consultation when the Project qualifies for a categorically exemption and the exceptions to the categorical exemptions were analyzed.

Staff received a letter dated July 3, 2026, attached, opposing the Project and requesting the continuation of the Project for further investigation into unpermitted demolition and reconstruction of the residence, fraudulent lot creation and cultural resources. Additionally, staff received a letter of support for the Project from the Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation. In letter dated July 6, 2026, received from the Topanga Association For A Scenic Community areas of concern were raised but felt the variance for the Project was acceptable if these concerns are addressed in the development of the Project. The areas of concern related to visual impact of the new deck and retaining wall and placement of the soil removed to create the pool.

Report

Reviewed By:


Robert Glaser, Supervising Regional Planner

Report

Approved By:

 for
David DeGrazia, Deputy Director

LIST OF ATTACHED EXHIBITS	
EXHIBIT A	Opposition letter to staff dated July 3, 2026
EXHIBIT B	Support letter from Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation, Inc.
EXHIBIT C	Topanga Association For A Scenic Community letter dated July 6, 2026

July 3, 2026

Shawn Skeries, Principal Planner / Case Planner
Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning
320 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012
Email: sskeries@planning.lacounty.gov

Hearing Officer
Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning
320 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Supplemental Report to the Hearing Officer, Project No. PRJ2022-002115-(3), Variance No. RPPL2022006560, Agenda Item 3, Hearing Date: July 7, 2026

Subject Property: 2266 North Topanga Canyon Boulevard, Topanga — APN 4434-012-037

Submitter: Kirk Morrow, Adjacent Property Owner, 2200 North Topanga Canyon Blvd

Dear Hearing Officer and Mr. Skeries:

I am submitting this supplemental comment letter for the record in response to the Supplemental Report to the Hearing Officer dated June 25, 2026, which recommends approval of Variance No. RPPL2022006560. I respectfully submit that the Staff's responses to the concerns raised in my prior public comment are materially incomplete and, in at least one critical respect, inadvertently confirm the very fraud I described. I renew and amplify my objection to any approval of this project.

I. The 1947 Aerial Photograph Does Not Refute the Unpermitted Demolition Claim

Staff's Supplemental Report states that the applicant submitted historical aerial imagery from 1947 and 2024 (Exhibit B) to demonstrate that the current structure is located in the same position as the original residence. This response does not address the substance of my objection and, on careful review, does not support the conclusion Staff draws from it.

The 1947 aerial photograph does not show a structure at 2266 North Topanga Canyon Blvd. Eleanor Covington, the longtime resident of this property, is believed to have taken occupancy in the 1950s — after the 1947 image was taken. Her original 1940 Spanish-style residence would not necessarily appear in a 1947 aerial of the parcel area depending on canopy coverage, image resolution, and construction date of site improvements.

More critically, the 1947 image cannot establish where within the parcel the original house was located. My prior comment documented with particularity that Eleanor Covington's original structure was situated in a distinctly different area of the parcel from the current structure. The foundation remnants of the original house remain visible on the west side of the driveway. The 2024 aerial shows the current structure near the ridge crest — consistent with my prior description of unpermitted construction in a restricted ridgeline protection zone. These two aerial images, when compared, do not refute this claim; they are silent as to the original structure's precise location within the parcel.

A proper investigation would compare the location of the current structure to the foundation remnants visible in the 2024 aerial, consult historical permit records for the original 1940 structure, and review intermediate aerial imagery from the 1950s through the period when demolition allegedly occurred. None of that appears to have been done.

II. The Lot Line Adjustment (RLLA200400014) Confirms Rather Than Refutes the Alleged Fraud

Staff states that a Certificate of Compliance for Lot Line Adjustment (RLLA200400014, Instrument No. 04-2938120, recorded November 12, 2004) was authorized by LA County Planning to establish the legality of the parcel, and that this resolves my concern about fraudulent parcel creation.

With respect, Staff's reliance on this document does not resolve the concern — it confirms it.

The Certificate of Compliance for Lot Line Adjustment RLLA200400014 was signed and submitted by John H. MacNeil and Patricia A. MacNeil, Trustees of the MacNeil Family Trust, as the requesting owner(s). John H. MacNeil is the adjacent property owner at 2330 North Topanga Canyon Blvd whom I identified in my prior comment as the alleged mastermind of the broader land use scheme affecting this property. The lot line adjustment Mr. MacNeil requested and obtained affected both his own parcel (APN 4434-012-038) and the subject parcel (APN 4434-012-037 — Eleanor Covington's former property).

The legal description of Parcel 2 (APN 4434-012-037) in the Certificate of Compliance includes an 'EXCEPT' clause that carves a defined portion of the subject parcel out of APN 4434-012-037. That excepted portion is incorporated into Parcel 1 (APN 4434-012-038) — John H. MacNeil's parcel. This is precisely the annexation of Eleanor Covington's lot that I described in my prior comment.

The fact that this annexation was formalized through a County-recorded instrument does not establish that it was lawfully or legitimately obtained. A Certificate of Compliance confirms that the paperwork submitted was processed; it does not independently verify that the underlying transaction was free of the conflicts of interest, coercion, or fraudulent inducement that I have

alleged. I note that the very individual alleged to have orchestrated unpermitted construction on this parcel is the same individual who requested and benefited from the lot line adjustment now being used to legitimize the parcel configuration.

The Hearing Officer should not treat Staff's citation of this document as a clean bill of health. The appropriate response is to refer the circumstances of RLLA200400014 to the County's Office of the Inspector General or to the appropriate investigating agencies for independent review.

III. The CEQA Categorical Exemption Does Not Eliminate All Cultural Resource Obligations

Staff's report states that CEQA does not require Tribal Consultation when a project qualifies as a categorical exemption. While this reflects standard CEQA practice in many circumstances, I respectfully urge the Hearing Officer to consider whether this project qualifies for the categorical exemption at all, given the documented history of the site.

Under CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2, categorical exemptions do not apply where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. The unusual circumstances here include:

- The site is located within the protected zone of a significant ridgeline — a sensitive environmental resource.
- Eleanor Covington, a decades-long resident of the property, identified what she believed to be ancient Chumash stone tools and pictographic art on the parcel, and believed a Chumash village once existed at the location.
- Extensive grading and unpermitted construction has already occurred on the site without archaeological monitoring.
- The proposed project includes an additional 246 cubic yards of grading, 74 of which are imported fill — further disturbing a site with potential unexamined cultural resources.

Where there is a reasonable basis to believe that a site may contain Native American cultural resources, the 'unusual circumstances' exception to categorical exemptions may apply, and Tribal Consultation under Assembly Bill 52 and Senate Bill 18 may be warranted independent of a CEQA determination. I urge Staff and the Hearing Officer to make this determination explicitly and on the record, rather than treating it as resolved by the categorical exemption finding alone.

IV. Granting a Variance to Approve Existing Unpermitted Structures Sets a Dangerous Precedent

The project description in Staff's own report acknowledges that one purpose of this variance application is 'approval of existing unpermitted structures, including a 315-square-foot addition to an existing single-family residence and a 69-square-foot addition to an accessory structure.'

This framing is significant: the applicant is seeking after-the-fact County approval for construction that was never permitted.

This is precisely the mechanism my prior comment described: unpermitted construction is carried out without authorization, and a subsequent owner then seeks variance approval to legitimize the non-conforming structures. Granting this request without a full accounting of how and when these unpermitted structures were built — and whether they were constructed by or with the knowledge of prior owners who are alleged to have engaged in broader fraudulent conduct — would effectively reward the avoidance of permitting requirements and foreclose further scrutiny of the property's construction history.

I ask the Hearing Officer to require the applicant to provide a complete construction history for the existing structures on the parcel, including documentation of when each structure was built, by whom, and under what permits or claimed permits.

V. Unanswered Questions Requiring Investigation Before Any Final Action

Staff's Supplemental Report does not address the following concerns raised in my prior comment:

- The allegation that the street address on Topanga Canyon Blvd was deliberately altered to misdirect responding authorities during unpermitted construction.
- The allegation that Ron Dockery, identified as a Los Angeles County employee, was complicit in facilitating unpermitted construction, as stated to me directly by Christopher James Gutierrez.
- The allegation that a 4.4-acre parcel was created by Caltrans in approximately 1983-1984 incorporating a portion of APN 4434-012-037, allegedly for the purpose of generating fraudulent loan collateral with the involvement of John H. MacNeil.
- The identity, permit status, and current compliance of the residence at 2330 North Topanga Canyon Blvd (MacNeil property) with California ridge crest setback requirements.
- Confirmation that conveyance deeds required within 120 days of recordation of RLLA200400014 (per the Certificate of Compliance's own terms) were in fact timely submitted to the Department.

The absence of any response to these specific allegations is not a basis for proceeding to approval. It is a reason for additional investigation.

VI. Formal Objection and Request for Continuance

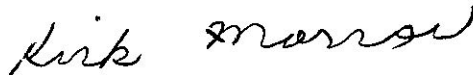
For all of the reasons set forth above, I formally object to approval of Variance No. RPPL2022006560 at the July 7, 2026 hearing. I respectfully request that the Hearing Officer:

- Continue the hearing to allow for a thorough and independent review of the concerns identified herein.
- Refer the circumstances of Lot Line Adjustment RLLA200400014, and the role of John H. MacNeil in that transaction, to the County's Office of the Inspector General or appropriate investigative authority.
- Direct Staff to obtain and review intermediate aerial imagery of the subject parcel from the 1950s through the present to determine the original location of the Eleanor Covington residence and compare it to the current structure's location and the visible foundation remnants.
- Require the applicant to provide a complete and documented construction history for all structures on the parcel.
- Make an explicit finding, supported by evidence, as to whether the 'unusual circumstances' exception to the CEQA categorical exemption applies given the site's potential cultural resource significance.
- Coordinate with pending State and Federal investigations before taking any final action.

I note that this hearing is proceeding on an accelerated timeline, and that the evidence now in the public record — including the applicant's own Exhibit A, which confirms the role of John H. MacNeil in reshaping the boundaries of this parcel — raises questions that cannot responsibly be resolved in a single hearing cycle. A decision to approve made under these circumstances, without full investigation, risks locking this matter into extended litigation and potentially compounding decades of unresolved irregularities.

I am prepared to provide additional information and to testify at the hearing. I respectfully request that this letter and all prior correspondence be made a part of the permanent project record.

Respectfully submitted,



Kirk Morrow

Adjacent Property Owner — 2200 North Topanga Canyon Blvd
Topanga, California



Project #. PRJ2022-002115-(3)
Variance#. RPPL2022-002
Project Location 2266 North Topanga Canyon Boulevard, Topanga Ca

The Las Virgenes Homeowners federation which represents Hundreds of homeowner groups all over the Santa Monica Mountains has been watching this project closely. We have read over the documents provided and would like to comment on our findings.

This project and our concern centers around the building of a Pool and retaining wall also the approval of existing unpermitted structure and additions to an existing single-family residence We understand a variance is required.

Under normal circumstances we do not think Variances should be given. We have opposed such things in the past and continue to do so. In this case after thorough examination of the entire project we realize it does not seem to raise significant issues.

It is our understanding records show a single-family residence is on the property and was constructed in 1941. The report shows a proposed addition is being asked for and the existing house will not be affected.

We as a strong Environmental/Homeowners organization will continue to monitor this property and would like to be assured that follow-up and monitoring by Regional Planning will be a condition of the overall Project.

Therefore, we concur with Staff in their recommendation to approve the variance.

Roger Pugliese- President
Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation

TOPANGA ASSOCIATION FOR A SENIC COMMUNITY
PO BOX 352 TOPANGA CA 90290

Project #. PRJ2022-002115-(3)
Variance#. RPPL2022-002
Project Location 2266 North Topanga Canyon Boulevard, Topanga Ca

July 6, 2026

The Topanga Association for a Scenic Community, (TASC) a non-profit representing the people of Topanga in their quest to keep the nature of Topanga essentially rural and in line with the North area Plan, has noticed this project and would like to weigh in with our observations.

The creation of a pool is not in itself an issue. We are simply concerned about issues relating to the placement of the soil removed to create the pool and the visual impact of the new deck. As long as the excavated dirt is properly removed and not simply pushed over the side of the hill, it should pose no problems. If the decking does not impede the view of the ridge line or create privacy issues for the neighbors, that too should be acceptable.

Any retaining walls built to support the pool and or decking must also meet North Area Plan codes so as to not create a dangerous slide situation in the future.

If Regional Planning will continue to monitor these issues, TASC agrees with Regional Planning to approve the variance.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'R Fomalont', with a stylized flourish.

Ronald Fomalont
Vice President