

**NEWPORT BEACH PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES  
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS – 100 CIVIC CENTER DRIVE  
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2026  
REGULAR MEETING – 6:00 P.M.**

**I. CALL TO ORDER - 6:04 p.m.**

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Commissioner Rosene**

**III. ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT:** Chair Tristan Harris, Vice Chair David Salene, Secretary Jonathan Langford, Commissioner Greg Reed, Commissioner Mark Rosene

**ABSENT:** Commissioner Curtis Ellmore, Commissioner Michael Gazzano

**Staff Present:** Community Development Director Jaime Murillo, Traffic Engineer Kevin Riley, Assistant City Attorney Yolanda Summerhill, Principal Planner Liz Westmoreland, Assistant Planner Melinda Whelan, Administrative Assistant Clarivel Rodriguez, Department Assistant Beatriz Avila

**IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Jim Mosher reported that the City Council held a recent Planning Session that included an update on the City's progress towards reaching its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) goals. He stated that, halfway through the current eight-year RHNA cycle, the City has only produced about 200 out of its required 3,000 affordable housing units, building just one affordable unit for every 20 market-rate units. He expressed concerns that the City does not have a sufficient plan to meet its RHNA goals, noting that a recent legal decision has ruled overlay zones to be an unacceptable way for jurisdictions to reach affordable housing goals. He stated that the lack of production to date should be a concern when considering housing developments with an inadequate number of affordable units.

**V. REQUEST FOR CONTINUANCES – None**

**VI. CONSENT ITEMS**

**ITEM NO. 1 MINUTES OF JANUARY 22, 2026**

**Recommended Action:** Approve and file

Chair Harris opened public comment, and there was none.

**Motion** made by Chair Harris and seconded by Secretary Langford to approve the meeting minutes of January 22, 2026.

**AYES:** Harris, Langford, Reed, and Salene

**NOES:** None

**ABSTAIN:** Rosene

**ABSENT:** Ellmore, Gazzano

**VII. PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS**

**ITEM NO. 2 DOVER TOWNHOMES (PA2025-0135)  
Site Location: 601 DOVER DRIVE**

**Summary:**

A request to authorize the development of a 33-unit, for-sale, residential townhome community on an existing medical office site at 601 Dover Drive (Project Site). The proposed development includes the demolition of the existing office structure and construction of two-, three-, and four-bedroom units ranging from 1,355 to 2,247 square feet. The development will include a two-car garage for each unit and 10 uncovered guest parking spaces for a total of 76 on-site parking spaces. The 33 units will be distributed within seven detached, three-story buildings with a maximum structure height of 38 feet above the established grade. The development will include resident-serving amenities including outdoor seating, picnic tables, barbecues, and a firepit area. Vehicular access to the Project Site is provided via a driveway on Cliff Drive. Pedestrian access to a publicly accessible plaza is provided at the corner of the site adjacent to Dover Drive. The plaza includes a seating area, walkway, and a scenic view (Project).

- A *Major Site Development Review* authorizing construction of residential development including deviations from specific multi-unit objective design standards.
- A *Variance* authorizing encroachments into the required street setbacks along Cliff Drive and Dover Drive.
- A *Vesting Tentative Tract Map* removing an underlying lot line and authorizing the airspace subdivision of the individual residential units for individual sale (i.e., for condominium purposes).

**Recommended Actions:**

1. Conduct a public hearing;
2. Find this project statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21080.66 (enacted through Assembly Bill 130) because it has no potential to have a significant effect on the environment; and
3. Adopt Resolution No. PC2026-003 approving the Major Site Development Review, Variance, and Vesting Tentative Tract Map filed as PA2025-0135.

Assistant Planner Melinda Whelan reported that the Dover Townhomes are proposed for the corner of Dover Drive and Cliff Drive, downslope from the Cliff Haven residential neighborhood. She added that the site was identified as a housing opportunity site in the Housing Element with the appropriate overlay zoning. She reported that the project will demolish the existing medical offices and construct 33 for-sale townhomes contained within seven three-story buildings approximately 38 feet high, featuring 2-4-bedroom units with two-car garages. She noted that there is a landscaping buffer both along Dover Drive and adjacent to the existing residences, a public plaza, two resident amenity areas, and a single driveway off Cliff Drive.

Assistant Planner Whelan reported that required approvals include a Major Site Development Review (MSDR) as there are five or more units with a tract map, including five deviations from multi-unit objective design standards. She added that approval also requires a Variance due to encroachments into street setbacks, a Vesting Tentative Tract Map for the individual sale of the condominiums, and a statutory exemption from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Assembly Bill 130. She reported on the development's compliance with the site's HO-3 zoning, noting that the only deviations are the requests for reduced setbacks from public streets.

Assistant Planner Whelan stated that the MSDR finds interior driving aisles, amenity areas shaded from public view, a larger rear setback in some spots, and a publicly accessible plaza. She noted that the existing medical offices at maximum capacity generate 231 more trips than the housing development would, while the townhomes will be 27 feet below their height limit, meet

the minimum density, have more landscaping than required, and exceed setback minimums on the sides and rear. She reported that, after traffic and driveway analysis, a Condition of Approval was added to ensure only right-in and right-out access if traffic issues arise after the development is occupied.

Assistant Planner Whelan presented an artistic rendering of the development to show its compatibility with the Cliff Haven community due to the slope and the height of the townhomes falling well below the maximum height permitted in the development standards. She also showed artistic renderings of the exterior of the units and the public plaza.

Assistant Planner Whelan reported that the project complies with 47 of the 52 objective design standards, with the deviations including a six-inch reduction in the four-foot landscaping and paving zone, an 11-inch reduction in the 10-foot minimum first and middle floor heights, a varying reduction in the minimum building recess projection depth, and five total recesses done for architectural purposes. She added that the intent of all objective design standards is still met. She noted some of the oddities of the irregularly shaped lot that greatly constrain the buildable area, adding that alternative designs were explored but made the development less compatible with the neighborhood.

Assistant Planner Whelan reported that the Vesting Tentative Tract Map is required so the units can be sold as condominiums. She added that there will be a Park In-Lieu Fee of \$38,400 per unit. She reported that infrastructure improvements, such as sewers and water, will be designed to accommodate the project, complying with City codes. She confirmed that the project was found to be statutorily exempt from CEQA under A.B. 130. She stated that Tribal consultation concluded on December 22, 2025, with monitoring conditions for two consulting Tribes.

Assistant Planner Whelan reported on minor changes to Conditions of Approval, including adding a timeline to Condition of Approval No. 55 of the Tract Map being recorded prior to the issuance of a Building Permit. She reported that Condition of Approval No. 71 has additional language should a right-out, right-in traffic flow be deemed necessary. She noted that after distributing the staff report, there were corrections made to Conditions of Approval Nos. 72-73 and 76-77 due to fire-related concerns. She reported that staff recommends approval.

In response to Commissioner Rosene's inquiry, Traffic Engineer Kevin Riley clarified that the proposed driveway will be 20 feet west of the existing driveway, which may cause a backup impacting the adjacent community if there is a backup of eastbound cars on Cliff Drive waiting to turn left into the development. He added that there is potential for this occurrence at the morning peak traffic window in conjunction with drop-off traffic from Ensign Intermediate School.

Commissioner Rosene expressed his appreciation for the language added to Condition of Approval No. 71, including the mechanism for how the potential traffic flow change would work.

In response to Secretary Langford's inquiry, Traffic Engineer Riley stated that there are no plans to add street parking on either Cliff Drive or Dover Drive.

In response to Secretary Langford's inquiries, Assistant Planner Whelan clarified that the public open space at the northern tip of the property would satisfy an objective design standard and does not fulfill the applicant's in-lieu park fee requirement. She confirmed that utilities will be undergrounded.

In response to Chair Harris' inquiry, Commissioners Reed and Rosene reported having met with the applicant, Vice Chair Salene reported no ex parte communications, Chair Harris reported having a telephone conversation with the applicant, and Secretary Langford reported briefly

communicating with the applicant.

Chair Harris opened the public hearing.

Emilie Simard, Director of Forward Planning for Shea Homes, stated that Housing Element sites are new to everyone involved and require extra work when they are infill sites. She commended Assistant Planner Whelan for her help guiding the application and project forward, and reported on Shea Homes' building history, including its most recent Newport Beach development, The Cay at Mariner Shores.

Ms. Simard noted that seven homes directly abut the project site's west side at an average of 35 feet above the pad elevation, separated by a 2:1 slope. She reported on outreach efforts to the Cliff Haven neighborhood, including active communication with direct neighbors on St. James Place. She stressed the importance of outreach with infill projects like this one.

Ms. Simard noted that it is an irregular triangular-shaped parcel with street frontage on two sides and a slope on the third, with City and State building codes limiting the buildable area to 1.1 acres out of the 1.6-acre site. She stated that Shea Homes wanted to plan the site with the community in mind and have a more traditional townhome product rather than increase building heights, keeping the structures well below their permissible limits and with a lower density. She added that there are no rooftop decks.

Ms. Simard reported that the development exceeds open space and parking requirements despite the site's small size. She added that the change from medical offices to residential use generates much fewer daily trips. She presented many sketches of the development and noted how the architecture draws inspiration from the existing buildings on the site and the nearby Environmental Nature Center with its butterfly roof.

In response to Chair Harris' inquiry, Ms. Simard confirmed that the applicant has worked on the Conditions of Approval with City staff and agrees to them as currently modified.

In response to Commissioner Reed's inquiries, Ms. Simard clarified how the 15-foot slope setback and housing product selected pushed the project towards Dover Drive and into the street setback requirements. She compared the dilemma to a previous Shea Homes project on Ford Road, where the applicant worked with the City on setback encroachments to keep the development less dense and shorter in height. She confirmed that the Dover Townhomes proposal was product driven. She confirmed that the applicant considered having vehicular access to Dover Drive, noting that it would have been limited right-in and right-out access, but the decision to limit access to Cliff Drive was due to safety concerns over the higher speeds on Dover Drive. She added that moving the Cliff Drive access point 12 feet to the west adds to safety by being farther from the intersection. She stated that having two points of entry did not make sense due to the limited buildable space available.

In response to Secretary Langford's inquiry, Ms. Simard reported that the architectural style was not a main point of conversation with neighbors, adding that their main concerns were height and the project's direct impacts on individual properties.

Secretary Langford stated that the architectural style feels more like the commercial corridor as opposed to Cliff Haven's coastal Cape Cod-style feel.

Ms. Simard reported that there was a goal for a coastal contemporary look to the development and reported reviewing design concept drafts with City staff to help determine what resonates best for the intersection. She clarified that the applicant felt that the intersection is a transitional

part of the city where commercial and residential areas meet.

In response to Chair Harris' inquiry, Ms. Simard cited the inclusion of a Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC&R) embedded pathway so neighbors can access their homes from the slope side as an example of changes made to the development after discussions with neighbors. She added that undergrounding a longer length of utilities than what is required by the City also emerged from discussions with neighbors, reporting that the applicant is presently discussing undergrounding utilities farther up Dover Drive with Southern California Edison (SCE). She added that residents also expressed concerns about the future height and view impediments due to the sycamore trees the City recently added to the Dover Drive median, requesting that the applicant discuss the matter with the City. She added that they have also been working closely with the resident at 702 St. James Place, as their new construction builds down the slope as opposed to the original homes with more mature vegetation on the slope.

In response to Chair Harris' inquiry, Ms. Simard estimated that The Cay at Mariner Shores peaks at 33 feet in height. She added that Shea Homes originally tried to place the development on the site of the current proposal but could not fit in enough units to hit the overlay district's density minimums. She added that five of the seven buildings in the proposal have a maximum height of 34-feet, 11-inches with two buildings at the interior of the site where the butterfly roof hits a peak of 37-feet, one-inch.

In response to Commissioner Reed's inquiry, Ms. Simard reported receiving feedback from City staff that the sycamore trees were newly planted with direct intent as part of a City beautification project. She noted that the applicant removed sycamore trees from its original landscaping plan due to concerns from neighbors.

Tom Dallape reported walking past the site regularly with the impression that the medical office building is obsolete and out of place. He stated that the development would be a great reuse of the land, commending the addition of new housing stock.

Morgan Craig of 624 St. James Place reported that he has lived in the neighborhood for most of his life and expressed concerns about the traffic estimate's accuracy, stating that the current volume is very low and would increase with residential development. He added that there is already ample morning traffic in the neighborhood due to Ensign Intermediate School and Newport Harbor High School. He added that 35 feet of elevation is fine for his views but expressed concerns that it would impair views for others on St. James Place. He condoned the development but expressed a willingness to compromise for two-level buildings instead of three.

Nick expressed his support for the development. He commended Newport Beach for being an excellent location for young families like his but lamented the lack of available housing. He stated that this development would be perfect for his family. He added that the project would fit the community and that the developer was size-conscious as opposed to building out to the largest permissible dimensions and density. He encouraged the Commission to approve the project so that young families like his can have the option of moving to the community.

Cynthia Mabus of 500 Kings Place expressed concerns about traffic, noting that the existing medical offices have two entrances and the two schools produce steady traffic around drop-off and pick-up windows. She added that Cliff Drive's no-parking zones are unclear, leading to regular violations. She stated that the development only having a singular entrance off Cliff Drive, will create traffic issues for all residents in the area, including perilous illegal U-turns on her street. She recommended installing a four-way stop sign at the intersection of Cliff Drive, Kings Place, and Kings Road. She expressed concerns about insufficient visitor parking leading to illegal street parking on Cliff Drive and beyond.

Mr. Mosher agreed that the developer building out the site to its full capacity of 81 units and 65-foot-tall structures would be inharmonious with the neighborhood but added that the Resolution should explain how only building 33 units on the site impacts the Housing Element because the additional units will have to be built elsewhere. He agreed with Ms. Mabus about the potential for a parking issue for visitors and that the adjoining streets' parking legality can be confusing. He requested a rendering of how the development will look from Castaways Park, adding that it seems imposing and close to the street from the Dover Drive southbound view. He questioned the precedents being cited to justify the Variance along Dover Drive and pondered if the units abutting Dover Drive can just be a few feet smaller in depth. He agreed with Secretary Langford's critique of the architecture's neighborhood compatibility. He expressed concerns about the trash management plan.

Jody Young of 604 St. James Place reported that the traffic on Dover Drive has increased dramatically over her 40 years living in her home, with beach-bound travelers providing a steady flow in addition to the seasonal school traffic. She expressed pedestrian safety concerns and stated that the project is out of character for a single-family home neighborhood.

Tom Cullis, a 40-year Snug Harbor Road resident, reported that it is impossible to turn left out of the existing Cliff Drive exit to the medical offices, as cars turning right off Dover Drive onto Cliff Drive move very fast. He expressed safety concerns about children walking to the schools and reported that Cliff Drive is already full of traffic around Ensign Intermediate School. He stated that there will be insufficient parking for non-residents of the development.

Mark Shenouda, resident of 712 St. James Place, clarified that he does not oppose the project due to the site's inclusion in the Housing Element, although he objects to the Housing Element, lamenting that the Commission has its hands tied by the Housing Element. He called for a Condition of Approval to underground a larger portion of Dover Drive's power lines as a community benefit. He commended the outreach of Ms. Simard and the applicant.

Kathy, a Newport Heights resident, expressed concerns about the traffic impacts, reporting that people drive rapidly along Cliff Drive as an alternate to Pacific Coast Highway. She requested a stoplight or crosswalk at the intersection of Cliff Drive, Kings Place, and Kings Road if this project must move forward and further increase traffic on a dangerous hill. She encouraged the Commission to help area residents with parking, including the large construction vehicles.

A resident at 1101 Kings Road agreed that the medical offices have aged poorly. He lamented that Mr. Craig's call for two-story buildings would leave the development short of the mandated density minimums. He noted that there are modern houses in the area, helping make the architecture more compatible. He noted that the closer the townhouses are to Dover Drive, the farther they are away from the St. James Place houses. He reported that his son currently lives in the City of Houston, Texas, and it is impossible for him to move back home to Newport Beach without building starter home developments like this one.

Georgia Fox reported that she regularly drives down Dover Drive and Cliff Drive. She expressed her concerns about the project's impact on the intersection, adding that a bottleneck could complicate a wildfire evacuation and endanger residents.

Community Development Director Murillo confirmed that the hearing was noticed to all residents within the required radius in the Newport Beach Municipal Code (NBMC). He reported that a Condition of Approval requires a Construction Management Plan be approved prior to the issuance of building permits. He added that the NBMC prohibits a garage from being used for storage instead of vehicular parking, and Conditions of Approval require the CC&R to reflect it. He acknowledged that it is difficult to compare the medical office's traffic flow today because of

its underutilization but added that an occupied one of its size would generate 453 daily trips instead of the 222 daily trips that the housing development will generate, for a decrease of 231 daily trips.

In response to Chair Harris' inquiry, Assistant City Attorney Yolanda Summerhill stated that it would be beneficial to hear from the applicant whether they would be amenable to a Condition of Approval calling for additional undergrounding of utilities as suggested by Mr. Shenouda. Ms. Simard confirmed that there is a Condition of Approval requiring them to underground the utilities on the project's frontage, adding that this has been requested of SCE. She added that the pole in front of 612 St. James Place has a transformer and circuit with a design for undergrounding expected from SCE in March, to be shared with neighbors to further the conversation. She added that it would be hard for the applicant to agree to a broadened Condition of Approval without knowing yet what SCE's design calls for. She stated that the applicant will perform the work if it can be realistically combined with the removal of the pole fronting the development and is committed to actively communicating updates with neighbors.

In response to Assistant City Attorney Summerhill's inquiries, Ms. Simard stated that they would be willing to commit to continuing the conversation with the Planning Division as more is learned about the amount of work SCE will require. She agreed and clarified that their request would be that it would be up to the discretion of the applicant based on SCE's determination of how reasonably the line could be undergrounded, noting that "reasonable" is an open-ended term. She stated that they cannot extend expectations of the applicant without SCE's report beyond committing to remain transparent with the neighbors and City about the situation. She agreed that they could speak further on whether a maximum cost figure could be included, adding that it is hard to commit to limits on both the cost and scope for the unknown work.

In response to Chair Harris' inquiries, Traffic Engineer Riley added that there are no current plans for traffic improvements in the area on the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). He added that parking on Cliff Drive can be evaluated based on the public comments heard tonight, including the potential for additional parking signage. He stated that the City can evaluate a four-way stop sign at the intersection of Cliff Drive, Kings Place, and Kings Road. He confirmed that staff can also consider other traffic calming measures for the area.

In response to Commissioner Reed's inquiries, Traffic Engineer Riley confirmed that there is existing parking on Cliff Drive west of Kings Place. He confirmed there is no street parking either down the hill east of Kings Place or along Dover Drive. He reported that State guidelines to evaluate for a four-way stop sign would require a minimum amount of volume, equally coming in both directions, along with a past collision history focused on broadside collisions. He confirmed that, if the development's 10 visitor spots were filled, the closest parking options would be uphill in the residential area.

Chair Harris closed the public hearing.

Secretary Langford expressed concerns about the parking, adding that forcing residents to park in their garages is hard to enforce even if included in the CC&R. He added that the State has recently applied caps to Homeowners Associations (HOA) and encouraged a future Commission discussion item on how those new HOA caps could influence their future decisions. He noted that a Condition of Approval for this item states that residential garage parking would be mandated in the CC&R but does not discuss the HOA's enforcement. He recalled that the Commission had the same concerns when discussing the Ford Road Townhomes. He stated that the architecture of the development does not make for a good entryway into the Cliff Haven neighborhood as it does not reflect the style of the uphill homes at a prominent intersection. He lamented that the neighborhood's coastal Cape Cod-style architecture would not allow for the same square footage

in the townhomes.

Vice Chair Salene commended how well the applicant designed for a constrained site, adding that it would be difficult to add an access point from Dover Drive. He noted that the development could have been much more aggressively planned under the HO-3 zoning and lauded the applicant's design restraint. He stated that he understands the concerns of uphill residents, but added that the project is permissible, well-designed, and has his support.

Commissioner Rosene stated that there is no nexus for asking the applicant to underground the power lines away from the site, guessed that SCE's estimate will be over \$1 million, and added that it is an unreasonable request for the City, so he would not support this potential Condition of Approval. He noted that the applicant is meeting the City's parking requirements. He commended the architectural style, stated that it is appropriate, and noted that the applicant could have made the development more dense and higher, but showed restraint out of neighborhood respect. He lauded the addition of for-sale housing at an achievable price point for Newport Beach. He expressed his support for the project.

Commissioner Reed reported that he has lived in the Heights area for 18 years. He expressed his appreciation for the applicant's thoughtful community outreach and lamented that there is no easy answer to either the traffic complexities at the oddly shaped infill site or the City's housing situation on a broader level. He stated that he will support the project.

Chair Harris stated that the site map is thoughtful, considering other options the developer held due to the overlay zoning, including pushing the project away from the uphill residents. He stated that the traffic issue may be overstated, relaying past experiences from taking his children to the medical offices when the complex was more active, but acknowledged that parking could be an issue. He commended the Condition of Approval about residential garage parking, but agreed with concerns about overflow parking, adding that some larger residences may need more than two cars' worth of parking space. He cautioned that a much larger, taller, and more intrusive project could have come to this site. He commended the intended target audience for the for-sale units. He agreed with Secretary Langford's critique of the architecture but acknowledged that he does not have the support to mandate other design options. He agreed that the Commission cannot demand that the applicant underground utilities beyond their property but stated that he would support a Condition of Approval for the applicant to continue working with the City and SCE to see if additional work is feasible at the applicant's discretion.

**Motion** made by Commissioner Rosene and seconded by Vice Chair Salene to approve the item as presented.

AYES: Langford, Reed, Rosene, and Salene  
NOES: Harris  
ABSTAIN: None  
ABSENT: Ellmore, Gazzano

## **VIII. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER ITEMS**

**ITEM NO. 4 MOTION FOR RECONSIDERATION - None**

**ITEM NO. 5 REPORT BY THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR OR REQUEST FOR MATTERS WHICH A PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBER WOULD LIKE PLACED ON A FUTURE AGENDA**

Community Development Director Murillo reported that the February 19<sup>th</sup> meeting will be  
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cancelled, with the next meeting on March 5<sup>th</sup> to feature a public hearing for the 300 Newport Center Condominiums, the annual General Plan Housing Report, an Ordinance updating the NBMC relative to telecommunications facilities, and a Conditional Use Permit public hearing for The Nice Guy restaurant.

Mr. Mosher noted that the City's Tentative Agenda Report does not include a time for the Commission to review updates to the General Plan before it is presented to the City Council. He reported that part of the Housing Element has not yet been implemented because it is in the coastal zone and needs California Coastal Commission (CCC) certification. He inquired about why the CCC postponed a scheduled meeting item about this, originally set for earlier today.

**ITEM NO. 6 REQUESTS FOR EXCUSED ABSENCES**

Commissioner Reed reported that he will be absent from the March 5<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT** – With no further business, Chair Harris adjourned the meeting at 7:44 p.m.

**The agenda for the February 5, 2026, Planning Commission meeting was posted on Thursday, January 30, 2026, at 11:18 a.m. in the Chambers binder, on the digital display board located inside the vestibule of the Council Chambers at 100 Civic Center Drive, and on the City's website on Thursday, January 30, 2026, at 11:39 a.m.**

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Tristan Harris, Chair

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Jonathan Langford, Secretary