



**TOWN OF COVENTRY, RI
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT**

STAFF REPORT

Project Name:	Hartsig Barn ADU
Plan Type:	Unified Development Review (Accessory Dwelling Unit w/ associated Dimensional Variance)
Owner/Applicant:	Nancy A. Hartsig Revocable Trust
Address:	655 Narrow Lane
Plat / Lot / Zone:	AP 302 Lot 17 Zone RR-5 Lot Size 32 acres
Existing Use:	Single-Family Dwelling
Proposed Use:	Single-Family Dwelling with an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)
Description:	The applicant proposes to construct a 1315 SF, 26.5' x 32.5' one-bedroom Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) on the 32-acre subject parcel which will serve as a multi-purpose, seasonal use structure. The applicant seeks a dimensional variance for maximum unit size as the proposed structure will exceed the maximum allowable floor area requirement. ADUs that are not allowed by-right shall utilize the Unified Development Review process and must be heard by the Planning Commission per Zoning Code § 255-920 F(2)(i).

I. PROJECT INFORMATION



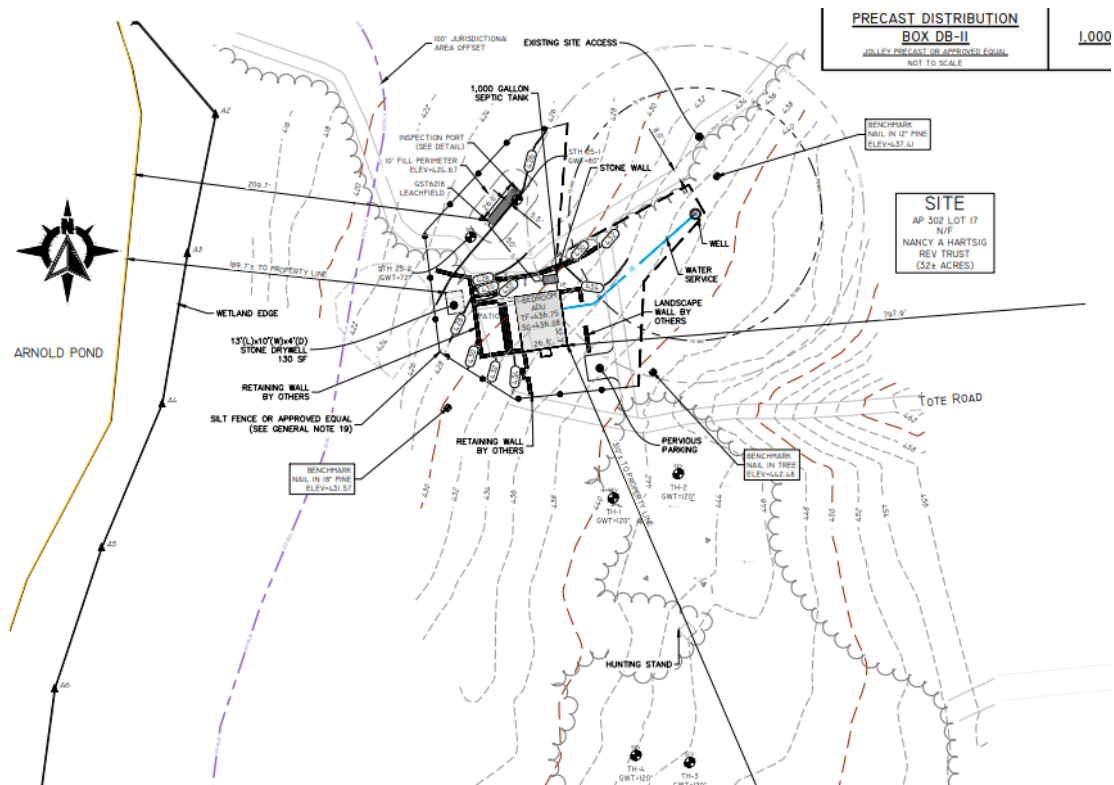
Background and Existing Conditions

This item will be reviewed as a Unified Development Review for a proposed Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) on a 32-acre parcel at the location listed above. The subject lot is comprised mostly of dense forest and currently hosts one single-family dwelling unit, a three-bay garage, and a small storage building, all owned by the applicant. There is also a dirt driveway that leads to the proposed ADU site. The subject parcel is abutted by two wooded, vacant lots that are part of the Farm, Forest, and Open Space Program. The property abuts Arnold Pond in the rear.

Proposed Conditions

The applicant is proposing to construct a 1315 SF, 26.5' x 32.5' one-bedroom Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) on the 32-acre

subject parcel which will serve as a multi-purpose, seasonal use structure to improve the applicant's access to and use of Arnold Pond and serve as off-season storage for small watercraft. The proposed ADU will be a pre-fabricated post and beam garage kit that will be designed with an oversized bathroom, mudroom, and laundry room. The ADU, along with its associated OWTS system, will be constructed 200 feet from the rear property line in the existing field to maintain existing tree lines and minimize tree removal.



Zoning

Per zoning code § 255-920 A(2)(d), detached accessory structures shall be “incidental and subordinate to the principal structure and maintain continuity with the architectural appearance and character of the principal structure.”

The applicant is seeking a Dimensional Variance for maximum unit size as the proposed structure will exceed the maximum allowable floor area requirements. The proposed structure would be 1,315 SF in size, where the maximum unit size for a one-bedroom ADU per § 255-920 A(1)(f) of the Zoning Code is 900 SF. This represents an approximate 46% increase above the maximum floor area requirement. The proposed ADU complies with all other relevant dimensional requirements contained in the Code.

Interdepartmental Review and Comments

Please see the attached report from the Technical Review Committee (dated September 15, 2025) for interdepartmental comments on this application.

II. DIMENSIONAL VARIANCE

Findings of Fact

The required standards set forth in RIGL Section 45-24-41 for Findings of Fact for Dimensional Variance applications:

RIGL § 45-24-41. General provisions – Variances. (d)(1) states, “That the hardship from which the applicant seeks relief is due to the unique characteristics of the subject land or structure and not to the general characteristics of the surrounding area; and is not due to a physical or economic disability of the applicant, excepting those physical disabilities addressed in § 45-24-30(a)(16)”

- Applicant provided the following answers: Applicant seeks to improve access and use of property, specifically for recreational use of their farm pond. Principal residence is more than 1,000 ft (1/5 mile) from water body. The hardship of family members is trekking back/forth several times a day for restroom use, food and other supplies (paddles, life jackets, outdoor gear). Unique circumstances are due to large land parcel (32 ac), existing location of the principal residence and distance to farm pond.
- Staff added the following considerations: The subject parcel is a uniquely large 32-acre lot that can accommodate much larger accessory structures without encroaching into the side or rear setbacks. The proposed ADU will also be located 200' from the rear property line, well above the minimum 35' side setback requirement in the RR-5 zone.

RIGL § 45-24-41. General provisions – Variances. (d)(2) states, “That the hardship is not the result of any prior action of the applicant”

- Applicant provided the following answers: The hardship is not due to any prior action of the applicant.
- Staff added the following considerations: The applicant did not create the uniquely large 32-acre subject parcel.

RIGL § 45-24-41. General provisions – Variances. (d)(3) states, “That the granting of the requested variance will not alter the general character of the surrounding area or impair the intent or purpose of the zoning ordinance or the comprehensive plan upon which the ordinance is based”

- Applicant provided the following answers: Applicant has taken great care to maintain natural beauty of the area and to minimize impact to heavily wooded parcel. Placement is

set back 200 ft from pond to maintain tree lines, minimize tree removal, and utilize portion of existing field for septic system use.

- Staff added the following considerations: The proposed ADU will not alter the general character of the surrounding area nor impair the intent or purpose of the zoning ordinance. The proposed location of the ADU on the subject parcel is situated over 780' from the public right-of-way at Narrow Lane and will not be visible from the street. As mentioned above, the subject parcel is surrounded by vacant, wooded land.

RIGL § 45-24-41. General provisions – Variances. (d)(4) states, “In granting a dimensional variance, that the hardship suffered by the owner of the subject property if the dimensional variance is not granted amounts to more than a mere inconvenience, meaning that relief sought is minimal to a reasonable enjoyment of the permitted use to which the property is proposed to be devoted. The fact that a use may be more profitable or that a structure may be more valuable after the relief is granted is not grounds for relief. The zoning board of review, or, [planning board] in unified development review, has the power to grant dimensional variances where the use is permitted by special-use permit.”

- Applicant provided the following answers: The dimensional variance has been considered reasonable in previous actions by Zoning Board and provides relief to applicant. In July 2022, applicant received ADU variance for similar, larger structure with same purpose. Due to cost escalation, applicant did not build. This revised plan is 50% in scope and size to previous ADU proposal. This plan replaces 2022 approved ADU approval.
- Staff added the following considerations: The proposed ADU is minimal to a reasonable enjoyment of the permitted use as it is an allowed use in the RR-5 zone and will have a proportionally modest footprint at 1,315 SF, dimensional requirements notwithstanding. Furthermore, zoning code § 255-920 A(1)(f) mandates that the maximum unit size for a one-bedroom ADU “may be up to 900 square feet, or 60% of the floor area of the principal dwelling, whichever is less.” The principal structure is 2,312 SF, of which 60% is 1,387 SF. The alternative, 900 SF, is lower and therefore applies to the proposed ADU. It should be noted that the proposed ADU is within the 60% SF threshold, despite being held to the 900 SF threshold.

Recommendation

Staff finds this proposal consistent with the standards for required Dimensional Variance findings of fact set forth in RIGL Section 45-24-41. Staff therefore recommends that the Planning Commission adopt the documented findings of fact and **approve** the Dimensional Variance application.

Conditions of Approval

1. ADU approval is conditioned upon strict adherence to the associated Dimensional Variance Application as presented and approved.

2. The driveway/vehicle access to the ADU shall seek approval from Western Coventry Fire District as part of the building permit phase.
3. The following items will be required upon submittal of a building permit application: (a) site plan showing the proposed structures comply with zoning code and (b) approval from the applicable fire district.

Pursuant to Article XII. Appeals, Subsection A. Procedure for Appeals to the Board of Appeal of the Coventry Subdivision Regulations, the decision of the Planning Commission herein may be appealed in writing by any party aggrieved by said decision to the Coventry Board of Appeal. Any such appeal shall be made within 20 days of the day of the decision is recorded and posted in the Town Clerk's Office.



TOWN OF COVENTRY
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TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT

DATE: September 15, 2025
PROJECT NAME: "Hartsig Barn ADU"
PROPERTIES: AP 302, Lot 17
ADDRESS: 655 Narrow Lane
ZONE: RR-5 (Rural Residential)
OWNER/APPLICANT: Nancy A. Hartsig Revocable Trust

This matter came before the Coventry Technical Review Committee at its September 15, 2025 meeting as a Unified Development Review Application for an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) with an associated Dimensional Variance. ADUs that are not allowed by-right shall utilize the Unified Development Review process and must be heard by the Planning Commission per Zoning Code § 255-920 F(2)(i).

The site plans and application materials were submitted for review on September 3, 2025. The applicant proposes to construct a 1315 SF, 26.5' x 32.5' one-bedroom Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) on the 32-acre subject parcel which will serve as a multi-purpose, seasonal use structure. The applicant seeks a dimensional variance for maximum unit size as the proposed structure will exceed the maximum allowable floor area requirement.

The members of the Technical Review Committee reviewed the following documents related to this application when preparing the comments below:

Hartsig Barn ADU - Project Narrative and Dimensional Variance.pdf
Harstig Barn ADU

TOWN ENGINEER

Plan

- 1) A Submission of a Town of Coventry Soil Erosion and Sediment Control (SESC) Application will be required for the project.
- 2) Provide calculations for sizing of drywell.
- 3) Any retaining walls over 4' require an engineering design.

PRINCIPAL PLANNER DESIGNER

- The applicant seeks a Dimensional Variance for maximum unit size as the proposed structure will exceed the maximum allowable floor area requirements. The applicant is seeking an ADU at 1,315 SF where the maximum unit size for a one-bedroom ADU in this case is 900 SF per zoning

code § 255-920. This represents an approximate 46% increase above the maximum floor area requirement.

- The subject parcel is abutted by two wooded, vacant lots that are part of the Farm, Forest, and Open Space Program. The property abuts Arnold Pond in the rear.
- The proposed location of the ADU on the subject parcel is situated over 780' from the public right-of-way at Narrow Lane and will not be visible from the street. The proposed ADU will also be located 200' from the rear property line, where RR-5 (Rural Residential) requires side setbacks of 35'.
- The proposed height of the ADU is approximately 24.5' which is less than both the average height of the principal structure at 27' and the height of the alternative dimensional standard of 25' per zoning code § 255-920.
- Planning staff seeks clarity about emergency vehicle access to the proposed ADU as well as specific information about the quality of potential driveway improvements.

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

- No comments at this time.

FIRE REPRESENTATIVE

- Western Coventry Fire District stated that the driveway to the ADU should be gravel.

POLICE CHIEF

- No comments at this time.

PLANNING COMMISSION CHAIR

The Planning Commission Chair recused as this item will be heard before the Planning Commission.