

APPROVED Conservation Committee Minutes June 26, 2018

Present: Bourne, Chiariello, DeStaebler, Eckstrom, Heiple, Magill, Murphy, Walz

Absent: Plunder, John Richards, Council liaison

1. Call to Order 7:30
2. Oral Communications –
 - a. deStaebler reports our member Chiariello has been named to the Scientific Advisory Panel of the Sempervirons Fund.
 - b. deStaebler reports our member Catherine Magill has become a docent at Jasper Ridge.
 - c. 2 people important to the history of Conservation Committee have died recently, Marilyn Walters and Phil Eastman.
 - d. Tree permit denied for 857 Westridge recently. Owner appealed and has hired Ralph Osterling, certified forester. Murphy and Walz (backup Chiariello) will meet with him this week.
3. Minutes *approved unanimously with 1 spelling error corrected.*
4. Current Site Visits
 - a. 385 Westridge – deStaebler. Reviewed and discussed.
 - b. 99 Hillbrook –Magill has not heard back from owner for access.
5. Tree Permits
 - a. 156 Corte Madera – Murphy completed
 - b. 311 Wyndham – deStaebler completed
6. Old Business
 - a. Oversight of Significant Town Owned Open Space properties. It has been suggested that we create an introductory history and guiding principles for each of the major Town owned properties. *Unanimously agreed we will do so.*
 - i. Springdown Preserve
 1. Comprehensive care calendar being implemented.
 - a. Photo documentation by Plunder has begun.
 2. Management Plan/Request for Funds
 - a. To Council 4/11/18, voted on tomorrow night.
 3. Monarch butterfly habitat - Heiple will contact Town resident who was interested in helping with this.
 4. Naming Pond – Council will choose name from our short list 6/27.
 - ii. Frog Pond – last report May '18
 1. Presented to council 5/10/18 with request for funds.
 2. AdHoc committee on Guiding Principles with members from Open Space committee and a representative from PV Ranch met and walked around and across the property. Draft report has been prepared. Appendix 1.
 - iii. Ford Field –revised report reviewed. Next draft will be circulated to committee 1 week before next meeting.
 - iv. Town Center – last report April '18
 1. Presented to council 5/10/18 with request for funds.
 - v. Rossotti's Field and ROW deStaebler and Magill - revised report reviewed. Next draft will be circulated to committee 1 week before next meeting.
 - b. Tip of Month – Magill - Star Thistle
 - c. What's blooming now – Plunder - Narrow Leaf Milkweed, Toyon, Clarkia
 - d. Kudos of the Month – Murphy – those who have mowed weedy grasses to minimize fire risk.

- e. BYH - deStaebler
 - i. Walden from Portola Valley Ranch applied. Great habitat garden even by Ranch standards. Discussion about whether or not individuals in PVR should be given awards since one was given to the Ranch as a whole and their HOA requirements accomplish much of what we suggest. *It was consensually decided that gardens of excellence within PVR should be eligible to receive a BYH award.*
 - f. Committee/Town cooperation
 - i. Public Works – Murphy. They are implementing mowing schedule at SpringDown under subcommittee guidance. The unmown circles of weed grasses and thistles around the trees and the still remaining Ailanthus need to be removed asap.
 - ii. Sustainability and Environmental Resources Committee – Murphy
 - 1. Probability that PG&E will turn off electrical power on high risk fire days has led to preliminary discussions of creating a microgrid at Town Center. This would integrate the solar, generator, and battery storage to both increase ongoing energy efficiency and provide “off the grid” energy for disasters and electrical shutdowns.
 - 2. Update from Greenwaste:
 - a. Most of their trucks use compressed natural gas, but the smaller trucks used in PV use renewable diesel.
 - b. Pending legislation SB 1383 would standardize colors used for recycling and compost bins throughout the state.
 - c. They offer to contribute a compost giveaway to Garden Tour next year and a “lose your lawn” incentive.
 - iii. Trails – Bourne reports Trails committee actively uses their Google Drive site to document trail conditions and communicate with Public Works. We discussed doing the same with Magill as tech lead.
 - iv. Open space committee – Chiariello
 - 1. They do not support the removal of the tree from Frog Pond Open Space requested by the Zussmans. They suggested that as a good will gesture to the Zussman’s the tree could be carefully limbed up to improve their view – under the supervision of Conservation paid for by the Zussmans. They deferred the actual decision to Conservation.
 - g. Rodenticide
 - i. Turn in Day October (sooner?)
 - ii. Timetable for decreased Town use.
7. New Business
- a. Sequoias plant list - Bourne is a member of the Landscape Committee at the Sequoias. They have been asked by management to make suggestions for planting areas created by removal of large redwood trees, and they request input from us. Subcommittee of Magill, deStaebler and Bourne will meet with their landscape committee chair, Lynn Davis.
 - b. Ban on plastic straws - Murphy Sustainability and Environmental Resources Committee is considering a Plastic straw ban and has asked

for CC comment. *We unanimously agree it would be desirable to ban the use of plastic straws in Portola Valley.*

8. Adjournment at 9:45
9. Next Meeting **7/24/2018**, 7:30 pm Old Schoolhouse.

Appendix 1

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR FROG POND PROPERTY

DRAFT 6/4/18

The Frog Pond commonly described as a sag pond is more accurately a thrust fault pond, created by seismic activity probably in 1906. It is a true vernal pool, drying up in the summer. As such it is a unique biological entity with a complex ecology.

The Frog Pond property was outlined in 1973 by the developer of Portola Valley Ranch, Joe Whelan, as PVR was created. The Planning Commission's original language guiding usage of the parcel, then known as Corte Madera Park, stated it should be "maintained as a natural park with only minor unroofed structures necessary for such a use." At the insistence of a single Council member the wording was changed to "use for park and recreation uses." Actual Grant Deed to Town 9/26/75 Lot E of PV Ranch Subdivision for Park and Recreation Purposes.

In 1983 Council adopted a measure to preserve the Frog Pond in its natural state, reserving the right to designate new uses for the area if conditions change. (*? At this time school baseball field encroached on the 6.4 acres. At that time, Whelan offered to formally deed the property to the Town without revisionary rights if its use as a "nature park" would be guaranteed in perpetuity. The council declined. This taken from a letter written by Whelan in 1993 – I can find no other reference to this.*)

In 1993 controversy arose over whether the Corte Madera school students active use of the pond for nature studies was damaging the area. At that time Mr. Whelan again stressed his desire that the Town should ensure that the pond would always remain a protected pond, available for student use, emphasizing that was the original intention when easement was created.

No further protections were enacted and the students were allowed to continue their studies of the pond.

In 2003 during construction of the new soccer field at Corte Madera School, construction crews encroached on the Frog Pond property evidently because of confusion about exactly where the property line was, and it appeared that no measures had been taken to protect the ecologically sensitive pond area from field runoff. The district erected a fence at the property line to make the boundaries clear, and runoff was diverted away from the pond into hard piping that runs to the town's storm drain system.

Need a section on creation of the outflow tract and problems it created.

GOALS

1. Minimize fire risk
 - a. *Possible to partner with Fire District and School District to remove pines and failing redwoods?*
2. Maintain views across open space property
 - a. Widely open view from Indian Crossing for walkers and drivers
 - i. Remove most trees that have grown here, protecting the valley and blue oaks.
 - b. Widely open view from Alpine Road trail for walkers.
 - c. Windows of open view from Alpine Road itself.
 - d. Windows of view from school fields.

3. Protect vernal pond
 - a. Protect outflow channel function
 - b. Silting issues?
 - c. Remove more vegetation yearly?
 - d. *Might this be a jurisdictional wetland?*
 - e. *What does this land want to be? Should we let Nature take her course?*
 - i. *What are likely outcomes for the water that enters the site if pond is allowed to silt in/peat in?*
4. Encourage residents' knowledge and appreciation of this unique property.
 - a. Encourage more school use of property?
 - b. Make more accessible to walkers?
 - i. Northern crossing path not feasible because of wetness.
 - ii. Southern crossing path
 1. *what does Ranch think of this?*
5. Maintain health of trees
6. Remove invasives and encourage natives for habitat value