

TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY
Ad Hoc Housing on Town-Owned Property Committee
Monday, June 24, 2019 3:30 pm
Historic Schoolhouse
765 Portola Road, Portola Valley, CA 94028

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Wengert called the Town of Portola Valley's Ad Hoc Housing on Town-Owned Property Committee meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

Chair Wengert prefaced the meeting with the reminder that there would no recommendation for any project or any property to move forward with coming out of today's meeting. She said the Committee is at a very preliminary stage and is trying very hard to communicate with everyone in town so there is clear understanding of the process.

Chair Wengert said this issue had been approached in three different ways. She said Portola Valley is part of a larger regional group and the Town cannot ignore the housing crisis. She said the Town must participate in coming up with solutions that will work for this community while maintaining the rural character, the open space quality, and all the reasons why people chose to live in Portola Valley. Chair Wengert said things are obviously changing and the Town must work with that change.

Chair Wengert said the first approach was looking at some very creative solutions for appropriate ADUs. She said there have not been a lot of applications or growth in that area, likely due to the current high cost of construction and availability of contractors.

Chair Wengert said the second approach was the affiliated partners – Stanford, the Sequoias, and the Priory. She said Stanford is moving forward and has been working with the community to gather input and address concerns, being as transparent as possible while trying to move solutions forward, prior to submitting even a pre-application.

Chair Wengert said this Committee was convened to look at the development of Town-owned properties, the only types of development financially possible, because the Town could never afford to be involved with a development where a land purchase would be required.

Chair Wengert shared the Committee's progress thus far – starting with a large number of possible parcels to a much smaller number of parcels on an active consideration list. She said at this point the Committee is receiving input and evaluating the positives and negatives of each possible alternative. She said while she anticipated receiving a lot of negative input today, she also hoped to hear some positive suggestions. She suggested that if someone was unhappy about one project, they please consider another. She said the Town Council is trying to provide additional housing for the people who are living, working, and want to return to this community, not on the grand scale of neighboring communities but something that would be appropriate for Portola Valley.

Present: Ann Wengert, Chair, Council Member; Steve Toben, Vice Chair, Public Member; Maryann Derwin, Council Member; Judith Hasko, Planning Commissioner; Nicolas Targ, Planning Commissioner.

Absent: Arthur "Chip" McIntosh, Public Member; Carter Warr, Public Member; Beth Bartlett,

Others: Jeremy Dennis, Town Manager.

(1) Open Communications

John Silver, 355 Portola Road. Mr. Silver said he has heard that the parcel next to Roberts Market is for sale for \$2.4 million, which he thinks the Town should consider acquiring as a site for housing. He said fundraising could be possible if they needed help. He said selling it at less than full market value with some tax write-offs may also be attractive to the seller. He suggested the Town take a close look at the options with that property.

(2) Approval of Minutes – Meeting of February 7, 2019.

Committee Member Derwin moved to approve the February 2019, minutes. Seconded by Committee Member Toben, the motion carried 5-0.

(3) Update on Property Disposal Work

Town Manager Dennis provided the update in Chip McIntosh's absence. He explained that Mr. McIntosh serves on this Ad Hoc Committee and the Open Space Acquisition Advisory Committee, both of which have been looking at the properties identified on the map. He said the Committees identified five or six properties that might be considered for disposal due to their small size, slide risks, etc., but that may be interesting to adjacent landowners. He said the Open Space Committee took the lead and has prepared letters to those adjacent property owners to start conversations.

Chair Wengert invited questions from the Committee.

Vice Chair Toben asked regarding the typical size of the properties. Town Manager Dennis said most of the properties are in the highlands, 1/10th, 1/20th of an acre. He said the thinking is a neighboring property owner may be interested for the possible additional opportunity to do something on their own property, without building on those properties themselves because many of them have restrictions.

John Silver asked if there would be restrictions on the use of the funds received if those properties were sold. Town Manager Dennis said the funds would go into the Housing Fund or Open Space Fund.

(4) Updates from staff:

a. Third Convening

Town Manager Dennis said the Town held its third community conversation on housing. He said there was very good attendance with approximately 80 residents present. He said the format was similar to the previous convenings with small tables set up where residents could talk to one another about the issues presented by the Town.

Town Manager Dennis shared the high-level bullet points from the convening. He said there continues to be desire in the community to preserve open space and rural character in Town. He said there continues to be excitement about ADUs as a potential option. There were general concerns related to traffic and parking as it related to building any housing. There was continued support from residents on the possibilities for affiliated and Town-owned lands, but concerns about specific sites. He said certainly people are interested in receiving more information and there was a true desire expressed to stay engaged in the conversation. There was an expressed hope for continued transparency. He said there was a desire to look at things more holistically, to tie in other issues faced by the Town such as fire safety, open space, etc. He said the summaries of the table discussions should be up on the website later this week.

b. Other housing work

Town Manager Dennis said Senate Bill SB-50 has been morphed into SB-592 by Senator Scott Weiner of San Francisco. He said this is a gut and amend process which allows a member of the legislature to change the entire content of a bill late in session. Town Manager Dennis said the bill continues with

elements of SB-50 but adds some additional elements. He said it effectively ends residential zoning as it is now and creates a mechanism to allow all different levels of density regardless of what is currently in the code. He said it provides an opportunity for cities to try to make findings that could stop those projects, but the findings will be very difficult to make. He said it would mean that any parcel in town under SB-592 could have more than a single-family residence. The insertion of the density piece means it could be apartments or any manner of construction. He said the Town would no longer have tools to stop housing developments as defined within the bill. He said the progress of this bill will be followed closely and there will be discussion about if there is an opportunity for the Town Council to opine on the bill.

Town Manager Dennis said conversations are starting about the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) process, which is what the Town uses in the Housing Element to plan for the number of units required to be built based on different income levels. He said in the current RNHA process, there are 64 below market rate housing units that need to be planned for. He said the Town is starting the planning process with the partners in the County for the next cycle. He said the expectation is that the next cycle will require significantly more units be built, although it has not been defined yet. He said it is also not certain that RNHA will continue to be a tool that the State uses. He said the requirement is to plan for units, not build them, which the Town has satisfied primarily through ADUs. He said is it a market exercise and the units are not created. He said the expectation is that much of this may fundamentally change in 2022. He said this all means that the State is very much pushing a housing agenda, wanting to create more housing in communities it feels have not been building that housing.

Chair Wengert invited questions from the Committee.

Committee Member Derwin said the people she has talked to say that SB-592 is likely to pass in some form. She asked if Town Manager Dennis was hearing the same thing. Town Manager Dennis said he talked with a colleague who works in the State Assembly who agreed. Town Manager Dennis said the general thinking is that some version of this will get through.

Committee Member Derwin said she is the Chair of C/CAG and was in Sacramento in May lobbying with C/CAG, sitting at a table with someone from Housing and Community Development (HCD). She said the representative from HCD told her there will be no more RNHA sharing because elite and rich communities like Portola Valley are not building housing and that has got to stop. Committee Member Derwin said whether people believe in climate change or not, the seas are going rise. She said people can think that this beautiful community is above the law and the Council will do everything they can to try to keep the Town's aesthetic and values, but it will change.

Town Manager Dennis explained that cities are provided numbers through the RNHA process. He said in San Mateo County there is a mechanism that allows the cities to talk to one another and share those numbers to the extent the cities are comfortable with. He said it sounds like the State will no longer be allowing that and most cities will no longer take the numbers from other cities because they know they will need to build more, so that sharing process is slowing down if not stopping.

A resident spoke up and asked how the proposed zoning change would affect properties with restricted covenants. Town Manager Dennis said in his review of the bill, he did not see language that specifically spoke to HOAs. He said he will research this further and provide that information.

The same resident said there are currently a number of communities actively fighting against these State requirements. He asked if there was any report or update on that.

Chair Wengert said the Town has been very active on this. She said SB-50 was the predecessor and several Town Councilmembers have gone to Sacramento and expressed opposition to a one-fits-all solution, asking to work on solutions that work for individual communities. She said it was a difficult point to argue because the Town had not demonstrated their ability to do that. She said the Town now has been able to demonstrate successful change in the ADU ordinances and progress with affiliated housing. She said Town-owned properties is the third of the three prongs that the Town has been focused on for two or three years, recognizing there is a backlash against communities like Portola Valley who have a

very beautiful, lovely, remote environment. She said the Town will fight to preserve that, but it must also be realized there is a responsibility to do something. She said it must be demonstrated that the Town is not oblivious to what's going on here or adopting a full moat mentality where Portola Valley is not part of the greater region and participating in finding solutions. She said the Town does not want the State to impose a situation where someone can sell their home to someone who will tear it down and have the opportunity to build a multi-unit. She said no single-family homeowners can be competitive to someone with a different desire. She said those economics can blow it up in a place such as Portola Valley, especially if they eliminate residential zoning. She said the Town Council is very active, and has been for a long time, working to make sure these things do not destroy the character of a place like Portola Valley.

The same resident as above asked how many other communities in California are unique like Portola Valley. Chair Wengert said every community feels like they're unique. She said Portola Valley properties have very large lot sizes and the Town has a significant amount of open space. She said the State is planning usurp a lot of local rules because they feel the communities have not been able to address the housing crisis in any significant way. She said the Town's main efforts, in addition to fighting the blanket legislations, are to demonstrate that what the Town is saying is correct, that the Town can produce some amount of housing that's consistent with retaining the Town's rural character, showing the State that it can be done. She said building ADUs is a big part of it and there may be more coming in terms of things like tiny homes and modular homes. She said there is nothing planned at this point because the Council and Committee Members have a lot on their plates and this is becoming almost a full-time unpaid job for many of them.

Another resident asked where legislators stand on it. Chair Wengert said it is changing fast. She said SB-592 was introduced on Thursday. She said the Governor and many legislators are very motivated right now to push through major housing initiatives.

A third resident asked if SB-592 eliminated the zoning within a mile of major transportation. Town Manager Dennis said there does not appear to be language related to being near a major transportation hub or a jobs-rich area. He said this bill appears to have a different take on the issue, with more of an attack on residential zoning itself. Committee Member Derwin said SB-592 is worse.

Chair Wengert said the Town is most concerned about the attack on zoning which could change the entire character of every community, at the highest level. She encouraged everyone to watch, read, and be very involved to be able to fight back against some of this legislation. Town Manager Dennis said Palo Altoans for Sensible Zoning prepared a good write-up of this a couple of days ago, which can be found on their website.

A fourth resident asked if it was appropriate to team up with cities who shared similar concerns to create reverse pressure. Chair Wengert said, while that could be an effective idea, there may not be enough time to do that. She said the Town works closely regionally within San Mateo County and now across County lines on all of these issues. She said most of the organizations, such as C/CAG and League of California Cities, will have that regional approach and Portola Valley does actively participate in those groups.

Caroline Vertongen. Ms. Vertongen asked how to obtain statistics about this issue. Town Manager Dennis said there are entities in San Mateo County that collect that information, such as 21 Elements. He said he will reach out to them to see if they have good data and he will share that data on the Town's website. Committee Member Derwin said C/CAG has created a grid of what every city is building which she will provide to Town Manager Dennis.

(5) Review of parcels

Town Manager Dennis said the Council created this Committee in late-2016. He said the Committee had three meetings in 2017 looking at the properties, whittling a list of 40 properties down to 4. He said the Council heard a report from the Committee in September 2017, which indicated there was no low-hanging fruit and they made no recommendations. The Committee offered to further research the four properties—

Town Center, the road remnant near Corte Madera School, portions of Ford Field, and the 11 acres across from the Blue Oaks development. He said six months later the Council asked the Committee to reconvene and begin discussing properties, which resulted in another set of meetings that culminated in a February meeting where a Committee member was asked to make conceptual renderings of two properties most interesting to this Committee – Town Center and the road remnant. The renderings were presented and the Committee asked staff to begin outreach work. This resulted in the convenings, the Mayor's March letter, and the Almanac article that shared the renderings.

a. Road Remnant, Alpine Road

- i. Discussion of pros and cons**
- ii. Update from staff on General Plan**

Town Manager Dennis described the property, slightly less than 1-1/2 acres, situated next to Corte Madera School. The property is being called a road remnant because it was left over from a realignment of Alpine Road. He said the color code of the property identified on the Comprehensive Plan Diagram is unclear and appears to be either "institution" or "neighborhood or community park." He said staff's best guess is it is the playfield component of a school institution.

Town Manager Dennis said that subsequently they have heard concerns from residents, as expressed in letters, on a number of matters related to open space, the Frog Pond, the Alpine Scenic Corridor, if there had been appropriate studies of the property, if alternate housing ideas had been fully explored, etc.

Chair Wengert invited questions from the Committee.

Committee Member Derwin asked if there was a slide that showed where this property is located in relation to the Frog Pond is. Town Manager Dennis shared the slide, which was not of good quality. He pointed out the areas in question.

Committee Member Derwin asked if there would need to be some sort of Environmental Impact Report (EIR) if this parcel of property was considered for development. Town Manager Dennis said there would definitely need to be an environmental document.

In response to a question from the audience, Town Manager Dennis said the cost of a full-blown EIR varies but could be in the low six figures. Committee Member Derwin asked if a housing developer such as Mid-Pen or Palo Alto Housing would be responsible for paying for the EIR. Committee Member Targ said it would be a negotiation with the housing developer, typically with a ground lease to a nonprofit housing developer for a period term of years and the affordable housing provider would then take the property through the entitlement process, a cost typically negotiated between the housing developer and the municipality.

In response to Committee Member Targ's question, Town Manager Dennis said the only designation this property has is on the map and staff's best guess on the color is that it indicates a playfield for the school, which may be a misinterpretation.

Committee Member Targ asked Town Manager Dennis to discuss the definition of a land use designation within the context of the General Plan. Town Manager Dennis said the General Plan is the guiding principle document of any community, which lays out the highest level of goals and vision. He said it is intended that all of the subsequent rules through zoning on a land use perspective flow from that. He said the General Plan has various elements – Land Use Element, Recreation Element, Housing Element, etc., which all speak to their respective different disciplines. He said in the case of a designation, the General Plan has the highest level of how the Town defines the various parts of land use – parks, preserves, residential, etc.

Committee Member Targ said there is an R-2-1/2 which is not consistent with the land use designation. He said he is trying to understand if this property would require a General Plan amendment. Town Manager Dennis said, depending on the designation, he would say it would need an amendment. He said if the designation indicates this is a neighborhood or community park, there would need to be a General Plan amendment associated with this map. Town Manager Dennis said the property is not presently included within the Housing Element, which would also need to be modified.

Committee Member Derwin said when she first got on the Council, possibly 2006 or 2007, she was on a small committee with the School District who wanted to consider a bus turnaround in that area. She said this was right after the heated Natthorst issue and the Council simply did not have the appetite to deal with more neighbor opposition at this point. She said she did not recall there ever being a discussion of the property's designation at that time. Town Manager Dennis said staff reviewed every document that went to the Council since 1964 regarding this property to see if they could find anything. He said the only thing they found was a reference in 2010 for potential consideration for a turnabout which never led to any real conversation at the Council level.

A fifth resident said the school wanted to put in a parking lot and drop-off pass-through but the neighbors opposed. He said the Town told the school that while they could do whatever they wanted on their own property, the Town had control of access to Alpine.

A sixth said there's a curve in the road there. He said many years ago the Town considered straightening out the road so it would be less dangerous. He said there was a 3-2 vote of the Town Council against straightening the road.

John Silver said the original plan for Portola Ranch called for not just access to the 205 homes but also an emergency only opening, both on Los Trancos Road and another farther up Alpine Road, between Corte Madera and Willowbrook. He said part of the plan would require the developer being willing to pay for the realignment and "improvement" of Alpine Road, which would have entailed removal of large amounts of land, a lot of cut, and a lot of tree removal. This would have resulted in making the funky and delightful Alpine Road between Corte Madera and Willowbrook much more like the still beautiful but more urbanized feeling of Alpine Road from Corte Madera to Highway 280. He said once Joe Whelan realized that people were not trying to torpedo the expansion of the road and additional access to stop them from building homes, they were supportive. He said he did not recall the details of who voted which way, but he was glad to see Alpine Road kept rustic in that area.

Council Member Targ asked if the School District has been approached regarding the property. Town Manager Dennis said there has not been a formal discussion that he's aware of. He said he communicated with the outgoing Superintendent three or four times advising that the Committee was looking at this property and that there may be a desire for a future conversation between the two entities. He said school board members have also attended meetings related to housing issues.

Chair Wengert said there is a new Superintendent and there will also hopefully be a meeting to discuss the school district's expressed desire for some faculty/teacher/staff housing. She said whether it relates to this possible parcel or other lands, she is unaware because those conversations have not yet occurred.

Chair Wengert invited public comment by those who had filled out comment cards.

Betsy Morgenthaler. Ms. Morgenthaler thanked the volunteer Committee Members for their dedication of time and personal resources to the community that means so much to her. She said she respected the volunteer effort this community brings forth. She said she understands the Committee has a narrow charge related to Town-owned parcels. She said that on July 11, 2017, the Committee said there was no single property they considered a clear choice for housing. She said it is a very hard choice from amongst the parcels she has reviewed. She said she was opposed to further consideration of housing at the Alpine Road crescent adjacent to the Frog Pond. She said there is too much spin and dismissal of the property by calling it a road remnant. She said the Portola Valley Housing Element pays tribute to the Town's low-density nature as being consistent with and based on the San Mateo County Master Plan. She said

Planned Bay Area refers to Portola Valley as being outside of transit and employment areas, bordering on significant conservation areas, and they therefore projected limited growth for this town. She said the Housing Element says, "The land preserved provides a significant conservation benefit to the region by providing habitat for wild animals, plants, and protecting water and air quality. The low-density housing pattern and the clustering of development in the town serves to protect this important regional resource." She said these are all more than adequate basis to say that the dense packing of the housing development onto the one-acre-plus parcel is not a credit to the existing General Plan or the Housing Element provisions and it actually violates the current Alpine Scenic Corridor Plan, which covers the primary vista corridor and limits points of access onto Alpine Road, as well as setting severe building setbacks. She said the Committee's volunteer time means a lot to her and she thinks it would be better spent on any other parcel. She urged the Committee to look elsewhere for housing opportunities and, moreover, to recommend to the Council that the Alpine Road crescent be dedicated to open space because that is its highest and best use.

Harold (last name not heard) said he agrees with Mr. Silver that the Town should look into buying the parcel next to Roberts. He said he agrees with Ms. Morgenthaler's points in opposition to development of the road remnant. He said that this is open space and the area is used daily by hundreds of pedestrians, dog walkers, and equestrians, with trails through the space. He said the unique thing about the space is that it is used predominantly by townspeople, as opposed to many of the other open spaces and trails that are used by out-of-towners. He said the school has a lot of traffic when the children come and go. He said building multi-family housing there would cause a problem for the parents bringing their children to school as well as the people who would live in that housing.

Chair Wengert asked for no booing or applause to the comments.

Curtis Carlson, Coal Mine View. Mr. Carlson said he understands the State is putting a lot of pressure on everyone to do something. He asked what would make the State happy. He said when he saw the map and the density of proposed housing next to the park and trails, he was shocked and said it was inappropriate for the Committee to consider such an idea. He said he heard in the presentation there is an enormous amount of confusion regarding the land use for this property. He said if buildings are placed on this parcel, the horse trail would be within a few feet of the buildings. Mr. Carlson asked the Town to go back to the State to ask how many units would make them happy. He said the truth is, no amount of units built will be enough. He said the map indicates a profound transformation in the community and it should be up to the people to decide what is done with their community.

Mr. Silver said the audience must stop applauding to make it easier to run a quicker meeting.

Helen Quinn. Ms. Quinn agreed with Town Manager Dennis that the Town General Plan map is confusing but said the color designation includes the existing playing field. She said most of the property the Committee is calling the road remnant actually lies underneath the green band designated Alpine Scenic Pathway. She said that land was deeded to the County by Bovet in 1958 and 1959 for changes to Alpine Road and therefore became Town property when the Town became a Town in 1964. She said in the 1964 plan there isn't such a wide Alpine Parkway and it's just the school but it has actually been a community park since 1964. She said a 1968 Almanac article discussed the expansion of the school playing fields which shows a nice map. She said in that article the property is described as a 1.6-acre parcel called Corte Madera Park. She said there is a discussion of the school board meeting telling the Council to maintain the originally designated use of the park. She said because there are no meeting minutes it is difficult to find when it was designated as a park but said it has effectively been a park since 1964. She said it is a heavily used park and the school uses it to run the loop and walk to school. She said for many reasons it is traditionally green space in Town and is asking the Town Council to designate this parcel as permanent open space to remove the confusion so that in the future this park can be part of the Town's open space. She said this property should be removed from this discussion as potential housing property. She said it is the cheapest open space the Town can acquire because it already owns it. She suggested that Portola Valley needs an ordinance like Palo Alto has, stating that no parkland shall be converted to housing.

John Silver. Mr. Silver wondered if there would be value to get together in one room with the best copy of the diagram with some of the town consultants and volunteers who have been in town a long time – including George Mader, Tom Vlastic, Dieter Walz, Linda Craig, and others – who may be able to spark each other's memory about the map. Mr. Silver explained his history of involvement in Town government, with his fundamental goal being preserving Portola Valley's unique natural environment. He said he also always believed that a variety of housing types and people of varying incomes living here was important although he saw little chance to do much about that until later. He said in 1990 a serious Housing Element was adopted that got State approval to try to provide for affordable housing. He said he worked very hard to see a certain amount of affordable housing built. He said, if done right, it is possible to provide affordable housing with less environmental impact than unaffordable housing. He said it can be justified from an environmental point of view. He said he does not, however, think this parcel is the place to make that case. He said a gateway to thousands of acres of contiguous permanent open space is not an appropriate place for development. He said the Town is blessed to have such knowledgeable, dedicated, brilliant volunteers.

Dale Pfau, 5030 Alpine Road. Mr. Pfau said the Frog Pond is a rare and precious ephemeral pond. He said vernal ponds fall under the Corps of Engineers, State Game and Fish, and other Federal agencies. He said it must be examined to see if that falls into the crescent. He said it sometimes takes years to get a determination from these agencies which is why this property should not be considered for development. He said he is on the Ad Hoc Wildfire Prevention Committee. He said it is a huge concern for him personally because of where he lives and also seeing what's going around the State. He said Alpine Road will be the main corridor of exit for people who live up Alpine Road, or even Willowbrook, and as a secondary exit for the people coming down from Los Trancos. He said to have another huge dense operation like this at that location, without considerable traffic mitigation, is not a good idea and will create another choke point in town.

Gary Morgenthaler. Mr. Morgenthaler thanked the Committee for their volunteer service to the community. He also thanked his fellow citizens of the community for their time here today and desire to maintain the rural and open space character of Portola Valley. He said he was there to defend the Corte Madera Park. He said Town Manager Dennis has said the property is problematic because the General Plan is not clear in its designation of this property. He said Ms. Quinn showed that the 1964 original designation was a community park and has been used for the last 55 years as a community park. He said this land is zoned as a 2.5-acre residential estate community. He said to increase the density of housing to 11 units on a 1.3-acre parcel is a 20x increase in zoning density, which is outside the community norms. He said this creates a precedent that should cause concern to Portola Valley citizens about the zoning integrity if a 20:1 change in zoning density can be done at will. He said it is problematic to the Alpine Road Scenic Corridor. He said the drawings come within 45 feet which violates the 50- to 100-feet. He said the fundamental spirit is that it should be setbacks and not high-density housing immediately adjoining the Alpine Road Scenic Corridor. He said it also contradicts the spirit of open space and conservation. He said the Frog Pond is a unique community resource, a fragile vernal ecosystem and it is illogical to site high density housing right next to it and self-defeating of the Town's other values in terms of open space and conservation. With regard to parks and trails, he said the Town has committed community resources to their maintenance. He said there are pedestrian, hiking, and equestrian trails on this property. He said the drawings put the equestrian trails within 5 feet of townhouses, which defies logic. He said the Portola Valley Housing Element describes any high-density housing as being mandated for proximity to mass transportation, which is Highway 280, not adjoining open space, Windy Hill, and the Coal Mine Trail. He said the siting of this project on this property is illogical and in direct contradiction to the organizing principles of Portola Valley. He said high-density housing is best sited where there is public transportation access to benefit the residents. Mr. Morgenthaler said that for all these reasons it strikes him and other members of the community that this land should be designated as permanent open space and should not be used to create high density housing because it is in contradiction to the traditional use as an open space park for the community and one that preserves both the rural character of Portola Valley and the commitment to conservation and open space.

Lee Middleman. Mr. Middleman thanked the Committee for their hard work. He said he has lived in town for almost 40 years, now living at the Portola Valley Ranch. He served on the Planning Commission and

the Architectural & Site Control Commission, and had been active in Town affairs for many years. He said he is not sure he is in support of using this parcel but, as he listens to everyone, he is hearing objections that he thinks will be presented on any parcel that is selected in an attempt to meet the housing needs as specified by the State. He said the Town should be in support of housing, potentially for teachers, first responders, Town staff, and even the staff supporting the Open Space District. He said times are changing and climate change will be one of the things nothing can be done about. He said the entire Bay Area has changed with regard to housing, traffic, pollution, etc. He said, as a result, Portola Valley must be also willing to accept some change. He said the level of change that's being considered here is quite minor compared to all the luxury of this environment. He said it is not unreasonable to ask the community give a little in support of this. He lives at the Ranch and may be one of the few homes that may be impacted visually by building on this property. His home is high on Coal Mine Ridge and has a view of the school and the pond and would look straight across at any housing built on that property. He said he doesn't particularly want to lose that, but will gladly give it up if it's the right thing to do. He said this town has the benefit of a lot of open space and trails. He said this project would not impact that much. He said there are 455 acres dedicated open space at the Ranch and Blue Oaks. He said that is real open space. He said there are also 15 miles of trails on that space. He said comparing that to some of these stated concerns about these small properties is out of proportion. Mr. Middleman said there are very few opportunities to meet the State housing requirement in Portola Valley. He said whether agreed with or not, at some level the Town will have to meet those requirements because something will get passed. He said he is not in support of the current bill, but it needs to be looked at and the citizens should not band together and fight every inch every step of the way and should try to think more about the larger community.

Maria Southgate, 4666 Alpine Road. Ms. Southgate said she grew up here on part of the adjoining land, which her father developed. She said the reason the school bus turnaround idea was abandoned was that it was considered too dangerous an area to add more traffic at that time, which was years ago. She said she just does not understand how the Committee came up with this idea. She said the outreach has not been positive. She said this property is zoned for 2+ acres, possibly a neighborhood park. She did not know how much actual square footage would be left after the rights of way with the road and the scenic corridor are considered. She said for the Committee to go so far as to have architectural renderings done for 12 condominiums on this little piece of land is coming back to bite the Committee because it provides a big visual. She said people she's talked to had no idea the article in the Almanac had to do with this little piece of land up by the school. She said Carter Warr lives on Willowbrook and should know better than to suggest having the road come out on the west end, right in the middle of a S turn.

Chair Wengert invited public comment by those who had not filled out comment cards.

Dan Quinn, 10 Bear Paw. Mr. Quinn wanted to emphasize the connectivity element. He said there is an Alpine Trail used by many people as a conductive trail along Alpine Road and up to the less settled area of Coal Mine Ridge. He said the Frog Pond is a unique ecosystem that includes more area than the area that is wet during the high-water time. He said the animals and other parts of the ecosystem need dry land and trees. He said he does not see the Alpine Trail marked on the map. He said if any other landowner owned it, there would be a trail easement.

Chair Wengert clarified that the drawings are conceptual schematics and were not architectural drawings designed to be fully comprehensive. She said they were designed to see what could possibly be put on those locations and how they could be designed based on the contours of the land.

Mr. Quinn said with the trail easement on one side and the 100-foot setback from the Alpine Road corridor on the side, the amount available for the condos is reduced. Chair Wengert said the trail and the Scenic Corridor are both taken into account in the conceptual renderings. She reiterated that the drawings are conceptual only.

With no further public comment, Chair Wengert brought the item back to the Committee for discussion.

Chair Wengert said primary goals of the General Plan Housing Element has always been an endeavor to provide opportunities for a diverse population, including for people of all income levels with special housing needs, particularly elderly residents and those employed in Portola Valley to be able to live in Town. She said this has only become more difficult to achieve in these last four years. She said this discussion will continue about how to provide that kind of housing. She said she appreciates all of the comments made relative to this project in particular, but right now they will be looking at the pros and cons of this parcel and all of the others. She said none will be eliminated or focused on specifically until such time as that full exercise is complete.

Committee Member Targ said he has heard a question of consistency with the General Plan, with Zoning, with expectations, with how people have come to use the piece of property – for trails, for functional open space, or a buffer for Frog Pond – and then other uses that are more implicit or that might be taken away, such as the potential impact to roads, to traffic, to circulation, to fire and general life safety and quality of life kinds of issues. He said he was struck by Mr. Middleman's comments, that there are multiple things trying to be achieved, fundamentally to make this a better Portola Valley without losing the essential qualities. He said among those goals is to foster support of services such fire, open space, schools, and Town staff. He said he's been thinking about the unique nature and location of this site as proximity to the school and the other essential functions of the town. The question is whether this piece of property can be used in support of those elements. He said there will be a new General Plan proposed as well as a Housing Element that will be coming up in a couple of years, which may be an opportune time to take these kinds of issues into consideration. He said some of the other discussions of other locations, such as the property for sale on Alpine, was interesting. He said although it is beyond the scope of what this body gets to think about, he thought there was some valid thought that could be applied there as well.

Vice Chair Toben expressed his respect for the thoughtfulness and preparation that has gone into the comments heard today. He is struck by just how fortunate it is to have the intellectual capital in this community and the conviction to continue enjoying a quality of life that is the envy of maybe the world. He said there was a touch of sadness in his experience this afternoon because there were no teachers from Corte Madera or Ormendale School or firefighters who spoke about the punishment they experience having to commute 1-1/2 hours to teach our children. He said he heard that a much-loved fifth grade math teacher at Corte Madera resigned this year because she could no longer bear the burden of commuting a very long distance in order to do her job. He said he loves open space as much as anybody in the room. He asked where the town can yield a tiny little bit, on 1.3 acres of land, in order to teach our children. He asked how important that value was relative to the availability of this parcel for general recreational purposes. He said he doesn't have an answer to that question. He said if it were to be demonstrated through further analysis that doing a modest development of this parcel would irreparably harm the Frog Pond, he would take it off the table, but he does not know that. He said he does not know if there is a design possible to enable the Frog Pond's continued wellbeing, that would enable some continued recreational opportunities, and would allow that fifth grade teacher to find an affordable place to live where she could walk to school. He said he is not suggesting a full speed ahead approach, but at the same time thinks it is the responsibility of Portola Valley citizens to consider with an open mind the totality of the values and aspirations for the children and the community at large.

Committee Member Derwin said she was close to crying. She said she has been working on this for a long time. She said prior to her coming onto the Town Council, her colleague tried to build a housing development at Natthorst and a referendum came through and died. She said while she was on the Council, they tried to build out the eight units at Blue Oaks and that was impossible, but they were able to do sort of a land swap, sell it, and buy the property down by the old Al's Nursey, which turned into a nightmare. She said people have also wanted to re-legislate the ADU ordinance. She said people are complaining about Stanford, alleging this has been in the works forever, which it not true. She said there are two homeless people living in town and she won't say where they are because she is afraid they will be run out of town. She said the San Jose Mercury is doing fantastic work. She said they have reported that the number of incidents of sexual assault and domestic violence is rising and is being directly attributed to the housing crisis because people are under too much stress and crammed into too small of spaces. She asked where Portola Valley fits in to the solution. She asked if Portola Valley was somehow

too good to provide housing for people. She said she was ready to quit. Committee Member Derwin became emotional and left the meeting.

Chair Wengert said Committee Member Derwin's expressed frustration speaks to how deeply this touches everyone and particularly those that have worked long and hard trying to move things forward. She said while perhaps this particular project may not go forward, the community should keep an open mind about how the Town can potentially add some housing that will be acceptable. She said there will always be consequences. She said also would rather not see the changes that have occurred and will occur. She said she hopes that whatever efforts made going forward are done with the right reasoning. She said there must be some progress in the community and there will be potentially some changes that go along with that.

Committee Member Hasko thanked everyone for attending the meeting today. She said the Committee needs to hear everyone, their knowledge, their feelings, and their neighborly sentiments. She said it is hard to anticipate what type of change a small community can make in the face of incredible and almost overwhelmingly rapid change at the State level. She said the frustration that Committee Member Derwin exhibited comes after many years of working tirelessly to solve a problem and is emblematic of where we are as a State and a community. She said there are a lot of conflicting goals. She said very important issues have been raised today that cannot be put aside – fire safety, the safety of children walking to school, and people being able to use community assets. She said, having worked on a couple of housing ad hoc committees and the Planning Commission, that it is a slow process. She said the Committee is incrementally trying to move toward a goal and the community is providing hopefully constructive but sometimes vehement feedback. She said she hopes that it is recognized that the Committee is not neutral to the dynamic here. She said they need people like Committee Member Derwin, who works so hard at such a heartfelt level, to make their contributions. Committee Member Hasko said five Committee members can't get it right – it's the community that needs to get it right and the process must be worked through. She said the community can say no to everything all the time, which is easy to do on an individual level. She asked then what is the solution? She said the solution may not be what they discussed today, and that's fine, but if we as a community can't figure out a way to get a teacher a reasonable rent, they will be lost. She encouraged the community to think of ways to solve the problem in the way they can. Do they have an ADU that can be made available at an affordable rate? She said there are community organizations like HIP Housing that try to get people together with housing to make it more affordable. She said these resources can be meaningful and need to be explored. She said she heard the comments but also challenged the community to come up with helpful ideas and share the efforts they have made. She said this information helps the Committee feel like their efforts are having an effect.

Chair Wengert said the Committee does appreciate all the input received. She said she now has a list of issues, in this case mostly cons, regarding this parcel, in terms of what its impact will be. She said they will move to the discussions of the other parcels and discuss if they want to expand it further to look at the next two, which would be a Blue Oaks remnant or Ford Field. She said it will be stepped through systematically resulting in a positive/negative sheet for each parcel with more input from the community, until they make a decision to do something, nothing, or everything.

Town Manager Dennis suggested that since Vice Chair Toben and Committee Member Hasko need to leave soon, the conversation might be continued at another time.

b. Town Center

i. Discussion of pros and cons

Town Manager Dennis said similar to the work Mr. Warr did for the property at Corte Madera, he prepared a conceptual drawing of the property referred to as the substation, adding two apartments above it. He said they have not received any written commentary but he has received a few phone calls with questions about where it is located.

Chair Wengert said it was suggested and there was a recent conversation where they discussed removing the substation and designing a small project in the space available. She said sometimes it makes more sense to take something down and then build something tasteful, potentially gaining more units, depending on the space available. Town Manager Dennis said the parcel includes the parking spaces to the west. He said there is access that would need to be provided to the property owners to the rear. Chair Wengert said perhaps Mr. Warr and someone from the Committee could look at possible ideas.

The Committee was supportive of that idea. Member Hasko agreed to work with Mr. Warr on this.

c. Other parcels for consideration (if needed) – Ford Field and Los Trancos Road properties

Town Manager Dennis said the property across from Blue Oaks has some legal issues that would need to be renegotiated with the owners of the Blue Oaks development. He said the Ford Field property is more complicated. He said there is a conservation easement and there is additional information he'd like to gather. Chair Wengert suggested the information be gathered for those properties for the next meeting. Town Manager Dennis said both of those properties appear to have those legal challenges associated with them that would not guarantee success if the Committee made recommendations.

(6) Discussion, Next Steps

Chair Wengert said the Committee will look at the Town Center property in a new way and will follow-up with some information on the Ford Field and Los Trancos Road properties. She said there will be no further discussion at this point on the road remnant and it will all come back at the point in which they've either whittled it down or expanded the list to consider them all again, one against the other.

Chair Wengert again invited additional ideas or leads on anyone who wants to give the Town some land.

Danna Breen said she has often offered ideas such as amnesty for nonconforming units. She said between her house and Willowbrook there are five units that are not considered ADUs. She said there may be 50 units out there. She said they could give money to the Pollocks or the Jellichs to have them go up. She said they were considering buying the land behind Spring Down, which would be a fabulous place for lots of housing. She said she's been trying very hard to be creative. She said most of the people in this room in her neighborhood are supportive of affordable housing but have a great sensitivity about the Frog Pond. She said for her it is all driven by the Frog Pond. She said the Frog Pond is not just water in a pond, it is a complete sanctuary, alive and happening at night. She said they just want the Town to find another site. She said looking at Town-owned property was low-hanging fruit and there has to be other solutions. She said this neighborhood does not want this land taken away.

(7) Adjourn

Chair Wengert adjourned the meeting at 5:15 p.m.