



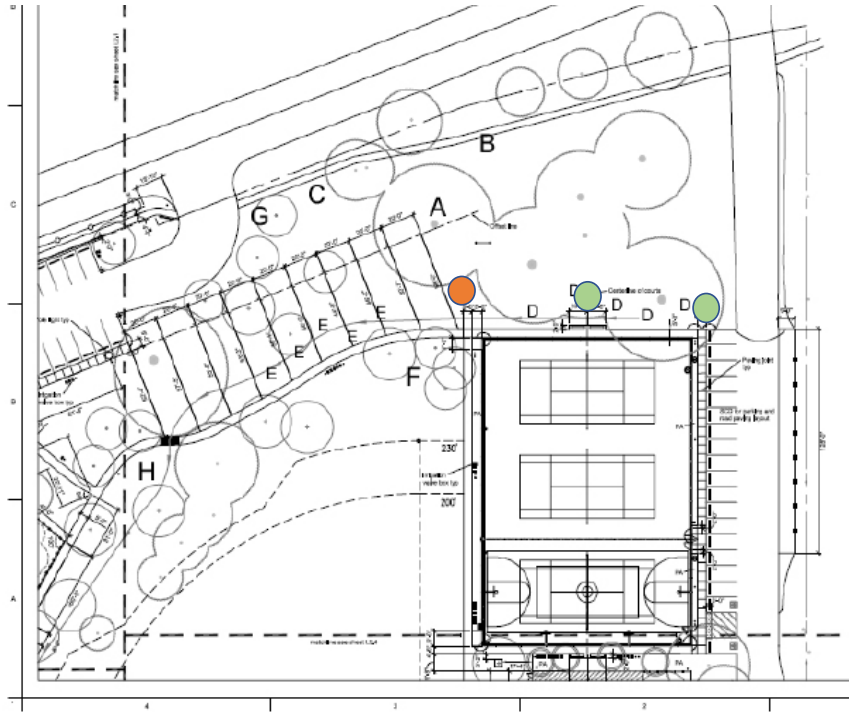
**TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY
Conservation Committee Meeting
Tuesday, July 23, 2019 – 7:30 PM
Historic Schoolhouse
765 Portola Road, Portola Valley, CA**

REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Oral Communications
3. Approval of Minutes – June 25, 2019
4. Current Site Visits
 - A. Subcommittee on Guidelines revision
 - B. 857 Westridge
5. Tree Permits
6. Old Business
 - A. Oversight of Significant Town Owned Open Space properties – 5 year plan for each and detailed calendar of care needed
 1. Springdown Preserve – Chiariello, Plunder, Murphy
 - i. Management Plan – details for next month
 - ii. Pond maintenance needs?
 2. Frog Pond – Eckstrom, Heiple, Murphy
 - i. “Road Remnant” evidence is Open Space/park? Request from residents to make recommendation to Council. See Appendix B
 - ii. Private \$\$ for restoration and maintenance endowment fund being raised – contingent
 - iii. Scout project sponsor
 - iv. Harding Grass Heroes sponsor
 3. Ford Field – DeStaebler, Magill, Walz
 4. Town Center – Chiariello, Magill, Murphy
 - i. Plan for screening tennis courts for ASCC – See Appendix A
 - ii. Detailed planting plan for fall – due date end of September
 5. Rossotti’s Field and ROW - DeStaebler, Magill, Walz
 6. Triangle Park – Eckstrom, Heiple, Murphy
 - i. Road remnant? Funding from road right of way and trails funds?
 - B. Tip of the Month - Magill
 - C. What’s blooming now – Magill
 - D. Kudos of the Month - Plunder
 - E. BYH – DeStaebler
 - F. Vegetation Management
 1. MROSD Plunder
 2. Ad Hoc Committee on Fire Safety - Plunder
 - G. Committee/Town Cooperation
 1. Public Works – Murphy
 - i. We should produce detailed timely work requests
 - ii. Paseo del Arroyo
 2. Sustainability Committee - Murphy
 3. Trails – Stromeyer
 4. Open Space - Chiariello

7. Changes to Criteria and website
 - A. Protect "Heritage" shrubs – Magill
 - B. Change Heritage Tree criteria for Bay trees – Walz
 - C. Golden Oaks – Magill, Walz
8. Rodenticide turn in event – Plunder, Chiariello
9. Fall evening lecture Pumas – Plunder, Chiariello
10. New Business
11. Adjournment
12. Next Meeting 8/27/19, 7:30 pm

APPENDIX A



● Toyon

● Ceanothus

APPENDIX B

June 18, 2019

Dear Madame Chair,

This letter is based on the merits of the land and does not encompass the threat of future development. I speak on behalf of many others from some of whom you will hear. In order to keep this rural, open space meadow we offer the following: We would like the Town of Portola Valley to keep this land undeveloped and to dedicate it as permanent open space. (Like its immediate neighbors the Frog Pond Park, Coal Mine Ridge and Windy Hill Open Space.)The preservation of this land is in the best interest of the town and its residents because the land is essentially unimproved and if retained in its natural state has scenic value to the public and is valuable as watershed and as a wildlife preserve. It is in the public interest that the land be preserved as open space because such lands will add amenities of living and will preserve the rural character of the area in which this land is located.

The Portola Valley General Plan (GP) Introduction and Community goals are poetic and make the GP the beloved town constitutional document that it has become. This is no ordinary document. It has guided us like the North Star, protected us with wonderful principles and inspired us since 1964. It is what we celebrated in 2014 at the year long 50th anniversary celebration and it is what invigorates us to be vigilant in our duty to protect the town and be responsible neighbors and stewards of the land. In March 1970 Martin Litton, the great environmental giant who championed saving the redwoods and the Grand Canyon and who lived on Golden Oak Dr. said the authors “ always showed extraordinary sensitivity to the natural environment and serious concern over threats to it. We are fortunate to have a planner who thinks in terms of minimum alteration of the natural scene and of maximum resistance to the undesirable effects of urbanization.”

Land Use and Open Space

The question why we would want to consider acquiring this micro scale open space with a macro scale land experience is evident in almost every line. It breathes the same air as the document. The entire GP supports this acquisition. Opening the document to any page will provide multiple reasons to lovingly embrace this parcel.The Comprehensive General Plan diagram map(see below) 3(1964) and 5 (1982) maps which show this land as neighborhood and community park designation.The 2007 map shows it as Alpine Scenic corridor. It was never designated for housing and it is a gigantic leap to move from the sanctity of an established neighborhood, community open space designation to possible dense housing or any housing.

The Recreation Element

Again in this element, this parcel fits like a glove

2325 The Trails and Paths are in and of themselves important recreation facilities. There are two very active trails on this land. The one from Alpine and Corte Madera along the

back fence of the soccer field and the smaller trail which connects the space to the crossing of 4750 Alpine which is the beginning of the privately held trail Historic element 33C the farm road which connects Alpine and Willowbrook at 200 Willowbrook. The historic remnants of the road especially on the north side are in “fairly good condition.” This trail is used daily by school children and lots of equestrians. Riders, bikers and school children cross Alpine and enter the open space which then connects them to the main trail which is contiguous to the Frog Pond, Coalmine Ridge and Windy Hill Open spaces. The main alpine trail enters the space at Corte Madera and is heavily travelled by up to 75 trips a day by bike, horse, pedestrian and is the part of the cross country course for Corte Madera students who during PE run along Indian Crossing past the frog pond to the gate at Portola Valley ranch and then back along the frog pond, under the gentle gaze of Windy Hill and return to school. For these children to be able to run along this path next to the expansive experience of the land and the view leaves a mark on these children and was surely something which colored my children’s view of the world. The Corte Madera community, part of Brookside Park of about 250 homes has used this park/ open space for decades. They have been active in its stewardship, pulling broom and planting wildflowers. Some refer to this land as Alpine Park, Corte Madera Park. I have always called it Frog Pond park, because to me it part of the whole sanctuary. Here neighbors sit, ride, visit, walk dogs since the adjacent Corte Madera neighborhood has smaller lots. Children explore the open meadow of owl’s clover, native sedges, bunch grasses, blue eyed ribbon grass and take walks by the wood rat nests and frog pond watching life happen around them. And of course when the frogs sing, it is magic. Everyone acknowledges this.

The Frog Pond

In a letter to Marion Softky in 1993 former Portola Valley Ranch resident Wally Richardson writes, “in Portola Valley, Ca. there is a unique eco-system called the Frog Pond located next to an intermediate grade school and adjacent to a large subdivision of homes. Since the development of the home sites beginning in 1977, Frog Pond was deeded over to the town of Portola Valley by the developer Joe Whelan. The pond is dry until the rainy season arrives, usually by mid November. By December through January, the nightly din of thousands of breeding frogs can be heard for almost a mile distant. It is an area of survival for frogs, at a time when frogs and other amphibians are rapidly disappearing from other areas of California. To the residents of Portola Valley Ranch, Frog Pond is a part of their environmental heritage, and as such, it is rarely traversed or trampled on. It is understood to be a little ecological jewel, not just for the residents and the students at the adjacent school, but to all the residents of the valley.” In a beautiful handwritten letter (enclosed) from Joe Whelan the developer to Marion Softky of the Almanac on 2/9/93 discusses the intent of the gift of land to the town of Portola Valley. Joe closes his letter, “we not only sold the beauty of PVR to our original home owners, we also sold other amenities including the beautiful country sound of the millions of frogs that make their home in this special ecological preserve.” There is a long, tall chain link fence which separates the school playing field from the frog pond which makes animals trying to drink, hunt, mate, nest in the frog pond navigate to come onto the open space land here to do the same. They also then travel down the farm road trail to get to Windy Hill open space. There was a family of fox born on this property last year. The pond fills with water and there is a culvert to the west end of the pond which diverts water under Alpine Rd, where there is often a waterfall on the other side of the road and

down to Corte Madera creek. It is a watershed parcel. The frogs are western tree frogs, however an endangered redlegged frog was found in a survey in Sausal pond in 1999. The frogs are amazingly sensitive to sound. They can be in full symphonic harmony and then hear a sound and they all stop singing at once and then a minute later they slowly being croaking until they are singing again in full volume. It is an amazingly sensitive habitat. Herb Dengler said that he “would like to see a firmer protection as was contemplated originally”

Conservation And Wildlife

The white tail kite, a fully protected California species, also lives here being a riparian habitat and they feed from and around the frog pond. They are non nomadic and mate for life. It is also the habitat for volumes of western bluebirds. All of this land comprises the sanctuary, not just the pond itself. The watering hole in Africa is not the water in the hole. It is the life surrounding it and with the Corte Madera fence as such an obstacles for so many of the animals the open space here becomes more critical habitat for them. During wet winter months many frogs cross the open space, Alpine Rd. and Indian Crossing. The Conservation Element of the General Plan has too many relevant objectives and principals to quote here, but since I am focusing on wildlife., the entire section Objective 4210 is relevant

1. To ensure that in the design and construction of public and private developments, the habitat of all wildlife will be protected to the maximum extent feasible..
 2. To maintain and to protect creek corridors for wildlife who use this resource for food, shelter, migration and breeding.
 3. To protect large and small natural systems for the purpose of supporting wildlife.
- Principles 4214
2. All subdivision and site development proposals should be reviewed to ensure that they do not obstruct wildlife access to important water, food and breeding areas
 4. Protect lands and habitat that support endangered or protected species wherever possible and consistent with state and federal requirements. (previously in the introduction section And to close this section on Regulation that “development projects are always considered in the context of conservation of the environment. ‘We would see this land being left unimproved other than spring mowing of Harding grass and any necessary wildfire mitigations, because of its habitat value. The cost to the town dedicating this open space would be negligible. Traditionally neighbors have tended to it.

The Housing Element.

The town has made remarkable progress with housing and has currently exceeded its own expectations. To counterbalance the building which will happen as result of the ADUs, it would be timely for the town to balance the construction and resources used to dedicate this open space parcel.

The Historic Element

This land as mentioned earlier, is adjacent to the Willowbrook farm road trail. Additionally all along Alpine are the historic walls and gates to the Herbert law estate. A visit to this land and trails is also an informative one.

The Circulation Element

This land has the ability for lots of movement for local residents in a regionally beautiful environment to connect to the western hills. The trails here are people movers not only for recreation, but to connect to Willowbrook and the school.

Scenic Roads and Highways Element The Alpine Scenic Corridor Plan

As you cross 280 and move toward the hills, the road climbs gently, past the school, signs say, "road narrows ahead." You reach the Corte Madera stop sign and exhale. You have arrived. This is the final gateway to the open space and the wild. I urge you to please read the Alpine Corridor plan, because it would be pointless to quote the entire section here. <https://www.portolavalley.net/home/showdocument?id=5974> The views of Windy Hill over the frog pond are iconic, widely painted and photographed.

3312 The policy of the Town of PV has always been to maintain a tranquil, rural atmosphere, and to preserve a maximum of green open space. Martin Litton discusses each section of Alpine Rd. in the Alpine Parkway letter dated March 15 1970 and beyond Corte Madera Rd. He says that "development of the town mountainside back country should be prevented. No element of the town government should act to encourage ANY developments except protective ones".

The Noise Element

When the pond is full there is the magical ability for sound to carry across it and be amplified. The land is bowl shaped. The frogs are very sensitive to noise and it is extremely important that it stay quiet. When you sit on the bench on winter nights you must whisper so as not to alert the frogs that you are there listening. This land is active at night and reminds me of nights in Africa with the wailing and crying, hooting and baying of animals. They are feeding, mating and birthing on this land.

This open space is small, unimproved, wild, dark, contiguous to thousands of acres of open space, has active, connective trails, is a neighborhood park, has one of the iconic regional views of the peninsula and we want you to dedicate it for the frogs, inarticulate invertebrates because if Herb Dengler were here, he would protect it for them and for all human generations to come. Herb said regarding the frog pond, "These are the kind of places where speciation takes place." Speaking before the school board on June 13, 1983 Herb described the frog pond as a unique- whole ecosystem and challenged, "do we have the right to tamper with this?" Let the children of CM school look up to Windy Hill across an acre of lovingly stewarded wildflowers, a modest sit bench to enjoy the frogs and families of fox. This is who we are.

Danna Breen