

Town of Portola Valley
Trails and Paths Committee
Minutes—Special Field Meeting
Wednesday, March 27, 2019

1.) Call to Order @ 10:05am

2.) Roll Call: J. Coleman, A. Doherty, E. Ferrari, S. Gold, G. Hanning, J. Shefren.
H. Young, S. Weber, Public Works, C. Sander, Portola Valley Ranch.

The purpose of this meeting was to view the signage sites proposed by Portola Valley Ranch at these entrances to the Portola Valley Ranch Trails.

Below are the following access points and some comments specific to each one:

1.) the Alpine entrance, opposite Willowbrook.

The largest sign is proposed at this location. Concerns included the size of the sign — most felt it was too large— and the fact that it might look too modern and thus not be in keeping with the rustic and rural aesthetic of the Town.

Most agreed that paper maps in this spot would be a good idea.

2.) the junction of Alpine Trail and Toyon Trail

Two signs are proposed here, one for Toyon Trail and the other for Old Spanish. It was felt that since the entrances are so close together that one sign could suffice. It was also noted that in addition to the small plaque on the post indicating usage there was one larger No Dogs sign on the same post, another separate No Dogs sign on another post as well as a large structure impeding bicycle usage, all within sight of the entrance.

3.) the junction of Alpine Trail and Old Spanish Trail

Some members felt that there could be some confusion here since there are two standard signage plaques, one for Alpine Trail, which allows dogs, and the one for Old Spanish which prohibits them — the feeling was that the arrow allowing dogs on Alpine Trail was slightly angled toward Old Spanish.

However, it was also noted that within sight of the trailhead were two No Dogs signs, both situated on the same post.

4.) the entrance at the top of Coal Mine Ridge

Many felt that signage much earlier would be a better option, at the entrance to the trail at Blue Oaks because by the time a trail user arrives at this point it seems too late to restate the rules. There was also a mention of “why is this part of the system a nature preserve when the Blue Oaks part is not” and concern about the sort of message that would send.

Further general discussion about the proposal included:

1.) signage placement and design.

2.) the amount/purpose of signage and its impact on a rural environment

3.) the precedents that this signage and nomenclature might set for other

trails/neighborhoods

4.) the potential for vandalism

5.) signage maintenance/upkeep responsibility

6.) who would pay for the signs

7.) whether increased signage would mean increased adherence to the rules

8.) how to quantitatively measure if the signage is having the desired effect

9.) the process through which this trails system would be called the Portola Valley Ranch Nature Preserve

10.) the concern that users might not readily associate the term “nature preserve” with a dog prohibition since many trails in neighboring MROSD, which uses the term “preserve” for their properties, allow dogs on certain trails.

11.) the mention of “open daily from sunrise to sunset” and if this conforms to Town codes.

The concern was repeatedly expressed that there are already many signs in place which state trail regulations.

S. Weber who spends a fair amount of time working on this group of trails mentioned that he does not see much misuse of the trails.

Many of the Committee members agreed with his assessment but also felt that a quantitative accounting of offenses was important.

H. Young stressed that all information on the signs would have to conform with Town Codes and Ordinances.

C. Sander explained that the Ranch is noticing many violations of the permitted trail rules.

The reasoning behind the new signage is the hope that explaining that these trails are more than just trails but part of a dedicated Nature Preserve — will inform and educate and instill an appreciation in users and hopefully make them more compliant with the rules and regulations.

On some of the larger signs there would be additional information on history and background along with seasonal particulars on wildflowers, other plants and animals that might be present on the trails.

The idea behind the new signage is to educate, inform trail users and to make them feel welcome.

There would also be printed maps to take with.

We look forward to working with the Ranch and Craig will attend the next Trails Committee meeting with some revisions to this original proposal.

(G. Hanning pointed out the Ranch’s proposed signage project is their in-house effort and is separate from the Trails Committee’s discussions about improving signage.)

H. Young explained that the approval process path will involve other Committees and Commissions and entities.

We appreciate being part of this early stage of the process.

Meeting Adjourned: 11:45 pm

