

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Breen called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Center Historic Schoolhouse Meeting Room, 765 Portola Road.

Planning & Building Director Laura Russell called roll:

Present: ASCC: Al Sill and Jane Wilson; Vice Chair Dave Ross, Chair Danna Breen
Absent: Commissioner Megan Koch
Planning Commission Liaison: Anne Kopf-Sill
Town Council Liaison: Maryann Derwin
Town Staff: Planning & Building Director Laura Russell, Public Works Director Howard Young

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

(1) Proposed Traffic Safety Improvements by the Town of Portola Valley

Public Works Director Howard Young described the background of the project. He introduced Paul Krupka, the Town Traffic Engineer Consultant. Craig Hughes, Council Liaison to the Bicycle, Pedestrian & Traffic Safety Committee, and Ed Holland, Chair of the Bicycle, Pedestrian & Traffic Safety Committee were also present.

Mr. Krupka described his background being in the transportation engineering business for 40 years, conducting a variety of large and small studies throughout the Bay Area. He has been the sole proprietor of Krupka Engineering for 10 years. He said working with Public Works Director Young has been a good experience. He said the ASCC is integral to the Town Government and character and said it is very appropriate to have this conversation.

Mr. Krupka explained he was hired to conduct a professional engineering review of pedestrian safety conditions at school areas, the major corridor streets of Alpine and Portola Road, and Los Trancos, the feeder street. He was tasked with identifying issues and opportunities from his own perspective and experience to define conceptual improvements and planning level costs, reviewing with the community through the Bicycle, Pedestrian & Traffic Safety Committee and the Town Council, and then prepare a report providing Public Works Director Young and the Town with a foundation for implementation.

Mr. Krupka led the presentation describing the project, the report, and Caltrans standard design templates, as detailed in the staff report. Staff recommended the ASCC consider staff's presentation, review the use of Caltrans standard design templates, provide input where variations are allowed, and accept use of standard templates.

Chair Breen invited questions from the Commission.

Commissioner Sill asked for clarification regarding the available options. Mr. Krupka said the arena of traffic control devices has established a fairly limited corral of improvements that one can choose from. He said the variations possible at a particular location have to do with optional sign panels. For instance, the Westridge intersection is a crosswalk, and they want to enhance it to make it more visible, adding advance signage. Mr. Krupka said the standards allow the engineer to exercise some judgement regarding options such as a "crosswalk ahead" sign, similar to what you see coming around the corner to Alpine and Golden Oak west headed toward Portola. Mr. Krupka said the other possible variation is the sign size. He said they would typically use a very consistent size already in use.

Vice Chair Ross said the discussion is about the balance between something that disrupts a driver's pattern of behavior and a noticeable sign. He asked if there was research that showed that a more disruptive sign had better effect on driver behavior or if standardized signs that are seen thousands of times go unnoticed. He said a lot of drivers on Portola and Alpine are likely regulars on those roads. He said he knows the signs well enough that he now ignores them, and he doesn't know if that's a good or bad thing. He said he understands that the signs are trying to influence driver behavior, but asked if the signs were more for drivers new to the area that do not know there is a crosswalk around the corner or drivers that drive the road daily, speed daily, and know very well there is a crosswalk there, but have gotten used to driving fast. He said he was curious about how all of that fed into the choices of colors, sizes, and placement.

Mr. Krupka said the research is voluminous by State committees focusing solely on traffic control devices, studies of data relative to collisions and behavior, and empirical studies about standards and guidance at federal and state levels. He said the essence of that is not about trying to disrupt, but to try to make sure there is adequate and sufficient information given to the driver to provide a uniform message.

Mr. Krupka said these signs are for both routine users and those new to the area. He said there is ample evidence of local drivers not paying attention and violating laws. He said the signs are just one more tool to complement the existing regulatory structure to give the user a visual cue regarding speed. He said local, regional, and state organizations have studied behavior and do before and after studies of speed and driver awareness, samples, and surveys to evaluate the efficacy of the particular improvement of different sign types.

Vice Chair Ross said the rapid flasher signs are sometimes unreliable. He said the one at Ladera is frequently triggered by something unknown. He asked about the maintenance dealing with adjustments and dealing with issues where they don't work properly or work too often. Mr. Krupka said Public Works Director Young has had discussions with County staff about the installation at Ladera and has had an opportunity to learn from their experience. He said generally speaking, like anything, maintenance and upkeep is important. He said the electronic mechanisms and circuitry are proven in pedestrian and traffic signals across the country. Vice Chair Ross said people are accustomed to the one at Alpine flashing even though there is no pedestrian so they just drive through it anyway.

In response to Vice Chair Ross's question, Mr. Krupka said the speed feedback signs would be for inbound traffic.

Vice Chair Ross said he assumed the thinking that goes into the balance between pavement markings and signs was covered extensively in the studies and discussions. He said it appeared the focus of the results is pretty much on signage. He asked if there was any discussion about

any other more profound pavement markings, such as in Europe where they actually make the shoulders wider causing people to slow down in the resulting narrowed roadway. Mr. Krupka said the intent here was to identify issues and find solutions based on the stated issues. He said the absence of a lot of citations indicates that speed is not a major issue, and the major focus was on the visibility of crosswalks and pedestrians. He said choking down roadways was not considered. He said the edge conditions at Portola and Brookside need to be looked at. He said at that location people going southbound try to move off to the right and drive on the shoulder to pass cars waiting to turn left, and they are looking at ways to improve that situation. He said they've interacted along the way with the Sheriff's Department in terms of understanding their resources and enforcement routines.

Chair Breen asked about the solar-operating lights that need to be plugged in. Public Works Director Young said there is AC at the Priory, and the other crosswalks would require permitting through PG&E to provide power. Mr. Krupka said the manufacturer representatives will conduct solar studies to determine if the locations are well-suited for solar to maintain the battery system. He said the matter of providing electrical service is routine.

Chair Breen asked if the study looked at any redundancy or obsolescence of signage in Portola Valley. For example the crosswalks at Westridge go nowhere, and at Alpine and Portola there is a crosswalk that dead-ends into steep dirt. She suggested eliminating crosswalks to nowhere and the signs that say "no parking on this side." She hopes that is part of this comprehensive plan so Portola Valley does not end up like Ladera where you drive in and there is chaotic signage. She said she wants Portola Valley to customize each situation rather than using templates.

With no further questions, Chair Breen invited public comment. She pointed out that the ASCC's purview is the aesthetics of signage only.

Jon Silver, 355 Portola Road. Mr. Silver thanked staff, the consultant, and the Commission. He said he trusted them to do the best thing. Mr. Silver said sometimes less is more. He said he happened to be driving in Palo Alto about 7:00 last night and noticed, amidst a sea of lights, a bicycle light moving slow. He said had the cyclist been riding in Portola Valley, he would have seen her easily. He said he hates when he's driving into town, and he sees a van that says, "Drive Carefully. It's Christmas," because he finds himself reading the sign instead of paying attention to the road. He said you don't want people to drift off while reading signs with a lot of words. He also noted that he can't remember seeing anyone ticketed for blowing through a crosswalk with someone trying to enter it, which should be enforced by the police.

Jose Iglesias, 311 Portola Road. He said this is a great study. He lives in the middle of the traffic intersection of Brookside, Portola Road, and the Priory access. He said every day, he witnesses this crosswalk situation unfold in the morning, noon, and evening, and knows the crossing guard well. He said he and the guard have had discussions about human behavior and how the traffic moves during prime time. He said traffic heading south on Portola wanting to turn left into Priory will get backed up. The traffic not wanting to wait for those turning left will drive around on the right shoulder. Public Works Director Young placed approximately 18" high boulders to deter that. He said every couple of weeks there are new scratches on the boulders. Mr. Iglesias said he did not think sidewalks would make a difference if the boulders aren't making a difference. He said when the traffic comes out of the Priory, wanting to turn right (north) onto Portola Road, the drivers will typically glance to the left and then gun it to turn right onto the existing and proposed sidewalks. The guard has said he's almost been run over by someone not looking his direction and instead looking for oncoming traffic. He said people turning left out of the school

are more cautious. Mr. Iglesias said he had previously proposed moving the crosswalk to a different location, out of the traffic, avoiding the Brookside traffic and the backup on Portola turning into the Priory. He said there is only about 5 feet between the proposed crosswalk and a resident's driveway which is not enough room for the kids to wait.

Jim Green, 130 Willowbrook. Mr. Green said at the intersection of Alpine Road and Willowbrook there are several trailheads. He said on a weekend with nice weather there are lots of cars. He said there is a parking area there that regularly overflows, and the extra cars park on Willowbrook. He said his house is the third house down on the right. He said he loves the hikers and the bicyclists and has no agenda other than there is a busy and dangerous intersection there. He shared photos indicating the visual aspects of the road from a driver's perspective, and showing how difficult it is to see bicyclists and pedestrians. He said if the red curb could be extended from 110 and 120 Willowbrook to also be in front of his house, cars could not park there, and he would be able to see cyclists coming down the hill. Chair Breen reminded the attendees that this was an ASCC meeting to discuss the aesthetics of the signage, and they cannot deal with traffic-related discussions, which should go to the Bicycle, Pedestrian & Traffic Safety Committee.

Caroline Vertongen, 100 Palmer Lane. Ms. Vertongen thanked Mr. Iglesias for his comments. She said she has attended and commented at all the meetings. She said she was disappointed to see no changes made. She said the flashing beacon does not fit in with the rural character of Portola Valley or the General Plan. She was supportive of the flag system and would like to see how that evolves. She said the signage lights have been broken for more than two years. She would also like to see the flag system at the Alpine Tennis Club. She said she doesn't see many people crossing there, and if a child stops there after school, people wait. She said she is available to volunteer as a monitor for a test of the flag system there. Ms. Vertongen said that after the August meeting there was discussion about a possible grant. She asked Public Works Director Young for an update on that grant. Public Works Director Young said the Town did not get the grant. Ms. Vertongen said she hoped the Town would also consider the cost of those beacons, especially if they are not effective.

With no further public comment, Chair Breen brought the item back to the Commission for discussion.

Commissioner Sill said a lot of good thought has gone into this issue. He said the recommendations make sense. He said updating the crosswalks and the proposed signage looks reasonable. He is not comfortable with the flashing beacons as being appropriate for Portola Valley, and his preference would be to go forward without the flashing beacons. He was supportive of using templates for sign consistency at each of the locations. He expressed concern about the eastern Golden Oak intersection where there is increasing vehicular and pedestrian traffic, down to Alpine Inn and the area around Arastradero.

Commissioner Wilson was supportive of using templates for sign consistency and said they should be consistent with the rest of California. She said she did not think there should be owl signs with flashing lights just because this is Portola Valley. She was slightly concerned about the speed beacons at the entrance/exit. She said if there are any flashing beacons, she would prefer them outside Windmill because people speed toward that junction and are unaware there is a school there. She said she liked Mr. Iglesias' suggestion about moving the crosswalk. She said if the flashing beacon is necessary, she would prefer the slimline post. She expressed concern with the Pelotons on Willowbrook and Portola that flash through the crosswalks.

Vice Chair Ross agreed that the Town is better off using the standard, recognizable set of signage. He is concerned about the visual fatigue of ignoring signs. He said there are many areas in town where the signs are extremely visible but don't keep residents from passing on Alpine Road. He said visitors in town tend to be more careful about following the rules and paying attention to signs. Vice Chair Ross said that residents, however, who are familiar with the roads, may drive down Alpine Road at 70 miles per hour, and a sign or a freshly painted crosswalk may not change that. He said new signs and crosswalks will be noticed for a while and then, as residents become accustomed to them, may be ignored. He suggested perhaps a budget to refresh the signs and markings more frequently as a visual reminder, but he understands the constraints. Vice Chair Ross said his personal experience as a pedestrian around town is that he picks spots that he feels are safe to cross regardless of if or how the street is marked. He said taking in the local, experiential information for guiding where a crosswalk is placed is a great idea. He preferred the green signs to the yellow-orange signs for school identification. He said he appreciated the background information that Mr. Krupka provided. He said Mr. Silver made an excellent point that when you see one sign in the wilderness, you will pay attention to it, versus seeing 20 signs near each other in the wilderness. Vice Chair Ross said there is value in keeping the quantity of signs to the minimum effective number. He was not keen on the rapid flashers idea. He said there are one or two locations where they may be important, such as in front of the Windmill School if there is overflow parking across the street or at particular times of day with a lot of people crossing the street. He said the intersections at west Golden Oak and the Alpine Hills Tennis Club have excellent visibility. Vice Chair Ross said he would not be opposed to speed feedback signs for traffic coming into town.

Chair Breen said she is the best traffic deterrent in town because she can hear them coming and is at a sharp bend, and she goes and stands in the middle of the curb. She said when the Porsche and Maserati are coming, they have no choice but to stop. She said she makes them roll down their window and says, "Let's have a chat." She said she appreciates the work of the Bicycle, Pedestrian & Traffic Safety Committee. She said she is a less-is-more person. She said she is uncomfortable with templates and thinks that each place can be customized. She said across from Alpine Hills Tennis Club and the Priory are very dangerous places. She said she can support the beacon more than the speed feedback signs. Chair Breen said the feedback signs are obnoxious, not helpful, and make her want to speed past them. She prefers the green sign over the yellow sign. She said anyone driving on Shawnee Pass is going to Ormandale School, but people going up and down Corte Madera are not necessarily going to Corte Madera School and don't need three signs indicating they are approaching the crosswalk. She said there is so much signage at Ladera, she can't even concentrate. Chair Breen said while signs are being added, the obsolete and redundant signs need to be removed – such as the "no parking" signs along Ford Field, which are only necessary in baseball season and everyone ignores them anyway.

Vice Chair Ross asked Chair Breen what specifically bothered her about the templates. Chair Breen said she agreed that the signs should be the universally used signs with regard to size, color, etc., but she was not supportive of using a "template" treatment for each crosswalk. She said the treatments should be customized for each situation. Vice Chair Ross agreed that in some instances there could be too much visual clutter for a crosswalk that is only used occasionally. He said since there are no stoplights in town, people are not as apt to stop at crosswalks as they do in more urban environments, so signs indicating where cars should stop would be more clutter than helpful. He said there may be other situations, however, where it is helpful to have more warning. Chair Breen agreed. Commissioner Wilson said Alpine Hills, Golden Oak, Windmill, and the Priory are the most dangerous.

Public Works Director Young asked the Commission if they were in agreement in their support of using the Caltrans standard sign templates. Chair Breen said she did support the standardized signs but did not think three signs are needed at all crosswalks in all situations.

Commissioner Sill said it is not clear what is and is not optional. He would suggest leaving out anything that is optional unless there is a particular reason it needs to be added.

Mr. Krupka said the Commission comments are helpful. He understood that the Commission is acceptive of the uniform signs, which are the templates. He said the guidance for sign placement is mostly standard. He said in all cases his intent as a designer is to use his professional judgment to provide sufficient signage for the visibility issues, not to create a proliferation of signs. He said he provides a very clear set of construction documents to guide the contractor at each location. Chair Breen asked if the ASCC would be able to review those documents. Mr. Krupka said he didn't think they would need to.

Vice Chair Ross agreed with Commissioner Sill's suggestion to leave out anything optional unless justified to solve a safety issue for sufficient but not an abundance of caution. He said ultimately this is more of a public safety issue than an aesthetic issue. He said if he were on the Bicycle, Pedestrian & Traffic Safety Committee he would want to review the documents to ensure that his efforts to research the safety issue were being adequately addressed. He said that as an ASCC member he doesn't have the depth of knowledge to rule on that.

Commissioner Sill said as long as it is clear that the ASCC feels less is more and desires as little signage as necessary to make it safe.

Chair Breen asked that unnecessary signs and crosswalks to nowhere be removed. Public Works Director Young said he will bring that up with the Town Manager and Council liaison about what can or cannot be done in that regard.

Planning & Building Director Russell asked for specific feedback on the rapid flashing beacons. The Commission concurred that the rapid flashing beacons do not fit in Portola Valley, although may be considered later if deemed necessary or required. The Commission, except for Chair Breen, was acceptive of the speed feedback signs for incoming traffic.

Public Works Director Young said he will take all the comments back to the Bicycle, Pedestrian & Traffic Safety Committee, the Town Manager, and the Council Liaison.

(2) **Architectural Review of an Amendment to an Approved Application for a Temporary Seasonal Tent at 3915 Alpine Road- Alpine Inn, File # PLN ARCH 0003-2020**

Chair Breen recused herself from this item because her son-in-law is a chef at the Alpine Inn.

Planning & Building Director Russell presented the application amendment for the temporary seasonal tent at the Alpine Inn, including the background, project description, discussion and findings, as detailed in the staff report. The applicant proposed this amendment upon learning that the tent they first considered is not available. Staff recommended the ASCC review the requested amendment.

Vice Chair Ross invited questions from the Commission.

In response to Commissioner Wilson's question, Planning & Building Director Russell said she removed January from the condition of approval so the 90-day condition is now February through April 2020. Commissioner Wilson said it seems cost ineffective putting it up for what may be as little as 30 days. The applicant said it appears it's going to be a dry winter, and they may take the tent down sooner because it's not inexpensive to rent.

Commissioner Sill said the original presentation was that the applicants were buying a custom tent, not renting a standard tent, which is completely different. The applicant said there was a lot of promising and bids from different companies. They learned that trying to build anything in the month of December is very difficult. He said they have not found a domestic company that does not use China to buy the tents, and the Corona virus has affected the ability to provide a custom tent. He said the tent company they got the bid from are fully closed and not producing anything. They found an option for the rental tent, and they are trying to do anything because they've lost a lot of time already. The applicants said they found this green tent and a black one that is available quickly, but all the others are white or clear, which would not be acceptable.

Vice Chair Ross invited the applicant to comment. The applicant said the newly-proposed tent is substantially smaller by 600 square feet although it is a bit taller. They said this rental option might also be a good opportunity to see if a tent will be a good idea at all.

Vice Chair Ross invited public comment. Hearing none, he brought the item back to the Commission for discussion.

Commissioner Sill said the important thing is there is agreement that the lights will be addressed, whether it's four months from today or four months from December. He said the tent doesn't need to be up after the end of April. He said he was happy they were just renting the tent so they can see how that works. He said long term, it will make a lot of sense to have some sort of tent structure there. He said he would guess they may find out they will want the height lowered. He was supportive of the proposal.

Commissioner Wilson agreed with Commissioner Sill's comments. She did not want to cause more delay for the applicants. She was supportive of the project.

Vice Chair Ross said the green color will be better than off white or tan. He agreed that the tent being a rental gives them a chance to see how it works. He was supportive to start the four-month lighting compliance condition to start today. Vice Chair Ross said that over the long-term, the time when the tent is up should be flexible and weather/calendar driven as long as the total is not more than 90 days. Vice Chair Ross was supportive of the project.

Commissioner Sill was not supportive of an open-ended timeframe for using the tent. He said he would feel better knowing that the tent would not be used after a certain date instead of just putting it up whenever the weather is bad.

Planning & Building Director Russell suggested changing Condition #2 to read "maximum of 90 total days from now until May 15." The Commission was in agreement with that.

The applicant pointed out that the cost to take the tent up and down is \$10,000, so it would not be used that way. They asked if they could be allowed to install the tent now or if they had to wait 15 days. Planning & Building Director Russell will research that possibility.

Commissioner Sill moved to approve the Amendment to the Approved Application for a

Temporary Seasonal Tent and the amended condition. Seconded by Commissioner Wilson; the motion carried 3-0.

COMMISSION, STAFF, COMMITTEE REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

(3) Commission Reports

Commissioner Wilson said that Chair Breen has not received a response to her requests to set up a meeting with Westridge.

Vice Chair Ross reviewed and approved a minor change of the language in a condition regarding lighting in a carport conversion to a garage at 8 Hawk View.

(4) Staff Report

Planning & Building Director Russell said the Priory Dining Hall is close to final. She said the lighting changes have been approved as were changes to the exterior materials on the second floor.

(5) News Digest: Planning Issues of the Day

Staff shared an article of interest with the Commissioners – “Bay Area megaprojects fail to deliver on big housing promises.”

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

(6) ASCC Meeting of January 27, 2020

Commissioner Wilson moved to approve the January 27, 2020, minutes as amended. Seconded by Vice Chair Ross, the motion passed 2-0-1 with Commissioner Sill voting present.

ADJOURNMENT [9:11 p.m.]