

PORTOLA VALLEY TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING NO. 1006, FEBRUARY 24, 2021

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Mayor Derwin called the Town Council's Special Teleconference-only meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Ms. Hanlon called the roll.

Present: Councilmembers Jeff Aalfs, John Richards, and Sarah Wernikoff; Vice Mayor Craig Hughes; Mayor Maryann Derwin.

Absent: None

Others: Jeremy Dennis, Town Manager
Cara Silver, Town Attorney
Howard Young, Public Works Director
Brandi de Garneau, Assistant to the Town Manager
Laura Russell, Planning & Building Director
Cindy Rodas, Finance Director
Sharon Hanlon, Town Clerk

Attendees: Kristi Corley
Betsy Morgenthaler
Bob Turcott
David Cardinal
Lorrie Duval
Rita Comes
Rusty Day
Vic Schachter
Caroline Vertongen
G. Kohs

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Betsy Morgenthaler said she attended the Planning Commission meeting last week, at which time Town Manager Dennis reported that the General Plan Update would be postponed. She said she has attended the vast majority of Town Council meetings for the last two years and has often heard staff and Council reference the importance of the General Plan, anticipating the public involvement, and the care with which information was being assembled to gear up for it. She said her understanding is that the Housing Element and Safety Element will be pulled out and prepared by staff alone. She said this was disappointing to hear and she hopes there is an opportunity to revisit that decision. She said the Town has gone 26 years with no resident update or inclusion to the General Plan, which she considers vital.

CONSENT AGENDA

- (1) **Approval of Minutes** – Town Council Regular Meeting of February 10, 2021.
- (2) **Approval of Warrant List** – February 24, 2021, in the amount of \$151,685.03.
- (3) **Appointments by Mayor** – Two (2) Members to the Cultural Arts Committee

Mayor Derwin invited public comment on Consent Agenda items. Hearing none, Mayor Derwin invited comments by the Council. There were none.

Councilmember Aalfs moved to approve Consent Agenda. Seconded by Councilmember Richards, the motion carried 5-0, by roll call vote.

REGULAR AGENDA

(4) STUDY SESSION – Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Council Priorities Study Session

Town Manager Dennis was joined by the management team of Planning & Building Director Laura Russell, Assistant to the Town Manager Brandi de Garreaux, Public Works Director Howard Young, Finance Director Cindy Rodas, and Town Clerk Sharon Hanlon.

Town Manager Dennis presented the first of what will be at least two FY 2021-22 Council Priority study sessions, a process employed to assist in the development of the annual budget. He described the background of the Council Priority process; discussion items including Wildfire/Emergency Preparedness, Service Delivery, Land Use Projects and Programs, and Established programming; and a summary of the Committee/Commission requests, as detailed in the staff report.

Mayor Derwin invited questions from the Council.

Councilmember Wernikoff asked regarding next steps and how this information is used. Town Manager Dennis explained that information collected tonight will provide foundation and contours of what the Town's budget will look like. He said the budget is small and changes may occur based on the Council Priorities around capital projects, how positions are deployed, and other areas. He said there are also certain expenditures necessary for day-to-day operations. He said this study session helps staff understand and focus on how they will be spending their time. He said it is the foundation to the budget and influences major portions of it.

Councilmember Wernikoff asked if a guiding document is produced listing the 20/21 goals, which is then reflected on at the end of the year. Town Manager Dennis said under normal circumstances staff would currently be reporting on how the Town has been doing as far as progress on projects related to this year's priorities, but due to the severe COVID disruption that usual procedure was not adopted. He said as part of the budget documents, there will be a page listing all of the priorities with a narrative describing why they are important, the plan, and projects that will be undertaken under each priority.

With no further questions from the Council, Mayor Derwin invited public comment and questions.

Kristi Corley said the Wildfire Preparedness Committee's final recommendations were adopted by the Council on December 11, 2019. She said there were 16 short-term recommendations to be done in 2020 and 11 medium-term for 2021. She asked regarding the status of those recommendations. Town Manager Dennis said the Council receives quarterly updates on the status of the recommendations with the last one received a month ago. He said in lieu of taking too much time tonight, he will send Ms. Corley the staff report from that meeting and invited her to reach out to him if she had more questions.

Ms. Corley asked regarding the two staff positions to be filled. Town Manager Dennis said the two positions referenced were approved in previous budgets but have not yet been filled.

Caroline Vertongen said they have not heard back from all the Committees regarding their priorities and asked for an update. Town Manager Dennis said the committees were all invited to the January 27 meeting and a few were unable to attend. He said staff is engaging with them now and they will present additional information to the Council which will be brought to the April meeting.

Ms. Vertongen said the report indicates the public is asking for more services and asked what is being asked for other than what was already promised. She said she's lived there 26 years and she does not

see any additional services. Town Manager Dennis said additional activities are performed by staff derived from State mandates, Council direction, or Town Manager direction. He said in the last five years that he can speak to, there has been an increase in the overall number of initiatives that staff is required to manage and perform. He said the second component, particularly in the last couple of years, is the wonderful increase in public participation in meetings. He said the increased resident participation is fantastic and getting more people involved is the holy grail of government. He said the result, however, has required more staff time in a variety of questions and engagement. The Town has also seen an increase in the number of permits received in Planning and Building. He said the Town's communication efforts have greatly increased and there is now a member of staff dedicated to it.

Mayor Derwin said she has been in Portola Valley for 16 years and this is her fourth time as Mayor. She said she has seen exponentially more work this year, almost undoable. She said the staff is completely stretched and she discusses hiring more staff with Town Manager Dennis weekly. She said they are asked to do more and more work with no increase in staffing. She said it is a different world now than even a couple of years ago.

Ms. Vertongen suggested that perhaps staff and Councilmembers spend too much time going to meetings that are for the greater community but don't necessarily help the Town residents. She said there are so many government entities that the Town did not previously participate in. Mayor Derwin said that is absolutely not true and asked if Ms. Vertongen had a question. Ms. Vertongen asked if it is the Town or the other entities that are creating more work. Mayor Derwin said it is the Town.

Rusty Day said he is gratified to see wildfire hazard and risk being tackled in the priorities and that the Town will update the General Plan, particularly the Safety Element to address the State mandate as well as the Federal mandate for the hazard mitigation plan for FEMA funding. He said both are extremely important processes. He said one is being run by San Mateo County and the other will be run by the Town because it is the Town's General Plan. He reiterated Ms. Morgenthaler's question asking what the process will be for updating the General Plan Safety Element, what steps are being taken to include residents and citizens in that process, what professionals are being engaged, and what the budget is for that. He said insofar as the work is being prioritized for wildfire safety, he did not see in the list anything about pursuing public and private funding and particularly grant funding. He said there are many opportunities for Portola Valley to expand the funding and resources available to the community to address and deal with these issues. He said he does not see a concerted effort to exploit and develop those opportunities and asked what is being done on that front.

Town Manager Dennis said it is early to discuss the scope, cost, etc., other than to say that, as with all of the Town processes, it will be transparent and inclusive and will include experts in their field to help with the development of the Safety Element.

Town Manager Dennis said the Town does not typically specifically include pursuing grants in the list of priorities because it is a regular activity with staff always spending a considerable amount of time looking for and applying for grants. He said it is a huge effort that, unfortunately, particularly for smaller cities, doesn't always come through. He said in the last year alone they received two grants associated with the Housing Element update, one associated with other land use updates, and one from the County affiliated with the pedestrian safety work. He said they also partner with other agencies in applying for grants related to wildfire work. He said the Town is constantly looking for grant opportunities and applying for those that will be of benefit to the Town. Mayor Derwin added that there are two new climate resiliency bills, both for sea level rise and wildfire preparation. She said this Town will go after any money they can go after. Town Manager Dennis said just today staff discussed a grant opportunity related to replacement of older fleet vehicles.

With no other questions from the public, Mayor Derwin brought the item back to the Council for discussion.

Councilmember Richards said sometimes it is easy to start thinking about projects instead of the bigger buckets and goals. He suggested focusing on the goals. He was supportive of the priority list as presented. He said it is a great start and the overall areas coordinate well with the committee requests.

Councilmember Aalfs agreed the list included the important items and they are in the right order. He said he doesn't see anything extraneous on the list or anything missing.

Councilmember Wernikoff suggested including the work on the budget system and reporting under Service Delivery. She said she understands that staff is just getting up and running with OpenGov and the subcommittee is working on it, but there is a lot of opportunity for improvement there and it should be prioritized. Town Manager Dennis agreed. He said this year is about implementing the new system, which takes a while and they are hopeful that next year will be about using the system as robustly as possible. He said this will reduce staff time and administrative tasks, focusing the Finance Director's strategic thinking and forecasting into the future, open up the transparency tools, and open up the ability for the staff to do typical reporting on both budget and financial issues back to the Council over the course of the year on a regular basis. Councilmember Wernikoff said that everything else on the list looked good.

Vice-Mayor Hughes said the list looks good. He said the Conservation Committee has consistently provided a list of improvements they'd like to see which always includes cleaning up some of the big open space properties. He said bits and pieces have been done in the last couple of budget cycles but suggested it may need more work to integrate the Conservation Committee's plan with staff's plan for what will be done. He doesn't want to see too many of those items being kicked too far down the road because it is harder to recover the longer they are put off. He asked if it might deserve its own mention on the priorities list or if staff had already considered that. Town Manager Dennis said the intention under 4.a. was to acknowledge the Council's strong support in the last meeting for a robust resource allocation for the open space. He said as the priorities are refined based on feedback received tonight, the final list may not even take on this form or structure. He said if it helps from a symbolic perspective, they can pull it out and make it separate in its own bucket, but it has always been staff's intention to bring back a budget package that funds as much as possible. Vice-Mayor Hughes said his thoughts are not just about this year's budget but more around figuring out an action plan based on the recommendations and requests from the Conservation Committee that calendars out however long is necessary to complete the tasks. Town Manager Dennis said it was discussed a couple of years ago whether or not the Town should bring on a consultant to help put that plan together, working directly with the Conservation Committee, resulting in a product to be used by staff and the consultants to manage the properties. He said the Town is fortunate to have had great experiences with firms such as Grass Roots Ecology, Go Native, and others that complement one another.

Councilmember Richards said he was glad to see 4.a. in the list and agreed it makes sense to focus on it. He said he assumes 4.b. Communications, included community outreach and efforts to make things as transparent as possible. He said there is a lot that could be included in the broad category listings. Town Manager Dennis said staff decided not to overload the list with details that felt like projects, keeping it at a higher level and to help keep the conversation more broad. Town Manager Dennis said a whole host of activity is included within Communications. He said staff has greatly increased the types and quality of communication the Town puts out and they expect to see more of the traditional one-way communication but the two-way communication has not been done as much. He said as the website update rolls out, staff will better learn about how people interact with it.

Town Manager Dennis said specific endeavors or projects the Council is looking to ensure are funded and supported should be part of this conversation.

Mayor Derwin asked if the looming insurance crisis will be included under the Wildfire category. She asked if staff is staying in touch with the Insurance Commissioner and advising what is happening with resident policies not being renewed. Town Manager Dennis said he engaged two days ago with the Deputy Insurance Commissioner. Town Manager Dennis said the Wildfire Preparedness Committee will continue to meet and refine the proposals brought to Council last December, bringing a suite of second-round recommendations. He said there is ongoing discussion about which items should be Town-based and which should be Fire District-based. He said insurance is explicitly in the committee's charge and they will be looking at opportunities there, including conversations with the Department of Insurance and Insurance Commissioners, directly with insurers, etc. Town Manager Dennis said the Emergency Preparedness Committee also continues to meet and bring other non-fire-related components to the table, such as virtual EOC, coordination with the new CERPP structure, etc.

Councilmember Aalfs suggested a general look at when, how, and if live meetings and events will occur, and when people will feel comfortable about being face-to-face again. Town Manager Dennis said he would like to have a specific conversation with the Council around some of these issues this spring. He said the next month may be the most critical in COVID for a while as more people get vaccinated and more is learned about the various variants, which will dictate a lot of what is possible in the medium term. He said they can work more robustly with some of the committees for more ideas. Councilmember Aalfs suggested it may be added as bullet point (2.e.) under Service Delivery. Town Manager Dennis said that 2.a. is a broad title that was intended to cover day-to-day operations as well as the live events and meetings Councilmember Aalfs mentioned.

Mayor Derwin asked if an evacuation plan and drill will be included in the Wildfire/Emergency Preparedness. Town Manager Dennis said 1.b. and 1.c. will include that.

Councilmember Wernikoff shared that the Creative Arts Committee has assumed no summer concert series other than potentially just one, perhaps in September, with PV Palooza being postponed until things are fully in the clear. Councilmember Aalfs said he was thinking just generally about things such as the Concert Summer Series, Zots to Tots, the Town Picnic, Nature and Science events, how to get back to face-to-face things. Town Manager Dennis said there has not yet been significant engagement with the committee chairs but they anticipate that as things return to a new normal there is a real pent-up energy to do a variety of things. He said he expects that as things loosen up, all committees will want to do their events, possibly around the same time. He said from a management perspective they've thought about having one big event combining the best of all of the events into something spectacular.

Mayor Derwin agrees with Vice-Mayor Hughes that the recommendations from the Conservation Committee be prioritized and she liked the idea of a workplan. She asked if the Green Building Ordinance and Reach Codes would fall under Sustainability. Town Manager Dennis said it would but the hope is that the Green Building Ordinance will be adopted this year. He said Sustainability would include, for example, the Climate Action Plan, which is a huge undertaking.

Town Manager Dennis said they appreciate the feedback and have a good sense of the high-level areas the Council wishes to focus on based on staff's draft. He said staff will bring this back to the Council more fully-formed in April after having consulted with the committees to ensure they are represented accurately.

Betsy Morgenthaler suggested that as this is rewritten for the April meeting there should be some indication and measure of what constitutes success in meeting targets.

(5) **Recommendation by Town Manager** – Extension of Local Emergency Declaration in Response to Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Town Manager Dennis presented the proposal to extend the local emergency declaration in response to COVID-19, as detailed in the staff report. Staff recommended the Town Council extend the Town's Local Emergency Declaration for another 96 days, thus expiring on June 1, 2021, and amend the Council subcommittees' membership.

Staff also recommended the following amendments to the makeup of the Council subcommittees, to reflect the election of Councilmember Wernikoff, the retirement of Councilmember Wengert, and the annual appointment of a new mayor: 1. Local Emergency Order support – Mayor Derwin and Vice Mayor Hughes; 2. Fiscal Matters – Councilmembers Hughes and Wernikoff; 3. Reactivating Full Town Service Delivery – Councilmember Aalfs and Richards.

Mayor Derwin invited questions from the Council. Hearing none, Mayor Derwin invited questions from the public. Hearing none, Mayor Derwin brought the item back to the Council.

Councilmember Aalfs moved to approve the Extension of Local Emergency Declaration in Response to Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the Subcommittees membership as amended. Seconded by Vice-Mayor Hughes, the motion carried 5-0, by roll call vote.

(6) **COUNCIL LIAISON COMMITTEE AND REGIONAL AGENCIES REPORTS**

Councilmember Aalfs – Attended a meeting with some of the big field users (Little League, soccer, tennis, pickleball, etc.) to discuss where things stand this year overall. Attended the Nature and Science Committee meeting. Yvonne Tryce is the new Chair, assisted by Bonnie Crater. They have restarted a Town speaker series, rescheduling the postponed an event with Roger Romani, an astrophysicist at Stanford, to discuss black holes. They will be lining up additional speakers in Zoom meetings.

Councilmember Wernikoff – Attended the Cultural Arts meeting where they discussed interest to hold another youth photo exhibit which may be able to be executed in a COVID-safe way. John Badger is the new Chair.

Councilmember Richards – Attended a Planning Commission meeting where they discussed upcoming projects. Attended a Conservation Committee meeting with two new members, where they discussed rodenticides and the broom pull. He and Mayor Derwin attended a meeting with a union rep for workers at the Sequoias where they discussed their upcoming new contract.

Vice Mayor Hughes – Attended ASCC meeting where they approved a horse barn project.

Mayor Derwin – Attended C/CAG meeting where they saw presentations on the 101 Express Lanes project and San Mateo County Energy Watch. The Leg Committee discussed the housing initiatives, programs to support RHNA, and support for cities that do not get their Housing Elements in. They also had a discussion about updating the San Mateo County Comprehensive Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan which was last updated in 2011. There was a presentation by Matt Fabry regarding Sustainable Streets Master Plan. She asked Town Manager Dennis to reach out to Mr. Fabry to get the tracking tool he uses. Mayor Derwin attended an Express Lanes meeting regarding their equity study. Attended Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency District (FSLRR) meeting where they discussed adopting the resolution for the Bay Front Canal and Atherton Channel Project and the local Hazard Mitigation Plan. Attended a Resource Management Climate Protection Committee (RMCP) meeting where they saw two presentations – one regarding the affordability of electrification and the second addressing housing considering trends in reach codes and electrification. The Bay Area Water Supply & Conservation Agency (BAWSCA) provided a short report. She attended the Sustainability Committee meeting. She attended a Search Committee meeting for the ED at C/CAG and they decided to use the County HR person instead of hiring a private recruiter. She had a telephone conversation with two people from Cal Water and two consultants discussing the 2018 rate case which was finalized. The rates in this area will be decreased a bit. They

discussed the Smart Meters and Cal Water said Bear Gulch will get Smart Meters this year but it will take time to install the software and teach people how it works. She attended the virtual State of the Valley which she believes is one of the best conferences out there.

(7) **TOWN MANAGER REPORT** – Town Manager Dennis reported that he has been attending committee and commission meetings to discuss the small-scale donation program and is happy to say there have been universal positive comments on the program and he anticipates receiving a lot of ideas forthcoming. He has been attending a lot of meet and greets with new committee members. He said the Resource Conservation District of San Mateo County has expanded its sphere of influence to include Portola Valley and others west of Highway 280. He invited the Executive Director, Kellyx Nelson, to attend the second Council meeting in March to share what they do and the programming that might be available to the Town. The next Mayor’s Coffee will be scheduled for April. He shared a picture of Ford Field and an email sent to him, Public Works Director Young, and Maintenance Worker Justin Bixby by a resident Coach and Commissioner of the Little League: “Thank you so much for the effort you and your team have put into the field. It is in absolutely fantastic condition and I was fortunate to experience this with our Alpine Little League team this week. Ford is in the best condition since the reopening a few years ago. You can imagine how marvelous it felt to take the field in the beautiful weather and with the kids so excited after a year away from baseball. Thank you for your support and investment here. It is genuinely appreciated.” Town Manager Dennis offered a huge thank you the Public Works team, particularly Justine Bixby whose has this responsibility as Recreational Coordinator. He said he has been in town every day this week and it is a joy to drive by the facilities seeing more and more people out there.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

(8) **Town Council Digest** – February 11, 2021

#6 – Invitation to the February Council of Cities Meeting – Friday, February 26, 2021. City Selection Committee meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. Mayor Derwin will attend.

(9) **Town Council Digest** – February 18, 2021

None.

ADJOURNMENT [8:28 p.m.]

Mayor Derwin adjourned the meeting.

Mayor

Town Clerk