



TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY
Conservation Committee Meeting
May 25, 2021
7:00 PM
Special Videoconference Meeting via Zoom

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM

Roll Call:

Members present: N. Chiariello, T. Coleman, P. Heiple, C. Magill, J. Murphy, M. Plunder, M. Richards, D. Walz, J. Zimmerman

Also present: J. Richards (Town Councilmember liaison)

Guests: B. Morgenthaler; P. Dewes

1. Oral Communications:

- a. J. Murphy has spoken with Town Manager J. Dennis regarding the timing of resumption of in-person Committee meetings and was told all Town Committees should start holding in-person meetings as of a yet to be determined date. He suggested meetings may initially resume as “hybrids” with Committee members meeting in person and guests participating via Zoom.
- b. There will be a Town event on October 9, 2021. The Conservation Committee will need to have a table at this event (will be added to future agendas as an item)
- c. Y. Zimmerman reported a MROSC kick off meeting for the Hawthorns property was held within the last week and suggested this item be added to the agenda going forward. He stated the involvement of the Conservation Committee in this process was mentioned during the meeting and agreed to be the Committee representative to the Hawthorns meetings going forward. P. Heiple stated he was on the Citizen’s Advisory Committee when this project was initially kicked off and would like to also be involved (at least at the beginning) to provide consistency.

2. Approval of Minutes for April, 2021: The minutes were unanimously approved.

3. Site Permits

- a. 135 Portola Road – Fire station #8

J. Murphy stated the plans were approved by the ASCC largely as presented and will now go to the Planning Department for review. The Committee discussed and agreed to provide a rebuttal amended site visit report to Planning emphasizing the previously stated CC concerns regarding the proposed parking area within the scenic corridor, the number of parking spaces to be placed in the front of the building and subsequent removal of the large, thriving redwood tree in the front of the building. B. Morgenthaler also stated her concern and strong feelings regarding the proposed plans, particularly regarding the potential impact to the community. M. Richards stated the preservation of the large, established trees may be unrealistic given the number and placement of the proposed parking spaces. J. Murphy will draft the amendment to the site report.

b. 627 Westridge

P. Heiple stated the hard copy plans had just become available and he will be forming the subcommittee for the site visit.

c. 200 Goya

Revised plans were received; Y. Zimmerman and subcommittee reviewed.

4. Tree Permits

a. 330 Alamos

The residents have applied for a permit to remove a potentially dead or dying oak. D. Walz, J. Murphy and M. Richards will evaluate.

b. Ford Field redwoods

The Town asked the CC to look at the redwoods at Ford Field and make a recommendation as to which could be saved and which need removal. D. Walz, M. Richards and J. Murphy looked at the trees and recommended seven be removed.

c. Heritage Tree list

J. Murphy initiated a discussion of inclusion or exclusion of Douglas firs from the Heritage Tree list recently updated and approved by the Committee. Y. Zimmerman stated the Ranch is in favor of removing Douglas firs due to the fire hazard. M. Richards stated both Douglas firs and bay trees are natural replacements when oaks die and she does not favor removing them from the Heritage Tree list. M. Plunder stated the CC needs to look at the bigger picture and consider that flammable trees near to houses/structures should be allowed to be removed. N. Chiariello asked if it would be possible to add a definition that Douglas fir trees within the defensible space that present fire hazards do not require a permit for removal. J. Murphy agreed to add this language to the Heritage Tree list and to determine if the list needs to be resubmitted to the ASCC. J. Richards stated that several years ago the persons who purchased the Lauriston property removed several Douglas firs (without permits) and there were ramifications as the trees were on the Heritage Tree list. The committee approved the addition of the proposed language to the Heritage Tree list (vote: 7 for, 1 against).

5. Old Business

a. Oversight of significant Town-owned properties

i. Spring Down

J. Murphy stated the poppies have done well and are nearing the end of their blooming. Go Native is coming next week and will be asked to concentrate on removing thistles and euphorbia. M. Plunder asked if the Town can remove the dead branches inside the large willow tree (fire hazard). J. Murphy and T. Coleman trimmed and removed several dead or overgrown bushes, however a potential wood rat nest was observed so trimming of the dead bush surrounding it was not performed. D. Walz agreed to evaluate the nest to determine if it is active.

ii. Town Center

J. Murphy provided a video link to the garden tour that included the Town Center gardens. The Town is in the process of renovating their website (will probably go live by end of June); J. Murphy will ask K. Chinn to provide a link to the video from the CC page of the renovated website once it is live.

iii. Frog Pond

The Road Remnant was protected by Town Council on 28 April (Appendix A). Pledges made by community member for funds to support the work that needs to be done by Public Works have been activated. Public Works has mowed the field including the central area removing thistles and Harding grass. There will be another public volunteer day in advance of the next chipper day in September. N. Chiariello stated it would be a good time to bring in a frog biologist to assess the pros and cons of the Frog Pond proposals.

b. Committee/Town Cooperation

i. Public Works (J. Murphy) – no activity

ii. Trails and Paths (T. Coleman) – A summary of the recent meeting was provided to the Committee. No additional comments.

iii. Fire Ad Hoc

M. Plunder stated Jennifer Youstra has been studying fire mitigation in canyons. There is a report and video planned to help homeowners in canyons understand how to best do vegetation clearance. Maintaining of islands of understory for wildlife habitat when performing fire mitigation activities will be encouraged by the Fire Department (D. Bullard) going forward. J. Murphy suggested the creation of an understory subcommittee to help educate homeowners what lives in the underbrush, etc. and to create some sort of reference document for the community. M. Plunder agreed to head the subcommittee; N. Chiariello, D. Walz and M. Richards will also participate.

iv. Sustainability (J. Murphy)

v. Open Space

N. Chiariello stated the Committee had met. Ticien Sassoubre has joined the Committee and K. Corley has also expressed interest in joining. The revised brochure will be printed and mailed to residents in early July. An early idea the Committee is considering is to use funds from Open Space to support individuals with fees associated with conservation

easements. She also stated it is unknown how many conservation easements currently exist within the Town but it is likely to be about a dozen.

- c. Tip of the Month (C. Magill) – Clearing properties while leaving islands of habitat for nesting birds, etc.
- d. What's Blooming Now? (C. Magill) - Salvias
- e. Kudos (M. Richards) M. Plunder posted kudos for this month; M. Richards will post for next month (topic not decided)
- f. Predators/Rodenticides (N. Chiariello) (Appendix C) – no additional updates
- g. Evening Lecture – Suggested topic – How to properly perform fire prevention and mitigation
- h. CC email address – M. Plunder has obtained a generic email address for PV Forum CC postings

6. New Business:

- a. Dog Park proposal

Patty Dewes, Vice Chair for Parks and Recreation Committee presented two preliminary proposals for a dog park in Portola Valley located at the Town Center. M. Plunder responded with concerns about the proposed location of the dog park within the scenic corridor and also the proposed fence heights (5 to 6 feet) which exceeds the Town's 4 foot limit for front yards. N. Chiariello stated concern this is a General Plan issue and stated the Town Center is not a good location for a dog park. P. Heiple suggested Hawthorns might be a good place to consider for a dog park and this could be discussed with Mid Pen. He also mentioned the second proposed location south and close to the Old Schoolhouse is an established native grasses garden. Y. Zimmerman stated insurance issues as well as clean up and maintenance need to be considered (would the dog park require the addition of material such as bark?). M. Richards noted that both presented options will be located within the drip lines of the established oaks and if there is any push to also include turf in the project, it would be in conflict with the oaks. J. Murphy said there had been a great depth of discussion about inclusion of a dog park during the design of the Town Center renovation and the dog park did not make the cut. She suggested it might be possible to plan for a dog park on the Spring Down property in the future (possibly behind the house). She also stated the proposed locations are well established open park areas constantly used by Portola Valley residents. D. Walz expressed the proposed fencing (1 – 2 feet higher than allowed by current Town ordinance) will not work. He also pointed out the proposed option 2 not only is located within the drip line of the oaks but also incorporates (destroys) a Town native grass garden.

- b. CC buddy for larger (50 acres and up) parcels

The Fire Marshall has indicated that at this time, input to owners by the CC for properties of 50 acres or larger is not needed.

Adjournment: 8:55 PM

Date & Time of Next Meeting: June 22, 2021 at 7:00 pm via zoom

APPENDIX A

2850-2021 RESOLUTION NO. _____

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY DESIGNATING THE PORTION OF TOWN PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY KNOWN AS THE “ROAD REMNANT” FOR OPEN SPACE PURPOSES

WHEREAS, the Town of Portola Valley was founded on goals, as stated in the General Plan, “To preserve and enhance the natural features and open space of the planning area because they are unusual and valuable assets for the planning area, the Peninsula and the entire Bay Area”, and;

WHEREAS, opportunities to enhance the Town’s open space provide valued recreational opportunities, scenic open viewsheds, and wildlife environments, and;

WHEREAS, the road remnant and proposed open space purpose area is on Alpine Road at Corte Madera Road, as depicted on the attached location map and diagram, dated 4/19/2021 with an approximate area shown of 59,965 square feet (referred to as “Road Remnant”), and;

WHEREAS, the Road Remnant has been enjoyed as a place of contemplation and tranquility for many years, and;

WHEREAS, the adjacency of the Road Remnant to Frog Pond Open Space benefits the pond with complementary habitat where people can observe, listen to and appreciate a beloved fixture of the Town’s commitment to open space principles, and;

WHEREAS, on December 9, 2020, the Town Council, after considering a staff report on options for the Road Remnant, directed staff to prepare a resolution designating the Road Remnant for open space purposes, and;


WHEREAS, as the Town begins a comprehensive General Plan update, staff will provide the Town Council with recommendations related to the Road Remnant’s permanent zoning designation and status in the Trails and Paths and Open Space Elements, and;

WHEREAS, the Road Remnant and proposed open space purpose area is and remains an existing Town public right of way with all its continuing rights as dedicated, including but not limited to trails, transportation, and utilities, and;

WHEREAS, designating this portion of the right of way for open space purposes ensures a new level of stewardship of the identified area by the Town, as appropriate and needed

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Town of Portola Valley, California, that the Town of Portola Valley designates the property known as the "Road Remnant" for open space purposes.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 12th day of May 2021.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a stylized name.

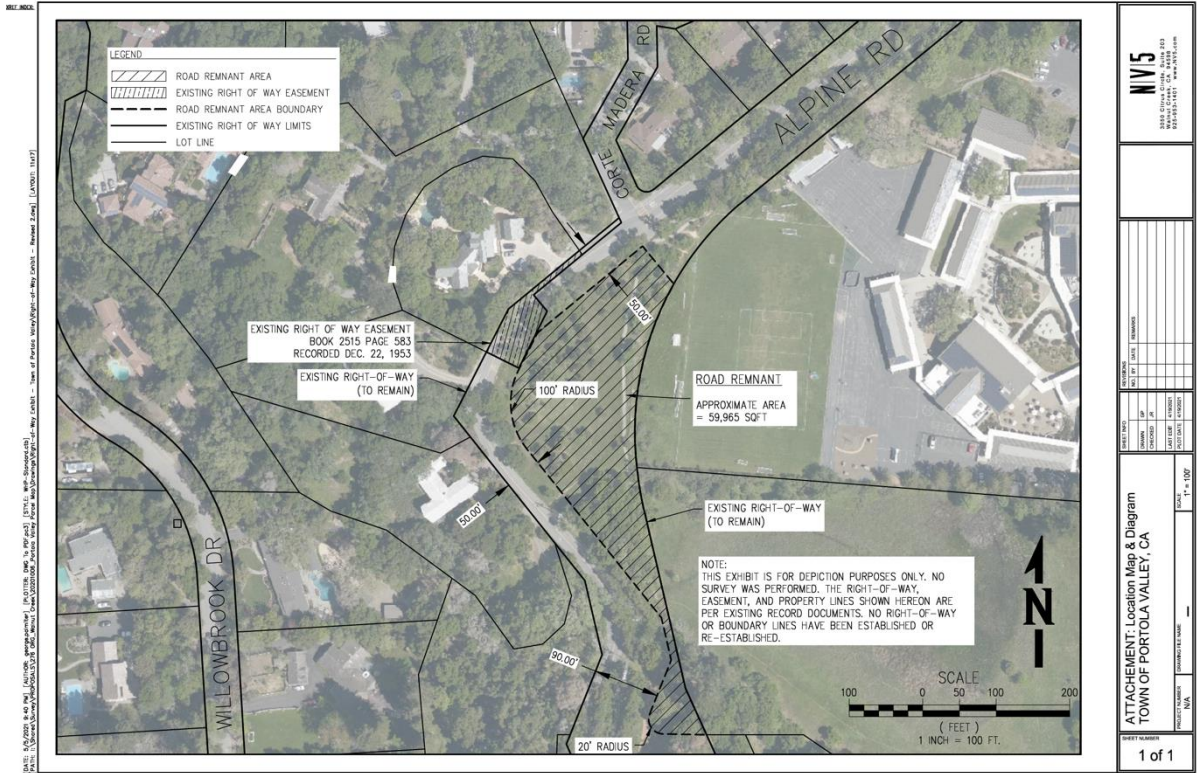
ATTEST:

Town Clerk

Mayor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a stylized name.

Conservation Committee Meeting Minutes
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APPENDIX B

Trails and Paths Committee Meeting Summary - May 18, 2021

Discussions of relevance to Conservation:

- 1). Sequoia Trail update: The Sequoias will be working with a town referred Ecological Consultant to develop a plan to replant sensitive areas along the trail. Specific replanting recommendations will largely be referred to the Conservation Committee for review and input.
- 2). Stanford Wedge project: A joint Trails and Paths and Conservation Committee meeting will be held once the draft Environmental Impact Report is received from Stanford. The meeting will also include L. Russell and J. Dennis.

APPENDIX C



TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

Conservation Committee subcommittee on rodenticides

Tuesday, May 18, 7:00pm

Videoconference meeting via Zoom

RODENTICIDE SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

1. **Present:** Nona Chiariello, Teresa Coleman, Jean Eastman, Paul Heiple, Marianne Plunder
2. Discussion:
 - a. **Marianne:** reported on her interview with Howard Young about the Town's experience with switching from rodenticide to trapping, including the increased cost (60% higher for trapping than rodenticide), seasonality, greater number of litters in irrigated areas than unirrigated, and overall stability of rodent population. We would like the Town website at some later date to add the story of the

transition to trapping and the results. We will continue to accumulate information and approach the Town Manager about assembling the story. Jean will be the keeper of the material that should be included in the narrative.

- b. **Teresa:** reported that she posted the first rodent control update (about not using bird feeders because they attract rodent pests) on PV Forum and received a reply of thanks from a resident who found it helpful and informative. Teresa also drafted our next rodent control update about plants that should not be removed from landscaping because, among other reasons, they are better for supporting bird populations than are bird feeders. Teresa sent the draft to Paul, and the next step is for Paul to populate the list of plants that should be mentioned; he'll do this in the next week. The theme is, "The garden is an alternative to rodenticide."

Teresa also reported that she asked around but was unable to obtain any information on the dead fox that Valerie Baldwin reported on at our last meeting.

- c. **Jean's** list of topics for PV Forum updates is great and will continue to provide ideas (list below is from a previous meeting). Two topics were discussed for the next PV Forum update: 1) raptors as rodent predators, and 2) a short guide to rodent traps (for rats and gophers, principally). The latter won out, and everyone will send input on wording about traps before our next meeting; the meeting will focus on reviewing all the inputs. Marianne and Teresa are in the lead. The goal should be to post this one in July.

- i. Effect of poisons on food chain. Include photos & statistics
- ii. Ways to repel gophers, moles and voles
- iii. Avoid leaving bird seed, rotting fruit, and pet food around. No bird feeders
- iv. Types of traps available
- v. Benefit of live predators: owls, gopher snakes, raptors
- vi. Precautions in disposing of droppings and dead animals
- vii. What to ask pest control companies before hiring. What chemicals to avoid
- viii. Local existing rodent control programs: Town Center, P.V. Ranch, The Sequoias
- ix. Danger to you, your children, and pets from rodenticides. What to watch for.
- x. Protecting trees from rodents
- xi. Use of habitat gardening and bird nesting boxes
- xii. Information resources

- d. **Nona:** reported that a rodenticide committee from another town had approached her about advice re Barn Owl nest boxes; she referred them to Arastradero Preserve where there is a very successful nest box. Nona's also signed up to automatically receive updates on state legislative activity regarding rodenticides.

3. Next subcommittee meeting: Tuesday, June 15 at 7:30pm. Nona will send a zoom invite. Note we have moved to a half hour later!