

**CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Chair Taylor called the Planning Commission special teleconference meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Planning & Building Director Russell called the roll.

Present: Planning Commissioners: Goulden, Hasko, and Targ; Vice Chair Kopf-Sill; Chair Taylor  
Absent: None.  
Town Staff: Laura Russell, Planning & Building Director; Dylan Parker, Assistant Planner; Cara Silver, Town Attorney

**ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

Caroline Vertongen announced that she had sent an email to the Commission and wanted to know if it was shared among the Commission members. She said that the email raised several concerns residents have regarding California Water Service (Cal Water) and public safety. She advised the Commission to discuss water before any more housing is built.

Bob Turcott remarked that he never received confirmation from staff that they had received the verbatim transcript that he had sent in. He clarified that the high and very-high fire hazard severity zones combined covered 65 percent of the Portola Valley area. He noted that the canyon network in central Portola Valley represented a severe fire hazard. He acknowledged that the Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Ordinance has been sent to Town Council and he hoped that they will acknowledge how big the zones area. Planning & Building Director Russell confirmed she did receive the email and the transcript will be integrated into the minutes.

Rusty Day said that he heard there will be a joint meeting with the Planning Commission and ASCC on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021 to review story poles for the Stanford Wedge project. He requested the Commission confirm that there will be a meeting and what steps will be taken to solicited public comment before the two groups discuss the item.

Rita Comes indicated that Portola Valley Neighbors United (PVNU) had submitted a letter on June 15, 2021, and she asked if all the Commissioners received a copy of it. Chair Taylor answered yes.

Planning & Building Director Russell confirmed that there will be a joint meeting with the Planning Commission and the ASCC. The topics for discussion included the story poles, the staking plan, and a discussion on State Density Bonus Law. The meeting will be open to the public and the public is welcome to provide comments.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

- (1) **Review of a Proposal to Expand the Existing Fire Station including an Amendment to the Municipal Code to Allow Fire Stations within the R-1 Zoning Districts, a Conditional Use Permit Amendment, and Architectural and Site Development Review, 135 Portola Road, Woodside Fire Protection District Station #8, File # PLN ZONA01-2021, CUP XD7-5, & PLN ARCH22-2019**

Assistant Planner Parker gave an overview of the site, as outlined in the staff report. The site is noted in the General Plan as an institutional use as well as in the Nathorst Triangle Area Plan. He said the proposal is to expand to the fire station, both in floor are and in impervious surfaces. The project

conformed to all setbacks and the project proposed 18 parking spaces. He noted that two of the parking spaces are designated for the American with Disability Act (ADA) which the Commission must determine as per Town Code. He said that the project contained three new components. The new apparatus bay, a new turn-out room, and new staff spaces. Together the three new components added 1,837-square feet to the existing 3,971-square feet.

Assistant Planner Parker noted that at the March 17, 2021, Commission meeting, the Commission gave some preliminary comments regarding the project. The Commission's discussion centered around the use of the definition of "public building" within the proposed Code Amendment, on-site parking space quantity, impervious surface area quantity and locations, Green Building techniques, drainage, and tree removal. During public comment, folks expressed concerns regarding on-site parking space quantity and location, noise, landscape screening, drainage, tree removal, and the use of "public buildings" within the proposed Code Amendment.

In terms of the May 10, 2021, ASCC review, Assistant Planner Parker said they reviewed the project for architectural and site development components. Their discussion centered around landscaping, tree removal, lighting, building design revisions, location and quantity of on-site parking, and scenic corridor impacts. Public comment received during that hearing raised concerns about landscaping, tree removal, location and quantity of on-site parking, and scenic corridor impacts. He disclosed that they moved to recommend the project to the Planning Commission with an added condition that the landscaping plan be reviewed by two members of the ASCC and solicitation of neighbor comments before the insurance of the building permit. He noted that condition was incorporate into the conditional use permit (CUP) as Condition #8.

Assistant Planner Parker reviewed the scenic corridor impacts that were expressed at the ASCC meeting. He said that the property is located within the Primary Vista Corridor Boundary of the Alpine Scenic Corridor Plan, but the fire station's construction and CUP pre-date the plan. The property is also located within the Portola Road Corridor Plan, but the fire station pre-dated that plan as well. He noted that the fire station front setback is 49-feet 9-inches, and the special scenic setback is 50-feet for the Portola Road Corridor Plan. He said that the Town's Code does consider the fire station conforming because it preexisted before both scenic corridor plans. He mentioned that the special setback only applies to structures and Town Code does not consider surface parking as a structure. The ASCC did find that the impacts to the Portola Road Scenic Plan were reasonable considering that the fire station was existing before the plan was established, the surrounding uses, and the project had a comparable parking location pattern that was similar to other buildings within the town.

Assistant Planner Parker reviewed the Municipal Code Amendment request, as outlined in the staff report, and the exact language that staff was proposing to be in the Town Code. He moved to the parking requirements, as outline in the staff report, and he noted that there are eight existing parking spaces on-site with one being ADA compliant. The project proposed to add 10 additional spaces to accommodate for off-shift and on-shift staff. He reviewed the CUP Findings, as outlined in the staff report. Staff added additional information to Finding Number Six regarding the Alpine Scenic Corridor Plan and the Portola Road Corridor Plan and that the fire station is in conformance to those plans.

In terms of public comment, staff did send out notices to the public within a 1,000-foot radius on June 4, 2021, as well as a notice was posted in The Almanac. Staff received no comments before the staff report was published. He said any public comments received after the publication of the staff report were forwarded to the Planning Commissioners.

In terms of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Assistant Planner Parker said that staff has determined that the project is exempted from Section 15301 (e), Section 15304, and Section 15061 (b)(3).

Assistant Planner Parker concluded his report with the next steps for the Planning Commission. Staff recommended that the Commission adopt the Resolution recommending approval of the project. He said the Commission should consider the approach and structure of the proposed Municipal Code Amendment, parking requirements, CUP findings, and architectural and site development permit. He noted that Town Council will be the deciding body for the project.

Chair Taylor invited questions from the Commission of staff. He asked if there will be an applicant presentation. Planning & Building Director Russell answered yes.

Commissioner Goulden summarized that the Commission is to discuss the R-1 Zoning District and the proposed Code Amendment only pertained to the R-1 Zoning District. He noted that the Town has a small number of R-1 zones with the rest of the parcels being zoned RE. Planning & Building Director Russell confirmed that both those statements are accurate.

Commissioner Goulden asked if public buildings are allowed in the RE Zone for the principal use. Assistant Planner Parker replied yes.

Commissioner Goulden noted that for 50-years the Town has allowed public buildings in the bulk of the Town's parcels without any problems.

Commissioner Hasko requested that staff summarize the implications of rezoning the zone to AP versus keeping R-1. Planning & Building Director Russell confirmed that the AP and the CC Zone could work for the parcel. Landscaping could be an issue and the project may require a variance due to the amount of impervious surface the project requires. She said that the parcel is the only parcel within the Nathhorst Triangle Area Plan that has an institutional use designation. She noted that the Nathhorst Triangle Area Plan does not allow office and other commercial uses. Staff interpreted that as it was initial to not allow office and commercial on the parcel. She added that the Town would not want to amend the zoning in such a way that allowed uses that are not allowed in the Nathhorst Triangle Area Plan. She expressed that it is common to find public safety facilities to be located within residential districts and staff felt that other R-1 properties will not be affected by the change. She said by leaving the parcel zoned R-1, the Town has more regulatory control over the parcel. She reported that the AP Zone would allow a sheriff's office to be located at the site and the public raised a lot of concern regarding that use. She remarked that an ADU is allowed to be on the site if the fire department chose to build one and the fire station would not fall under the Multi-Family ADU Exception.

Commissioner Hasko asked what are the dividing lines between the roles of the ASCC and the Planning Commission. She said, for example, the ASCC assessed that there were reasonable impacts to the Portola Road Scenic Plan, but she wanted to understand how does the Commission interpret that feedback. Planning & Building Director Russell reiterated that the ASCC is a recommending body to the Planning Commission and the Commission should consider that feedback as a recommendation.

Chair Taylor invited the applicant to provide their presentation.

Mike Wasserman, Capital Program Management, remarked that the problem is that the facility is aging and outdated. The fire station does not currently comply with the Department of Homeland Security requirements, accessibility code requirements, and the station does not accommodate the current needs. He noted that the current station is not equipped to house the staff that occupies the facility, the clean turn-outs have to be stored in the apparatus bay, the apparatus has to be stored off-site, as well as other issues.

Rob Lindner, Fire Chief, explained that there are three to five personal at the station and their shifts are 48-hours on with 96-hours off. The station also housed a cadet from the College of San Mateo as well

as the Chipper Program. He shared that the Woodside Fire Protection District employs 55 people with 20 to 25 of them staffed in the district daily. He added that there are 30 to 40 vehicles that the district owns. Those staff personal and associated vehicles are split among four fire stations. Fire Station #8 has two engines, one water tender, one communication trailer, and three trucks with support trailers that are used for the Chipper Program. He expressed that at the fire station, interior and exterior trainings are held. To allow for training to occur, no parking of staff vehicles can be parked in the rear of the building and that is why the project, as proposed, has the parking located in the front of the building. In terms of the existing redwood tree proposed to be removed, he shared that firefighters planted the tree, but the tree has caused hardscape damage and is too large for its current area.

Bill Gutgsell, CJW Architects, reported that the solutions to the existing problems were to increase the number of bedrooms to five, provide dedicated office space, provide a new turn-out room, a new apparatus bay, additional parking spaces in the front of the building, a drive-through for a visiting apparatus, improve the training facility, and make general building remodels. He referenced the arborist report for the tree proposed to be removed which stated that there are two, very tall trunks that pose a damage and safety risk located in the front of the building. He noted that the Town Ordinance does not address fire station parking requirements and the Town has the latitude to determine the number of parking spaces needed based on comparable uses. He said that there have been several design review meetings with the neighbors and the district has changed its design to accommodate neighbor's concerns. He noted that the Fire District intends to maintain and irrigate the landscape buffer between the station and the southern neighbor as well as install a chain link fence at the neighbor's request. The remaining fencing will have 6-foot high redwood. The Fire District is agreeable to providing a final landscape plan for two ACSS members to review before permit submittal.

Chair Taylor invited questions from the Commissioners for the applicant.

Commissioner Goulden asked which is better, a front location or back location for the drive-through aisle. Mr. Lindner answered either would be sufficient. Mr. Gutgsell mentioned that when a visiting engine comes to the station, that engine cannot drive through the apparatus bay.

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill inquired where do all the cars park currently with only eight parking spaces. Mr. Lindner shared staff currently park in the provided parking spaces, near the apparatus doors, the ingress curve to the apparatus bay, and on Portola Road.

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill asked if the reason to remove the redwood tree was because of the damage that it has done, or to accommodate 18 parking spaces instead of 15. Mr. Gutgsell added that the proposal intended to place the stormwater retention tank under the proposed parking lot to address concerns about drainage and flooding. He said that with the retention tank and the proposed pervious pavers, the roots to the redwood tree will be impacted.

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill asked if the retention tank could be moved to the ingress driveway. Mr. Gutgsell expressed by doing that, there will be a period where the ingress driveway cannot be accessed.

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill inquired if the split rail fence in the front will be retained and could cars park between the fence and Portola Road. Mr. Gutgsell confirmed that the fence will be retained, but that the parking between the two was discouraged.

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill asked how many redwood trees currently exist and how many are proposed to be removed. Mr. Gutgsell estimated there are 20 to 25 redwoods existing redwoods on the site and the proposal was to remove 10. Commissioner Goulden noted he did a rough count of 30 trees on-site and between the neighbor's request and the proposal, half of the redwoods would be removed.

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill wanted to understand if 15 parking spaces were allowed, would that allow the redwood to stay. She said she would hate to go through a lot of gyrations to save the tree only to have it die because parking is too close. Mr. Gutgsell emphasized that the Fire District has tried to limit the amount of construction near as many trees as it can. He said he is not an arborist, but he predicted the tree would suffer if parking is too close.

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill asked what negative impacts would happen if only 15 spaces were approved and the tree had to stay on site. Mr. Lindner restated that all four fire stations are maxed out in terms of parking.

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill said it many come down to how frequently can folks park in the dirt space between the fence and the road, or can a deal be made with the businesses across the street. Mr. Lindner reported that the Fire District is not in favor of having vehicles parked between the split rail fence and the street. He was strongly uncomfortable having an agreement with neighboring businesses to provide parking. Mr. Gutgsell specified that it is unsafe to have a firefighter moving their vehicle at a neighboring business when a call comes in and that staff must maintain their vehicle parking on site.

In answered Vice Chair Kopf-Sill's question regarding the number of trees being removed on site, Assistant Planner Parker replied that 17 significant trees were proposed to be removed and that figure did not include the trees request to be removed by the neighbor.

Commissioner Hasko asked how many parking spaces other fire stations have. Mr. Gutgsell said it is typically based on a needs assessment and varied from station to station.

Commissioner Hasko wanted more details on what equipment needs to be stored in a parking space. Mr. Gutgsell explained that the Chipper Program has three trucks and three chippers. The chippers are the same size as a parking stall and the chippers are heavier than a typical automobile.

Commissioner Hasko asked if the chippers serve the whole Fire District or just the local area. Mr. Lindner answered they serve the whole district.

Commissioner Hasko inquired if other chippers within the Fire District are housed in a parking space. Mr. Lindner replied that two of the chippers are housed at Fire Station #7 in a dirt section behind a tree.

Chair Taylor asked how many parking spaces are at the other Fire District stations. Mr. Lindner reported Station #7 and #19 have roughly 20 spaces plus equipment storage.

Commissioner Hasko indicated that staff said there was a new arborist report that was submitted, but it was submitted late and did not make it into the material provide to the Commission. She asked what details were in that arborist report. Mr. Gutgsell explained that the original arborist report covered the trees the project proposed to have removed. The trees located on the southern side were requested to be included in the removal and the trees on the west side were suggested to be removed by a third-party landscape architect that was hired by the neighbor.

Commissioner Hasko asked if the redwood tree in the front received a complex evaluation and was that information included in any of the arborist reports. Mr. Gutgsell said it was included in the second arborist report as well as in the third report.

Commissioner Targ asked for more information regarding the pervious surfaces proposed and could those surfaces support the weight of a fire truck. Mr. Gutgsell explained that there are materials where the block has a thicker section. That block is placed on a thicker base rock section and then the native material below the base rock is prepared in a way that can support the weight of a fire engine.

Commissioner Targ requested more information on how those pervious pavers can impact the roots of the redwood tree. Mr. Gutgsell restated that the pavers are not the main concern, the amount of excavation is.

Commissioner Targ asked how big is the area where the pervious pavers will be used. Mr. Gutgsell estimated a range of 3,500 to 4,000-square feet.

Commissioner Targ said that sounded like an improvement and he asked if the Fire Protection District has committed to using those pervious pavers. Mr. Gutgsell answered yes.

Commissioner Targ indicated there may be a trade-off in using the pavers and the maintenance of the tree. He mentioned that there is a historic underground storage tank located on the parcel. Mr. Gutgsell was not aware of there being a storage tank underground.

Commissioner Targ said he checked and there use to be a 1,000-gallon leaking underground storage tank that was located at the site. He asked if the slab of the building is proposed to be removed and will there be further excavation once the slab is removed. He said his concern was that the crew would be digging into contaminated soil. Mr. Gutgsell informed Commissioner Targ that the previous tank was before his time and he could not speak to it. He noted that typically when tanks are removed, any contaminated soil is removed as well.

Commissioner Targ requested what depth was of the groundwater at the site and will the project use existing utilities. Mr. Gutgsell answered that the groundwater is 8-feet below the surface. Some utilities will be maintained, but others needed to be remediated. He indicated excavation for those new utilities would be around 2- to 3- feet deep.

Mr. Wasserman stated that the inquires about an underground tank were new news to him. Mr. Lindner asked if the tank was located on the ingress side of the station close toward the apparatus door. Commissioner Targ noted the tank is on the backside of the station. Mr. Lindner reported there were underground fuel tanks, but they were removed.

Commissioner Targ wanted more details regarding community outreach. Mr. Gutgsell shared that COVID-19 struck and community outreach was delayed. He said Zoom calls and site visits have taken place. An in-person meeting took place with the neighbor on the westside before COVID-19 hit.

Commissioner Targ asked if there have been any discussions with the business neighbors regarding shared parking. He disclosed that shared parking is done all the time. Mr. Gutgsell indicated that there have been no discussions due to the concerns Mr. Lindner and himself expressed earlier. Mr. Lindner said he strongly did not support having staff walking across the street due to safety concerns. Commissioner Targ proposed a crosswalk be installed so that shared parking can happen.

Commissioner Targ inquired what will happen to the redwood tree in front once it is removed. Mr. Gutgsell stated those details have not been planned out, but one option was to allow the staff to build a new dining table. Mr. Lindner noted that has been done at two of the stations.

Chair Taylor wanted to understand if there was any outreach done to the general public and has there been any thoughts on how to save the tree or repurpose the tree. He shared that the Commission has received a lot of feedback about saving the tree.

With no further questions, Chair Taylor invited public comment.

Jon Silver acknowledged that Woodside Fire District does a great job. He noted that the whole community needed to be involved in the discussion, not just the immediate neighbors. He said with any other architect, the redwood tree would be preserved and any other architect would have figured out a way to do that. He encouraged the Town to select an arborist to do a full report on the tree. He was very frustrated that there has been very little effort to explore alternative ways to save the tree.

David Cardinal said he did not understand the uproar about the tree because the tree species loves water and is not environmentally friendly for drought situations. He said the Fire District protects the town and the town is facing a very high fire season. For those reasons, he supported all the proposed updates to the station. He did not see having leased parking with the businesses across the street as a long-term solution.

Jan Mountjoy said that she is a neighbor of the fire station. One of her residential neighbors has a redwood tree that is lifting the ground and causing problems to her property. She noted that redwood tree roots are only 5- to 6-feet below ground and can range up to 100-feet from the tree. She had no idea why folks wanted to save the tree when the trees can do destructive. She noted that as she stood outside the fire station one day, not one car or biker glanced at the fire station. She encouraged the Commission to approve the project as proposed.

Bob Turcott appreciated the presentation and the details about the different options for zoning. He mentioned that he suggested changing the zoning from R-1 to AP at the May 10, 2021, ASCC meeting. He noted that the suggestion and his concerns regarding that matter were not listed in the summary. He said he could provide a verbatim transcript if the Commission so chooses. He said that for 35-years the Town has not allowed public buildings in the R-1 and this project was not a compelling reason to change a single-use residential zone to a mixed-use zone. The use of the parcel as a fire station fits perfectly in the uses listed in the AP Zone. He said he is concerned that the proposal is unnecessarily expansive and exposes the zone to unintentional secondary effects. He found that staff's reasoning to not change the zone to AP were trivial and could be mitigated. He requested that the Commission address the questions that are listed in the letter that was sent by PVNU.

Judith Murphy stated that the usually Town process has not served the residents. She noted that the project is unique, the neighbors are much more impacted than they usually are with projects, and the lot size is small. The Town should have had a process that worked collaboratively and cooperatively with the community and the fire station in order to have a full understanding of the positives, negatives, and compromises proposed to be made. She noted that the process would have resulted in less upset and misunderstanding by the community. She did not support having parking in a landscaped area between the street and a split rail fence. She said that is not the Portola Valley way and it will be very ugly.

Teresa Coleman said that her family has been living in the Portola Valley community since 1995 and she is sincerely distressed about the level of the conversation at this point about the project. She requested that Mr. Lindner disclose the potential for having the equipment be housed at the Emerald Fields facility. She was frustrated that folks assumed that the community was in opposition to expanding the fire station. She said the community has expressed time and time again that they did not want a parking lot to be visible from Portola Road. She found it troubling that the Conservation Committee's recommendations were not listened to by the ASCC. She concluded that once the redwood tree in the front is cut down, that tree and its presence can never be replaced.

Rusty Day said it was concerning that the community was not concerned about the fire safety at the fire station itself. He indicated that if folks looked at the project from the perspective of defensible space, there should not be so many large trees with such little separation distance from the structure, there should be no hedges, and there should be no trees near the egress. He encouraged the

Commission to discuss that perspective in their deliberations. He remarked that inside a home, ignition and flashover can be less than 3-minutes. If there is a fire, minutes and seconds count and he stated that is why staff parking should be on site.

David Cardinal pointed out that some firefighters have to bunk in the exercise room and he did not support that kind of treatment of civil servants.

Kristi Corley noticed that Mr. Wasserman was able to receive \$4 million for Santa Clara County for fire reasons and she wondered if San Mateo County offered financing as well. Mr. Wassermann answered that he was the one who obtained that financing.

Chair Taylor reminded the public that their comments are to be addressed to the Commission, not the applicant. If there are questions of the applicant, the public should ask himself and he will decide if the question should be asked of the applicant. He said the reason for a public hearing was to help the Commission understand what the issues are.

Kristi Corley asked how many community members are in attendance and Chair Taylor answered 19 from the community with 12 panelists. She requested that information be made available during the meeting. Chair Taylor agreed, but noted he has not found a way to do that.

Bob Schulz said he lives next to Fire Station #8 and has enjoyed being their neighbor. He commented that the project is at a point where all the neighbors have had their concerns addressed and he supported the project as presented with the recommendations from the ASCC. He strongly favored the parking to be located in front of the facility due to there being too much of an impact to the neighbors if it is located somewhere else. He stressed there are flooding and drainage issues in the rear corner and parking there would be a bad idea. He acknowledged that the 16 significant trees proposed to be removed provide significant screening to his home and his neighbor's home. He did not understand why one tree was being singled out. He noted that redwood trees are not native to the area, they grow quickly, and they pose a fire danger. He said he supported having the tree be removed to allow the fire station to have what they need to perform their job. He strongly supported the R-1 Text Amendment and using the words fire station. He opposed any broader language or any other spot zone change. He requested the Commission approve the project as proposed and move it forward to the Town Council.

Jon Silver clarified that coastal redwoods are native to the valley floor, but not to the hills.

Jan Mountjoy affirmed her approval to keep the zoning as it currently exists.

Chair Taylor brought the item back to the Commission for discussion. He requested the Commission discuss zoning first, then parking, and then the CUP.

Commissioner Goulden supported fixing the zoning as staff suggested so that the fire department can move forward in the future in a normal fashion. He said there are multiple approaches to doing that and it did not matter which approach is used. He noted that the R-1 Zone is the most protected and the vast majority of the residential sites in town could house a fire station with no issues. He suggested staff convert all the R-1 Zones to RE Zone.

Commissioner Targ agreed with Commissioner Goulden's comments. He said changing the zone to AP is interesting and he wanted to understand that concept better. Commissioner Goulden said that the zone should be changed to RE to make the parcel consistent with the rest of the parcels in town. Vice-Chair Kopf-Sill agreed. Planning & Building Director Russell said it could be possible for the project to work with an AP Zone District from the point of view of the design standards, but staff is concerned about having inconsistencies with the Nathorst Triangle Plan. In regards to the suggestion



to make the zone RE, she stated that would not solve the design standards concerns. She said a CUP allows the design standards to be fit appropriately to the specific use on the parcel.

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill said she supports changing the R-1 as staff has proposed. She found that recommendation to be the simplest solution with the fewest complications.

Commissioner Hasko supported staff's proposal as well for zoning. She commented that the General Plan review is on the horizon and there may be other opportunities provided in that update.

Chair Taylor acknowledged the public who raised the question of if the zone could be changed to AP or CC. He found the answer to those questions helpful. He supported staff's recommendation of leaving the parcel as R-1. He restated that the parcel is not just R-1, it is R-1 and has to be within the General Plan. So, the zoning is restricted to just that specific parcel. He remarked that having a CUP for the parcel is important. He said with the General Plan revision on the horizon, he would rather have the parcel be R-1 and during the General Plan update, decide if the Town wants to expand the commercial possibilities or not. He noted he is sympathetic with the neighbors who have expressed that R-1 should be limited to a fire station and because the R-1 designation is narrowed, he supported leaving the parcel zoned as R-1.

Chair Taylor announced that there is consensus among the Commissioners to leave the zone as R-1. He suggested the Commissioner begin the discussion regarding parking and the tree.

Commissioner Goulden summarized that if the parking is located in the front of the building, the tree will have to be removed. He stated he is persuaded by the ASCC's recommendations to remove the tree and have the parking in the front. He acknowledged that the ASCC is very protective of trees and for them to recommend the tree be removed says a lot. In terms of 15 parking spaces versus 18 parking spaces, he commented that three additional spaces would not impact the aesthetics and he'd rather plan for additional parking spaces in the future if the fire station needs them. He stated that the tree will have to be removed at some point and the fire station will outlive the tree. He said the tree is gorgeous, but he felt comfortable having the tree be removed.

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill supported having the parking located in the front. She said she liaison at the ASCC meeting and reported they had discussed the trade-offs thoroughly. She said that if she knew of a better solution for the tree she would support that solution. Since no other solution was presented, she supported the ASCC's recommendation to have the tree removed. She said that typically the Commission is concerned that there is not enough parking when they review CUPs and she was uncomfortable not following that process for this project. She said the Fire Chief has strongly advocated for more parking and to not allow that to happen would invite problems for the future. She remarked that if the other redwood trees were being removed at the neighbor's requests due to safety and structural concerns, the Commission should allow the fire station to remove the one tree they believe will cause those same concerns. She concluded she supports the proposal as is and she did not believe the tree would survive even if the Commission imposed tree mitigation measures.

Commissioner Targ supported having the tree be removed, but he wished the Commission did not have to figure out the record to come to that decision. He said the fact that the tree was planted by hand made the tree more historical. He wished there had been an arborist report that confirmed the speculations that the tree will create a hazard. He said he is sympathetic to the concerns about removing a tree from a scenic corridor, but he said the tree is not unique. He wanted to see an arborist report be drafted and formally draw the conclusion that the tree should be removed or provide arguments to keep the tree.

Commissioner Hasko said she is very supportive of the fire station and that the facility needs to be updated. She stated disappointment that the record did not provide enough support for her to be comfortable making a decision. She expressed frustration that there was no arborist report that laid out all the information thoroughly. She said that bothered her because it is the Planning Commission's mandate to recommend to the Town Council a way to think about balancing different interests. She said the General Plan recognizes the value of nature. She indicated that she was on the Portola Road Scenic Plan Committee and the assumption made by the ASCC that the plan intended primarily to preserve the views of the western hill was wrong. She could not support proceeding to remove a tree that is a visual landmark and that the Conservation Committee expressed strong views on. Based on the information provided to the Commission, she could not support having the tree be removed. She mentioned that the Commission must make findings that talk about fitting with the General Plan and minimizing the removal of plants. She could not make those findings based on the information provided. She strongly agreed that a lot has to change and the Town needs to prioritize upgrading the fire station, but the information presented to the Commission did not provide enough data for her to make an informed decision. She added that she is still unclear why the chipper has to be at the fire station and she did not have enough information to know where to put the chipper to decide on how many parking spaces there should be. She restated that she wants to be generous, but she was not given enough information to agree with the other Commissioners.

Chair Taylor fully agreed that the process could have been done better and that the Commission never received an arborist report that justified taking out a heritage tree. He said he was leaning toward the mitigation side and moving the project forward. He agreed that the tree will have to be removed in the future and the fire station will outlive the tree. He said he was more comfortable finding a way to honor the tree and incorporate it into the station as part of its design. He said with the parking located in the front, there has to be a way to soften up the front besides having a split rail fence. He generally supported the project with the tree being removed and parking placed in the front. If approved that way, he wanted to know how the tree will be used and what softening action will happen at the front parking area.

Commissioner Targ stated he did some exploration and discovered that groundwater has been measured at 2-feet at the neighboring gas station. He wanted to supplement the record with a site management plan that identifies how to deal with the flooding concerns. He wanted to have an arborist examine the tree and that information be provided to the Commission to help the Commissioners make a more informed decision. He acknowledged that everyone supports the Fire District and the need to have a robust and resilient response. He suggested several key items come back to the Commission at a future meeting.

Commissioner Goulden suggested that the tree be sold for lumber and that the funding be donated to the fire department for their ongoing services.

Chair Taylor summarized that several Commissioners have expressed they want more information on groundwater, would the tree survive if the parking were near it, and an arborist report be put into the record.

Commissioner Goulden mentioned he would vote to move the project forward and address those concerns offline. Vice Chair Kopf-Sill agreed.

Commissioner Hasko, Commissioner Targ, and Chair Taylor were not in favor of moving the project forward until more information is provided.

Chair Taylor requested the Commissioners provide a clear list of what information they need. Planning & Building Director Russell mentioned that some of the information that the Commissioners have

requested may be in one of the arborist reports. She suggested having the applicant say if any of the information is available before the Commission makes a decision.

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill asked what the concern is regarding groundwater. Commissioner Targ explained that there is a report from 1999 that groundwater at the location is at 3.2 micrograms per liter, which is 10 times the residential standard, and higher than drinking water standards. He wanted to know how the groundwater is going to be handled at the site.

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill said that what is being requested regarding groundwater may not be in the Commission's purview. Commissioner Targ wanted to understand if the groundwater is a big deal or not.

Commissioner Goulden asked Commissioner Targ if the parking should be located in the front or the rear of the facility. Commissioner Targ said he needs more information to answer that question.

Chair Taylor said the what-if scenarios are not helpful and requested that the Commission discuss what information is needed before discussion happens. Commissioner Goulden agreed.

Commissioner Goulden wanted information from an arborist on will the tree cause a problem to the building in the future.

Chair Taylor asked what Commissioner Hasko and Commissioner Targ want more information on in terms of parking. Commissioner Targ wanted to know what all the alternatives are for parking and the pros and cons of those alternatives.

Mr. Lindner said he would appreciate it if the Commission did not dictate a parking space to a specific vehicle. He said that is not the intent of having the 18 parking spaces. He stated that the fire department does not have an equipment yard like the Town has and equipment must be housed in the area it is being used in.

Commissioner Hasko clarified her comments were not intended to be heard in that manner. She stated that none of the background information on how parking works was provided and the Commission was not trying to be unreasonable. She said the Commission must balance components and she was struggling with that balance because all of the information is not available. She restated that she did not support holding up the project, but she wanted to make an informed decision.

Chair Taylor summarized that a written plan on how parking is used within the district and a statement from the applicant explaining why they are requesting the amount of parking they are is needed to help the Commission come to a decision.

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill opposed the approach the Commission was taking and she did not understand what information can be obtained from all the documents the other Commissioners were asking for. She indicated that the Fire Chief has expressed several times why he needs what he is requesting and that the Commission should take that information as valid information. She said for the arborist report, she would like to see it, but she said it is wishful thinking that an arborist report is going to decide for the Commission.

Commissioner Goulden asked Chair Taylor what approach would he be supporting.

Planning & Building Director Russell noted that there is an arborist report and it was attached the ASCC report.

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill asked for a summary of that report. Chair Taylor requested that staff hold off until he can answer Commissioner Goulden's question.

Chair Taylor agreed that the Fire Chief has explained what he needs and he agreed with Commissioner Hasko that his oral comments should have been in a written form. He said he has sufficient information from the Fire Chief regarding parking to make an informed decision. He declared the one area he is concerned about was the potential for there being groundwater contamination.

Chair Taylor asked if the Planning Commission is the body to deal with groundwater. Town Attorney Silver stated that the Town of Portola Valley does not have jurisdiction over groundwater contamination. The State Water Board and other State regulatory agencies handle that. She said there was an underground storage tank that did leak at one point. A remediation plan was used to address the leak and the site was closed. She said based on that, it is reasonable to assume that there has been sufficient testing by the regulatory agencies to determine there is compliance to the standards. She agreed it is common to have a mitigation measure around best management practices when there is contaminated groundwater, but the State agencies oversee those measures.

Commissioner Targ reported that the Town does have jurisdiction through CEQA regarding contaminated groundwater and can impose mitigation measures unless it is made as a project design feature. He restated that it is routine to require a project to have a groundwater and soil management plan should it be needed.

Chair Taylor inquired if the Town Council should handle this concern instead of the Planning Commission. Town Attorney Silver said that the Commission can request that the applicant do a soil survey and groundwater survey, and that best management practices happen during construction. Commissioner Targ agreed that is the right way to handle the concern.

Commissioner Goulden asked if that is a reasonable cost to inflict on the applicant. Commissioner Targ answered yes, it is standard practice.

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill requested that staff explain the arborist report. Assistant Planner Parker said in the original arborist report, the arborist noted that the tree in question is 75-feet tall, has a spread of 40-feet, is in fair condition, and is located in front of the fire station. The crown exhibited normal vigor, the tree had secondary leaders at 25-feet and the tree was proposed to be removed.

Commissioner Goulden found the report to insufficient to answer any of the questions raised by the Commissioners. Planning & Building Director Russell agreed that the report made general assumptions.

Chair Taylor believed that there were findings that an arborist must make before proposing that a heritage tree be removed. Planning & Building Director Russell restated that they evaluate the health of the tree, the relationship between the project and the tree, and potential damage the tree can cause.

Assistant Planner Parker shared the cover sheet of the arborist report and Commissioner Hasko noted that the report indicates that the tree should be removed because it is required for the project. Assistant Planner Parker agreed with that statement.

Chair Taylor summarized that the Commission wanted to know not that the tree should be removed for the specific project, but whether the tree will damage the building or be a hazard in the future.

Chair Taylor asked Commissioner Hasko to describe again what information she needs. Commissioner Hasko wanted to know if there are alternatives to keep the tree, but provide the additional parking spaces that the fire department needs.

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill appreciated Chair Taylor trying to find consensus among the Commission, but she said it is valuable to move a project forward with a split vote to inform the Town Council where the concerns were.

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill moved to recommend that the Town Council approve the proposed project as is, with the recommendations made by ASCC to remove tree #6, with the addition that the water quality issue is dealt with appropriately. Seconded by Commissioner Goulden.

Planning & Building Director Russell requested that the motion include the resolution.

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill provided a substitute motion.

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill moved to approve the Resolution and before issuance of a building permit or grading permit, the applicant shall provide analysis of any groundwater or soil contamination, and provide construction best management practices to address any issues. Seconded by Commissioner Goulden, the motion failed 2-3.

Chair Taylor wanted to see a more detailed arborist report before he can approve the project.

Town Attorney Silver asked if the Commission was comfortable with the groundwater language in Vice Chair Kopf-Sill's motion. Commissioner Targ said he is comfortable with the language as long as the applicant will include the provision as part of the project. Chair Taylor supported Commissioner Targ's comment.

Chair Taylor asked the Commission if there were any comments regarding the CUP or should the hearing be continued to a future meeting.

Commissioner Hasko requested that staff explain what they are seeking for the CUP and the architectural and site development permit. Assistant Planner Parker explained that if the Commission had additional items they wished to add as Conditions of Approval, the Commission could add those.

None of the Commissioners provided additional conditions for the CUP.

Chair Taylor suggested that the hearing be continued.

Planning & Building Director Russell advised the Commission to hear from the applicant regarding timing. She noted that the next Planning Commission meeting is on July 7, 2021, and the applicant team would have to submit additional information by June 25, 2021. Mr. Wasserman said the arborist is a local arborist, but he did not know his schedule. He said that because the arborist is familiar with the tree, reinspection should be a quick process.

Planning & Building Director Russell suggested that a placeholder be placed on the July 7, 2021, agenda. If the materials are not submitted by that time, the Commission can reopen the public hearing, and continue the item to the following meeting. Chair Taylor supported that approach.

Commissioner Targ moved to continue the hearing to July 7, 2021. Seconded by Commissioner Goulden, the motion carried 5-0.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **(2) Planning Commission appointment to Ad-Hoc Housing Element Committee**

Planning & Building Director Russell reported that the Commission appointed Commissioner Targ and Vice Chair Kopf-Sill to the Ad-Hoc Housing Element Committee. She said that at the Town Council meeting, a resident raised the concern that Al Sill from ASCC and Commissioner Kopf-Sill are married and both were appointed to the Ad-Hoc Housing Element Committee. Town Council requested that the Planning Commission and the ASCC reassess their appointments. She said that there was no indication from the Town Council that the appointments were problematic. The ASCC reaffirmed their appointment of Al Sill.

Chair Taylor asked how many people are appointed to the Ad-Hoc Housing Element Committee. Planning & Building Director Russell replied 15.

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill explained that Al and herself did not plan to be on the Ad-Hoc Housing Element Committee together. She noted that Commissioner Targ and herself have been recusing themselves from the Stanford Wedge project due to conflicts of interest and that provided both Commissioners a little extra time that the other Planning Commissioners do not have. She supported the Commission's decision if they wanted to appoint someone else.

Chair Taylor invited public comment.

Rita Comes said she attended the Town Council hearing where the Town Council added the two additional people. She requested that there not be a married couple on the Ad-Hoc Housing Element Committee.

Jon Silver affirmed his faith in Vice Chair Kopf-Sill and supported having her on the Ad-Hoc Housing Element Committee.

With no additional public comment, Chair Taylor brought the item back to the Commission for discussion.

Chair Taylor asked if any of the other Commissioner wanted to be on the Ad-Hoc Housing Element Committee. Chair Taylor noted he had requested that Vice Chair Kopf-Sill be on the committee.

Commissioner Hasko commented she has no concerns about the two serving on the committee. Commissioner Goulden, Commissioner Targ, and Chair Taylor agreed.

Planning & Building Director Russell said that a motion is not needed and staff will report the discussion to the Town Council.

## **COMMISSION, STAFF, COMMITTEE REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **(5) Commission Reports**

Commissioner Targ mentioned that he attended the ASCC June 14, 2021 meeting. He said he was amazed at their attention to detail and their thoughtful comments.

Chair Taylor invited public comment; seeing none he closed the item.

**(6) Staff Reports**

Planning & Building Director Russell restated that there will be a joint meeting of the ASCC and the Planning Commission regarding the Stanford Wedge housing project.

Commissioner Goulden asked if the public receives the packet the same time the Commissioners do. Planning & Building Director Russell answered yes.

Chair Taylor noted that it is helpful for the public to know what items are coming up.

Chair Taylor invited public comment.

Kristi Corley asked what will be discussed at the joint meeting regarding the Stanford Wedge Project. Chair Taylor said that the meeting will focus on story poles and staking. He noted there will be a packet and materials available prior to the meeting. Planning & Building Director Russell added that the State Density Bonus Law will be discussed as well.

Ms. Corley asked if the groups will be discussing the ADU additions to two of the units. Chair Taylor restated that there will be a packet and that will have what will be discussed at the meeting.

With no further public comment, Chair Taylor closed the item.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**(1) Planning Commission Meeting of June 2, 2021**

Commissioner Hasko suggested revisions to pages 57 and 59.

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill asked if a Commissioner misspoke, can that be changed in the minutes, or are the minutes set in stone. Planning & Building Director Russell explained that the minutes should reflect what happened in the meeting. The minutes are summarized and the summary should be accurate to what the Commissioners say.

Council Member Hughes added that Commissioners can comment on the minutes that will be reflected in this meeting's minutes.

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill said on page 61, the minutes state that she said: "that the ordinance has already addressed restricting ADUs in the very high and high severity fire hazard zone". She said that is incorrect, the words "and high" should be removed to make that statement correct.

Chair Taylor requested that Planning & Building Director Russell review the audio transcript to determine if the minutes are correct. Planning & Building Director Russell said that if the transcriptionist got it wrong, staff will change the minutes. If it is right, the language will stay as is, but there will be a comment in this meeting's minutes that Vice Chair Kopf-Sill made a clarification.

Chair Taylor invited public comment; seeing none he brought the item back to the Commission.

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill moved to approve the minutes of the June 2, 2021, meeting, as amended, and Planning & Building Director Russell will check the audio transcript to verify Vice Chair Kopf-Sill's remark. Seconded by Commissioner Goulden, the motion carried 5-0.

**ADJOURNMENT** [10:35 p.m.]

Vice Chair Kopf-Sill moved to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner Goulden, the motion carried 5-0.