

**CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Chair Ross called the special teleconference-only meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Planning & Building Director Laura Russell called roll:

Present: ASCC: Commissioners Kenny Cheung, Megan Koch, and Al Sill; Chair Dave Ross and Vice Chair Jane Wilson.

Absent: None

Town Staff: Planning & Building Director Laura Russell; Consulting Planner Suzanne Avila; Consulting Assistant Planner Jake Garcia

Chair Ross advised that item (1) is being deferred by joint agreement of the applicant and staff to a future meeting date, so we will not be hearing item 1, landscape revisions to an approved plan at 228 Westridge Drive.

**ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

**NEW BUSINESS**

- (1) **Architectural Review of an application for landscape revisions and site improvements, File #PLN ARCH09-2021, 228 Westridge Drive, Dolin Residence (D. Parker)**

[Deferred]

- (2) **Architectural and Site Development Review of a 680 square foot addition, remodel of an existing residence and landscape improvements, File #PLN ARCH12-2021, 150 Stonegate Road, Wilson Residence (S. Avila)**

Consulting Planner Suzanne Avila described the proposed project. Site improvements include new hardscape, decking and landscaping. There is a 680-square foot addition to the south end of the house. This is for a master bedroom suite. They are adding a new front entry. There will be some walkways, some decking at the rear that is being replaced and new landscaping around the periphery of the house and the rear yard open space areas.

Ms. Avila shared the vicinity map for the property, which is at the end of Stonegate Road. The rear property line abuts Portola Road. Most of the surrounding properties are single-family homes. Across Portola Road is the Windy Hill Open Space. The property is zoned RE/1A/SD-1a. It is one acre in size. The average slope is approximately 13 percent. The garage end of the house encroaches slightly into the front setback. This is an existing non-conforming situation.

Ms. Avila described the site plan. Some new windows will be installed on the garage end of the house. There are four parking spaces, two in the garage and two in the driveway. The large addition at the end of the house is the bedroom addition, and the little one in front is the front entry. The project is within the allowable floor area, maximum impervious. The existing height of the residence from low to high point is 17 feet 6 inches, so it will stay at the maximum height for the residence. There is no change to the access parking or backup area. The addition is

compliant with setbacks as well and leaves ample floor and impervious coverage for any future projects. There will be small amount of impervious surface added, from 4525 square feet to 5074 square feet, which leaves a surplus of 2,674.

Ms. Avila shared the sections showing the addition of the bedroom and the front entry. The front elevations were shared. There are a few changes to windows and doorways on this elevation. On the rear elevation, the changes involve doors and windows and the bedroom addition can be seen. The two side elevations show the chimney on one end of the house which will go away. The bedroom addition will pop out and there are a few changes to windows as well. The roof plan shows one skylight added, 2.5 by 2.5. There are two existing skylights, one which will be removed. There is a small area for solar panels on the roof area over the master bedroom addition.

Ms. Avila shared the existing materials, which the applicants were going to match. Subsequent to submittal of the application and processing, the applicants advised that they were considering replacing the composition shingle roof with a metal roof for fire safety. They are hoping to fit this into their budget, so Ms. Avila presented both materials to the Commission, hoping for approval of both the existing roof material being matched and/or being replaced by the metal roof. The owners prefer to go with the metal roofing. If they are able to work it into their budget. Both are very dark colors, with very low reflectivity values. The siding is being matched, as well as the wood frame windows. Everything else matches the existing materials.

Ms. Avila pointed out the landscape lights which include low level path lights and step lights built into the steps. Two of the locations have three step lights and the other three are individual, with one step each. The exterior house lighting includes a recessed light on the front entry and new wall sconces that are down-directed, in addition to existing down-directed wall lights already in place.

In the landscape plan, some new trees are proposed, primarily in the area around the existing sports court where a couple of new trees are proposed. The remainder is shrubs and perennials. The water usage is about 60 percent of what is allowed for the property, so they are well under the budget for landscape water efficiency. All the proposed species are low-water-using.

Ms. Avila advised that notices to neighbors within 300 feet of the site were sent out. One email was received from the owners of 115 Stonegate in support of the project. Those were the only public comments received. She reported that staff has determined that the project conforms to the zoning requirements, design guidelines and the project is exempt from CEQA under two different provisions, one for exterior alterations and one for additions to structures. Staff is recommending approval of the architectural review permit subject to the conditions in Attachment 1. Ms. Avila introduced the project team, Ted and Katie Wilson, property owners/applicants, Chris Spalding, architect, and Jim Redman, landscape architect.

Chair Ross invited questions from the Commissioners. Hearing none, he invited the applicant team to provide their presentation.

Mr. Spalding said this was a refreshing project with a nice ranch house that is not being torn down but instead being fixed up for the next generation. It does not max out all of the limitations, which he appreciates. He said he doesn't see anything controversial about the project at all.

Ms. Katie Wilson added that they are excited about the project. They have three young children and this will allow for each to have their own bedroom and improve their hopefully long quality of life in Portola Valley.

Chair Ross invited questions from the Commissioners for the applicants. Hearing none, he opened oral communications and invited comments from the public. Hearing none, he brought it back to the Commission.

Commissioner Sill said there is a lot to like about the project. He said he also appreciates taking a nice mature house and fixing it up instead of tearing it down is refreshing to see. The proposal will give the house a nice feel, and seems that it will balance things out. The entry looks good, and it makes sense to have a nice master bedroom. He said the general appearance of the house will have a little bit more pizzazz. He thought it was great to see that not everything is maxed out, and that it looks like a lot of different things have been considered well. The lighting is a nice proposal with a light touch. Commissioner Sill continued that there are a couple things he is not wild about, but he can understand why the decisions were made. He is not a big fan of lawns, and there is an existing lawn that they plan on keeping. He understands that's the way the rules are. He said their decision to continue with wood siding may be a little short-sighted. While he understands the reason for it, he is concerned that a few years down the road they may have issues with insurance as more and more insurance companies decide they don't want to insure houses with wood siding. However, given the rules, he would not vote against the project because of that choice. He said he felt the trees along the sports court are a bit too much in a line, and he would like to see them spaced a bit more randomly, so that the screening is achieved without an unnatural-looking line of shrubs. He thinks the proposal is extremely well-thought-out, and he is very much in support of it.

Commissioner Koch agreed with Commissioner Sill and thought it was a smart project to take a wonderful ranch home and emphasize its beauty with a new entrance and master suite. She indicated she could support either roof material but would lean towards the metal roof because of insurance considerations, and it also could also provide an easier fit for photovoltaics if they wanted to do more than the plan suggests. They could possibly even be net zero for PG&E, which would be great. She said the landscaping plan looks nice and the lighting is just right for the site. She suggested they could make the master bedroom a stucco or stone, which could possibly mitigate something, although she realizes they won't be re-siding the entire project on this remodel. She said it's a great project and it will be a wonderful family home.

Commissioner Cheung echoed Commissioner Sill and Commissioner Koch's comments and said he is happy to go with the staff's recommendation, including either the existing composition roof material or the metal roofing. He said he thinks for the reason they are considering metal roofing, he would suggest the noncombustible siding as well. He thought they would not have much trouble matching the look of the rest of their siding, but with a noncombustible material. He explained that they don't want the applicants to wish someone had warned them about the noncombustible materials. He added that it appears likely an actual policy will be approved requiring use of noncombustible materials for new construction, and this is a discussion about how that will affect insurance. Beyond that, he said he appreciates that they are not doing a tear-down and are fixing up what they have.

Vice Chair Wilson appreciated that they have redesigned the home within the maximum square footage allowable and within the maximum impervious surface, and they are not at max roof height. She concurs with the Conservation Committee's recommendations, the removal of the Douglas fir and the acacia. She thought that their suggestion that the 24-inch box size plants

reduced to 15-gallon ones is a good one, because it's better to allow the plants to growth into their areas and into their spaces, rather than overplant to start with. She reiterated the Commissioners' comments about noncombustible materials for siding and suggested it would be something they may want to consider. She observed that the Conservation wanted to discourage a red hot poker, but she couldn't find that on the plans when she looked. Other than that, she feels it's a good redesign and thinks they will be very happy with the work that they are going to be doing and that they are fitting in with Portola Valley ideas and thoughts.

Chair Ross said it is an excellent proposal, very much in keeping with the existing site and architecture. He said it is very organic, and in a few years from now it will be very difficult for anybody to know that it was an addition to the house. He mentioned that IPE decking, while it is more fire resistant than redwood or cedar, is also combustible. Since the deck appears to be relatively close to grade, there might be other ways to deal with it with an entirely noncombustible material. He suggested that if they wanted to look at that, he would be happy to have that simply reviewed by staff as opposed to going through the ASCC process again. He said IPE is also pretty expensive material and it might provide them with a budget to do other things if they had an alternate approach for the deck. He said either roofing material is just fine. The tree removal is fine. He agreed with Commissioner Sill that it would be nice to stagger the planting of the new trees a little bit, to provide a little less formal, hedge-like look to it, although it's not in a place where it's going to bother any member of the public, and not a big deal. Overall, he said it is a very well-done application.

Chair Ross invited comments from the public. Hearing none, he was ready to entertain a motion.

Commissioner Sill moved to approve the project with the conditions outlined in the staff report. Seconded by Vice Chair Wilson.

Chair Ross asked if they would consider a condition that says if an alternate decking material was chosen, it could be simply a staff report. Commissioner Sill agreed and also added that either roofing material would be acceptable, composition or metal.

The vote carried with the proposed modifications, 5-0.

(3) **Architectural and Site Development Review of a new residence, landscape improvements, and removal of significant trees, File #PLN ARCH 01-2021, 214 Grove Drive, Holmes Residence (J. Garcia)**

Consulting Assistant Planner Jake Garcia presented the staff report for this request to recommend project approval to the Planning Commission for an architectural review and site development permit for a new residence, major landscape improvements and significant tree removal at 214 Grove Drive. The 70,567 square-foot lot is zoned Residential Estate and is a corner lot located at the intersection of Grove Drive and Grove Drive. The property is surrounded on all sides by single-family residential located in the same zoning district. The lot is moderately sloped and located upslope from Grove Drive.

The proposal includes an existing main residence, detached garage and detached guest house. The main residence, detached garage and driveway are proposed for demolition. The detached guest house is proposed to remain. There are 11 significant trees proposed for removal. The applicant is proposing a new 4,060 square-foot residence consisting of two stories and an attached garage. The proposed residence would comply with the overall allowed floor area and

the maximum allowed 85 percent floor area for the site. The proposed project consists of major landscape improvements including moving the existing driveway from Grove Drive, west of the main residence to Grove Drive, north of the main residence. The landscape improvements include a new deck, a trellis, a plunge pool, site paths, retaining walls and deer fencing. Landscape planting would consist mainly of native plants grouped naturally throughout the site.

Mr. Garcia advised that the project site development permit triggers ASCC review, and the property also seeks a separate entitlement for the modification to the Town's ground movement potential map. The Planning Commission is the decision-making body for map modification, so the ASCC will make a recommendation to the Planning Commission on the architectural and site development review components of the project.

Mr. Garcia presented the front, left, right and rear elevations. The proposed materials and colors would be consistent with the Town's Design Guidelines and include exterior wall finishes of gray ash wood siding, dark wood fascia, black windows, doors and steel trellis, board form concrete for all site walls and a gray parapet roof with a total of four skylights. He shared the proposed site plan with location of the proposed trees for removal. There are 11 significant trees that are proposed for removal, consisting of four coast live oaks, three valley oaks and four coastal redwoods. The project arborist report has inventoried the trees and has detailed reasoning for removal, as summarized in the staff report. There are also 17 non-significant trees proposed for removal.

Mr. Garcia pointed out the proposed new driveway location, new plunge pool, new retaining walls around the main building and rear deck with the proposed trellis. All of the new site paths and impervious paving would comply with the required impervious surface totals allowed for the site. The project proposes 3,547 square feet of new landscaping. Most plantings are proposed in natural groupings close to the house, and include areas marked as restoration to be seeded with native plants. The planting plan features a non-mow lawn. A majority of the outer and rear property are proposed to be left natural, and landscape is proposed to be vegetative with predominantly native plants. The project proposes to utilize 74 percent of the maximum allowed water allowance. It proposes 885 cubic yards of soil movement, which is subject to site development permit, as shown on the grading plan. As such, the final discretionary approval will be considered by the Planning Commission following ASCC review. The amount of grading is proposed primarily to relocate the driveway.

Mr. Garcia presented the proposed exterior and landscape lighting. All fixtures are compliant with the Municipal Code. Staff recommended minor lighting reductions to the recessed lighting around the house, and the applicant has accepted those recommendations.

Notice of the public meeting was mailed to all property owners within 300 feet of the project site on September 3, 2021. To date, one comment has been received raising concerns with the project, and has been shared with the ASCC prior to the meeting. A second comment was received just prior to the meeting in support of the project. Mr. Garcia said that staff had assumed the applicant team was in contact with at least the immediate neighbors. However, based on the comments received from the immediate neighbor, such outreach may not have been sufficient to identify concerns to be raised earlier in the review process. He said staff's recommended approval assumed that neighborhood outreach was received and considered. He suggested that after applicant presentation and public comments, the ASCC should consider the next best steps for project review.

Chair Ross invited questions from the Commissioners.

Vice Chair Wilson asked what steps are available to the Commission, considering the neighbor's comments haven't been taken into account on the project. Planning and Building Director Russell said their recommendation would be to hear the applicant's presentation, receive the public comments, and follow with discussion among the Commission regarding appropriate steps. She said staff would be happy to provide some ideas about how to possibly go forward.

Chair Ross asked, since this is a recommendation to the Planning Commission, if it has been placed on a Planning Commission agenda yet. Planning and Building Director Russell said it has not yet been scheduled for Planning Commission. Chair Ross asked if the range of available options would be the usual options – approval, approval with additional conditions, a request to return to ASCC with potential changes, or denial. Director Russell said the normal range of options that the ASCC would take are available. This will be their recommendation up to the Planning Commission. It would be a recommendation for approval, approval with changes, or asking the applicant team to go back and reconsider or redesign items and bring them forward again. She said the ASCC might be interested to go out for a meeting at the site, and if they feel this warranted, staff could arrange that.

Commissioner Koch asked how long the story poles have been up. Mr. Garcia said he believes the story poles have been up for a month prior to the meeting. Commissioner Koch asked if there were any questions from neighbors within that month. Mr. Garcia said there was an inquiry from the adjacent neighbor, who waited for the staff report and plans to be published prior to providing comment.

Ms. Elizabeth Holmes, applicant, commented that the story poles have been up for a couple of months. She said she has had conversations with most of her neighbors, including Leslie Latham, explaining what was happening. She said that she sent an email earlier today. She had gotten up on her roof and taken photos from the windows that they are concerned about. She shared that she is concerned and did not spend six years designing this to upset anyone. She sent the photos, taken from all of the second-floor windows as well as the garage doors, to the Planning Commission. She said she is happy to walk anyone through it.

Mr. Jeff Farrell, architect, commented that they feel the owner does not actually understand what is going to be built, and the fact that between the garage door and their house is a six-foot incline between them.

Chair Ross interjected that there will be an opportunity for application presentation which would be a great time to address all of these things.

Commissioner Koch wondered what the normal timing of story poles is in which neighbors can view the site beforehand, as it appears that it was at least a month or so. Planning and Building Director Russell said the normal timing for the story poles can be between a month or more before the public notice, or right before the public notice. Anything within that range is typical.

Commissioner Cheung asked if this is a situation where, as part of the initial application, the applicants were to have certified that they notified immediate neighbors. He asked if that was confirmed to have been done. Planning and Building Director Russell said they ask applicants to reach out to neighbors. The applicant did let staff know in this case that they had reached out to them; however, whether that level of outreach was sufficient may be the question.

Chair Ross invited the applicant to make their presentation.

Ms. Holmes shared that she has lived in the town for 15 years, at the current address for 9 years. She said she is a designer and interior architect and works on residential projects, many in town and many in other areas. She has three kids that have gone through school in the town. This project has been on her drawing board for about six years. She hired an architecture firm on the East Coast that does pre-fab houses in hopes that it would help her speed up the process, although having been six years, she said it may not have helped. She remarked that it harder to make decisions for herself and much easier to make them for her clients. She shared that she grew up in an Eichler in Sunnyvale, a style that seems to her to be very typical in Portola Valley. She looked at many styles, but when she bought the property the house was in terrible shape, although it was beautifully built in the 1950s. She described that the roof has no plywood on it, and all of the trim on the exterior is pine and has moss growing on it. Her goal has been to replace the house with something that would fit in the neighborhood and fit in the community. She is in a lovely location, but most of her property is behind the house.

Ms. Holmes went on to say she has always had two goals. The main one was to be able to see the back side of the property. Several years ago, PG&E and the Town cut down about 13 100-foot eucalyptus trees across the street from her, so she now has a view of the mountains, which she never had before. However, the view is from her garage. In trying to balance and move the driveway to the back and also take advantage of the view, she decided to flip the entire plan from the garage on the west side to the garage on the east side. She said her goal was always to move as little dirt as possible and to use her landscaping and her knowledge from the Westridge Garden Club and from her previous house in Portola Valley to plant the plants that have done very well in the area. She submitted a landscape description and walked the Conservation Committee through, and received helpful comments from them. She placed the house stepping down the hill, moving very little dirt. It's not a huge house. It is a four-bedroom house. She said that she has three kids, two of which will be gone in three years and the third will follow in two years. Her bedroom is on one end and the living room/kitchen/dining room is one big room. There's a family room, a mud room, a garage and a little wine storage area tucked underneath the stairs. She said she does not consider the house to be extravagant in any way. She has been moved by sea ranch and all of the wood houses around, so her intention was always to do horizontal wood siding, which would help it look long and low, not tall. She added that, clearly, in the last couple years, wood has become a serious issue. She has spoken with her architect and her contractor about using a pressure-treated thermally-modified wood. Mr. Farrell explained that this wood is put in a kiln and heated up which changes the chemical properties of the wood and makes it more resistant to rot and fire.

Ms. Holmes said she said she is deeply sorry that her neighbors, Ann and Leslie, didn't feel comfortable enough to come to her house and talk to her about the problems. She has talked to them about the house location and the driveway and what was going to be next to their house over the last couple of years. She stated that the story poles have been up for two months, and nobody came to her to ask her anything. She said she obviously sent out the information too late, and they happened to be going out of town, which she wasn't aware of. She said she set up a Zoom call for Friday afternoon, but when she got on the call, they had cancelled it, saying they were overwhelmed by the drawings and needed time to look over them. She said they didn't respond to her again until Sunday afternoon when they left her a message that they were sending a letter. She thinks she could have easily walked them through, taken them on the roof, as she did herself this afternoon, taking pictures from all of the windows.

Ms. Holmes said the windows that face the neighbors' house are her daughter's bathroom window, her closest window, and the boys' bathroom windows. The elevation of the garage is at least three feet below their elevation and there is a big hill right there with a huge oak tree on it.

Also, they have a six-foot fence on their property and on her property, which she said has not been a big deal. They also have new trees growing in that area. She said she hopes they can work this out, because she certainly would not have done anything to be a bad neighbor. She said she understands their concern about the gravel on the driveway because they have a wonderful neighbor across the street who has a long gravel driveway, and they can all hear it every time she drives in and out, and she can see that they wouldn't want that right next door to them. She said that wouldn't be a big deal to change. She felt that they wouldn't be able to see any light at the garage doors, and garage doors that are installed nowadays are very quiet, so she is not concerned about the garage doors. She said that she thinks they can work it out. She has talked about this property and the house for the nine years that she's lived on the property, and had a lot of very positive feedback.

Planning and Building Director Russell clarified that staff received the pictures but there wasn't time to forward them to the ASCC members. Ms. Holmes said she could share them.

Commissioner Koch asked Ms. Holmes how she proposed to change the gravel driveway. Ms. Holmes replied it is actually at the top of the rest of the driveway and is a small section. She originally wanted to have a nice country driveway but because of the slope it needs to be all concrete. She said she would just continue the concrete and use crushed gravel around the side, which is different than gravel. It is DG, which is what all of her walkways are.

Ms. Holmes shared the photos that she had taken from the southwest corner of her house which is going to be the driveway. She pointed out the hill and the neighbors' six-foot fence and their house where the edge of the neighbors' roof was visible. She showed photos from various other aspects of her house indicating that the neighbors' house was not visible. She pointed out that the elevation of their house is several feet higher than hers, by at least 36 inches. She stated again that she is happy to take any of the Commissioners through the property at any time.

Commissioner Koch asked staff what dictates a site meeting and why they were not given the opportunity to have a site meeting for this project. Planning and Building Director Russell said they just haven't re-started site meetings yet, so this would have been the first one. She said they would be happy to schedule a site meeting. Commissioner Koch said she doesn't necessarily think they need a site visit at this point, but she wondered if there was a way to have smaller meetings. She felt if the neighbor had seen the perspective from the applicant's side none of this would have been an issue. Planning and Building Director Russell said they tired to use their best judgment about whether a site visit was warranted or not. They did not anticipate that this was an issue at the time the meeting was scheduled.

Chair Ross invited further questions from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Cheung asked the applicant if they had explicitly invited all of the immediate neighbors to discuss the project with her. Ms. Holmes said she knows several of the neighbors very well. On the back side of her where her driveway is, some new neighbors just moved in about two months ago. She went over and introduced herself to them and told them what she was doing. She said she has talked to every neighbor in the last several years more than once, and as neighbors noticed when the story poles went up, she did have people over. She repeated that she has talked to Ms. Latham while walking down the street, more than one time. She said she didn't show them her drawings six months ago, or six years ago, but she has been talking about it and been very clear about what she was doing. Nobody had anything negative to say at all, and she thinks if she had shown the drawings to them earlier, gone over and knocked



on their door with the drawings a week ago, then they wouldn't have this problem. She said if they came to the site, they would hopefully understand that their concerns she doesn't feel are concerns, but if they are, she said, she is open to dealing with them.

Mr. Farrell added, regarding the three things that they had complained about – the location, the garage and the guest parking – the garage has to stay there, but they can address the light and the noise spillage. He said the noise from the driveway is an easy fix and the lights aren't really facing anything the neighbors can see from their house. Regarding the driveways and cars shining lights at them, the hill provides a huge screen. He suggested if they were worried about the lights, they could add more screening and they have addressed those issues that have been brought up. He said the lighting on the exterior is minimal in order to light up the pathways to enjoy the site when walking around at night. The property is not heavily lighted, and was minimized as much as they could.

Hearing no further questions from the Commissioners, Chair Ross invited comments from the public.

Ms. Leslie Latham along with Ann Wengert said they live at 150 Grove Drive. They have been very happy neighbors and members of the Grove Drive community for 22 years. She thanked the Commission for the opportunity to speak and communicate their concerns. Since the Commission had read their letter from last night, she wanted to respond on some comments made by Ms. Holmes, whom she considers a neighbor and a friend. She said Ms. Holmes and her three kids have been very considerate neighbors, so the way they were surprised in this process was unexpected. Given the timing, she said they chose to write a formal letter. When they finally saw the plans late Thursday afternoon, they were primarily surprised by the location of the garage. She related that they had met Ms. Holmes while out walking her dog at one point, and she told them that she will have an opportunity to cure the easement for the her driveway on her property, because she would be moving the driveway. She said they saw the story poles and that she has a few pictures as well. She said they did speak about it, but the thing that really surprised her and led them to their concerns was they never heard any description of the garage being moved around to the back of the house, closer to their property and farther from the street. She said they just don't know what the impact of that will be because they just saw it.

Ms. Latham said they are coming at this from a perspective of wanting to understand what the impact is. She wanted that to be clear that they are happy that already there is some understanding of what their first issue was, the noise created by having gravel after the driveway converts to gravel, which then comes around and leads to guest parking. She said that it is 30-some feet from their master bedroom suite over to their privacy fence, and then perhaps another 30 feet or so to Ms. Holmes' driveway, possibly up to 100 feet. She said that's going to have some impact, but they don't know what it is. She hoped they understand that they felt it was legitimate to raise the question. She said they spent a lot of time looking at the plans. Since their house is a 1954 adobe house and stays nice and cool, they keep the window open, and noise from cars coming in and out of Ms. Holmes's driveway and onto the gravel and possibly into the guest parking is likely to carry. They don't know how much, but that's what they're asking. She said their tree concerns were raised in that priority order. The question of the light spillage from the second story was their third priority. She apologized to Ms. Holmes that she had to climb up on her roof to take the photos, but she appreciated it. They also have some photos taken from within their house. She said they just don't know what the effect would be. They can see with the story poles and have pictures of that, but that is their third concern.

Ms. Latham commented, regarding the process, when she sent through her email to staff around the 26<sup>th</sup> of August, the story poles had been up and she had talked with Ms. Holmes about the property at a cursory level, never talking about the driveway or the garage. When she sent the email through on the 26<sup>h</sup>, she wondered what the process was for coming to understand the full design plans, and the timing for providing input.. She was not waiting for the official package to come out, as Mr. Garcia had said. She just wanted to know when she needed to provide comments. That was when she started to contact Ms. Holmes to say maybe they should see the plans. By the time Ms. Holmes sent her the landscape plans and the design plans later, they felt that they just needed to dive in because they knew that the meeting was on Monday. She said they didn't know what to ask at that point, so that was why they cancelled the meeting that was set up. Ms. Latham asked the Commission if what she had said so far made sense.

Chair Ross first invited any further members of the public to speak.

Suki Eyre commented that she lives across the street directly opposite Ms. Holmes. She said from their perspective when there will not be leaves they will see the building, but compared to what they see now it will be a great improvement. She said Ms. Holmes has put a lot of time and energy into the design of this, a lot of effort at least over the last two or three years. She has been iterating and iterating to get the placement correct and the aesthetic correct and to be appropriate for Portola Valley. She said they support her and think it will be a great addition to their street and will definitely improve the value of all of their properties. She said Ms. Holmes is very modest about what she does for a living, but she works with very high-end clients and her design aesthetic is terrific. She has looked at the story poles, looked at the plans and thinks it's going to be a great addition to the street. As far as the driveway, she said she will love not having that driveway there, because they have a gravel driveway and people are constantly spinning out and both Ms. Holmes and she have replaced their mailboxes because people insist on turning around in their driveways. Planning and Building Director Russell confirmed that this was who sent the other comment letter that was mentioned previously which they didn't have a chance to distribute.

Hearing no further comments from the public, Chair Ross addressed Ms. Latham's request for feedback regarding her concerns. He thanked her for extensive comments and understood that one of her greatest concerns is not having a good understanding of how, or if, this is going to have an effect on her property. He said they all heard that, and during their discussion they will talk about what, if anything, they can do about it. He suggested closing the public hearing if she was comfortable with that. Ms. Latham said that she was.

Chair Ross invited the Commissioners to offer their thoughts and comments.

Commissioner Koch said her takeaway is an emphasis on how important site meetings are. Many of the Commissioners have an education in reading site plans and grading as their specialty but a neighbor may not, so when they look at a plan it's not a 3-D plan for them. They simply see their fence line, the property, and she said it's a service that the Commission can do in Portola Valley. She said she thinks they need to walk the site every time and see exactly what it looks and feels like. She said she didn't know if it was the responsibility of the property owner to make copies of plans and put them out there. Perhaps that's something they need to be sure to tell applicants in the future to do, but it is not a standard procedure, although they obviously want to encourage everyone to talk to their neighbors. She said she has driven by the site to see what she could see with the story poles, and it appears that the neighbors' concerns with the gravel driveway absolutely make sense, and that can be mitigated. She said garage doors

these days are so silent that she sometimes worries about her pets not even knowing the door is closing on them, so she doesn't feel that is a problem. The light spill can be addressed with blinds and other things. Bathrooms or closet lights aren't usually left on. Regarding the car turn-around and the headlights, it appears that there really would never be an issue there, but sadly the neighbors were really worried about that, which is understandable. She said it's not their fault for being worried about it. They just didn't know and had never had the opportunity to walk the site, and a site meeting would provide that opportunity.

Commissioner Koch commented that at site visits, they have even gone to a neighbor's house and looked out of their bedroom windows or decks, et cetera, and it is an invaluable opportunity for everyone to come onboard to support each other. She said she thinks the proposal is quite beautiful and an incredible improvement, not only to the property but to the neighbors around it and the property values. She said the siding is something they don't like to see right now, because of the worry about what it will look like for insurance purposes and fire danger, but the treated material is perhaps a good buffer. She was onboard with it because they don't have anything in place right now to suggest otherwise. She thought the landscaping is lovely and the lighting is minimal. She recognized that the driveway placement is a smart move, where it was very steep and appears that it was part of another neighbor's as well. It takes advantage of the views, which she said they should allow all property owners to do. Commissioner Koch said she was mostly riled up about the lack of a site meeting, which would have been beneficial for all parties in this project.

Vice Chair Wilson was looking for pictures of the garage doors, because she was concerned about whether or not they have glazing at the top. She wondered about the lighting inside the garage. She echoed Commissioner Koch's concerns about the lack of a site visit, which would have been a good idea in this instance, and also an earlier notification to the neighbors of the ancillary buildings in addition to the main one. She was concerned with the light spillage skylight window coverings. She agreed that the driveway is better situated in this plan. She agreed with the Conservation Committee's advice to keep the overseed of the acacia and move the olives and redwoods. She would like to see more native species planted. She said the fact that they got the memo so late in the day concerns her and she said she is split on what to do next. She does not like to see either the applicant or the neighbors upset. She wanted to see how they could work it out between everyone.

Chair Ross said he would offer a suggestion but he was interested in hearing everyone else's thoughts first.

Commissioner Cheung appreciated the applicants and the neighbors taking the time during the meeting to explain their thinking. Regarding the neighbor's questions, putting aside the process, the first order of business is whether or not they will move the project forward with an approval. The question of the location of the garage, in his mind, within the easement is to a first order acceptable, and there are good reasons behind that in terms of what those easement distances mean and what they are based on. He thought it fair to say, in particular with a move towards electric vehicles, and generally how vehicles have changed since the easements were made, the baseline noise and impact from the cars engines themselves will actually be quite low within what's allowed in an easement. In addition, he said his reading of the topography numbers, the grading information provided, together with the pictures provided is that beyond that, the impacts are even further reduced. He felt it was understandable for Ms. Latham to raise the concern about the impact of the garage, but with the elevation difference and its existence inside of the easement suggests that it will be a very low impact to her. He said regarding the gravel noise, the applicant has already offered to replace the use of gravel there which indicates

her willingness to resolve this and provide a solution. He thought the light spillage, insofar as window coverings and the light fixtures themselves conforming to the Design Guidelines, and also with the elevation difference involved will be something that they can accept and approve. Beyond that, Commissioner Cheung offered, out of concern for fellow neighbors and for the neighborhood that there is a difference between fire resistant materials including modified wood and non-combustible materials, and that difference will be a difference of policies, he thinks, in the not-too-distant future in town, and the reasons behind that are truly important. In addition to the wood siding, he said he thinks rubber roofing is combustible as well, so that would also end up being noncompliant. However, those are not reasons to not approve the project, because there is currently not a policy in place in that regard, but they don't want applicants to come to them later on and say that their insurance is now unaffordable and ask why they didn't tell them.

Commissioner Sill said the proposal is stunning. The architecture looks outstanding and it's great to see such an innovative design that is reasonably-sized and of modest height. There is a lot about the project that is very well-done. He said moving the driveway location makes a lot of sense. It will now access the guest house also. He thought the lighting plan looks reasonable. The wood panel siding, he said he is not familiar with the thermally-modified material. He hopes that it keeps its properties for a long time, or there will be insurance issues. He saw a wood deck in the rear of the house, and he thinks it would make sense to really think twice about whether or not to have a wood deck. He said the landscaping plan is outstanding, with a lot of thought going into it, kept close to the house, much of it left natural, some landscaped areas not even irrigated, with a good plant palette. Cleaning up the trees makes sense, and there were good responses to the Conservation Committee's comments. Water usage is also good.

Commissioner Sill said the issue with the neighbors is too bad, because absent that, they would be celebrating this as an exemplary project. He said he thought the neighbors' concerns are quite valid. He thought Commissioner Koch's comments regarding a site meeting would have helped to alleviate a lot of the issues. He would like to see the next step as to go to the Planning Commission. As the ASCC, he would like to do something like give contingent approval but then still have a site meeting where they pull together the ASCC and perhaps the Planning Commission, if interested, and also the neighbors, to consider some of the site line issues. From what they've seen, he doesn't think there will be big issues, but if there were, it would give an opportunity to come up with remedies for the situation. He thinks it will come down perhaps a little screening needed. Ms. Holmes has conceded that she is happy to just use concrete rather than gravel, so that issue goes away. He doesn't see the garage doors or cars being too noisy, as Commissioner Cheung highlighted.

Chair Ross said he didn't have any different concerns from anybody else. The wood decking and wood siding are currently allowable if they get their permit application in before the local ordinance changes, which will be within a few months he believes. He said since the decking is going to be close to grade, so there might be other options that wouldn't be outside the budget. He said he has looked at the skylight question and feels that the orientation of them is not going to create a light spillage problem. It doesn't look like they're in areas that will be typically illuminated at night but will be used mostly for providing light to otherwise internal dark rooms that need it during the day. The garage doors, at least in the illustrations, do not have a glass panel in them. He said he cautions people about that, given the way sometimes garages are used for electric chargers which can create an annoying phenomenon where glass in garage doors flashes like an emergency beacon without the homeowners realizing it's happening. He said he likes the project very much. It meets the Design Guidelines and is thoughtfully put together.

Chair Ross said he is a little concerned about the process. Clearly, the ASCC has not had a public site meeting where people are invited to attend since the beginning of the shelter-in-place in mid-March of 2020, so it's been a year-and-a-half. He can understand staff's reluctance to get them going again, but there is an opportunity here to have a site meeting that will serve the purpose that site meetings always do. It will better inform them about things they may not be able to visualize, and an opportunity for neighbors to see it from the perspective of the new residents and for the Commissioners to perhaps visit any neighbors who would like them to. He said there is a very light agenda for the next meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup>, two weeks away. The Planning Commission review of this project has not yet been scheduled, and their agendas are busy, so it's not likely to be delayed if the ASCC holds off the final consideration and recommendation for this project until the 27<sup>th</sup> of September. He said he hopes there is sufficient time between now and then to schedule both a site meeting and to put this on the agenda for the 27<sup>th</sup>. He did not think there was a need to ask the applicant to change any plans or make any modifications, which is what usually holds up a very quick turnaround for a next review. He would like to, if possible, get both a site meeting scheduled and get this on the agenda for the 27<sup>th</sup>. Planning and Building Director Russell said that would definitely be possible. Chair Ross asked how much public notice is required for a site meeting and for the agenda. She replied that they would need to notice it this week, to do that for the 27<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Koch asked if it is possible to have just two ASCC members and some neighbors come, since it is just a landscape screening issue at this point. Chair Ross said since this is an application and the applicant hasn't received any recommendation or approval from them, he would like to keep the public process open so that any member of the public or neighbor that wants to see it is welcome to do so and have their comments recorded, and he would like to see a quorum of the Commission in attendance.

Commissioner Cheung wondered if they could quickly ask Ms. Latham if her concern has been met, or not, over the course of the discussion today. Chair Ross responded that, if Ms. Latham's concerns have been completely addressed and she doesn't feel the need for a site meeting, then that would change his thinking somewhat. Chair Ross asked Ms. Latham if she would like to have a site meeting with an opportunity to interact with the public and the Commission and view the conditions up close. Ms. Latham said they would very much appreciate everyone's time to do that, and if they could do it in a way that they can hear what was said today. She said they've learned a lot, but they still think there are some open issues. She said their intention is not to derail the project; but they want to understand more and see whether there are things they can do that will address their concerns. She said she feels it's not just about tweaking the landscaping, but they would very much appreciate the site visit.

Vice Chair Wilson mentioned that, regarding light spill, the applicant didn't say whether or not she was going to do certain types of blinds that came down at certain times of the night which might alleviate some of the concerns about light spill, or with skylights. It would be a simple thing to look at that might help. Ms. Holmes explained what she planned to do in regard to windows. She said in her 13-year-old daughter's bedroom she will definitely have a sheer blind, at the least, on her windows. The other two windows are in the bathrooms, so they have blinds. In the rest of the house, all of the big windows have automatic blinds that will come down, including her daughter's room which faces somewhat towards the neighbors. Vice Chair Wilson said that kind of information would be helpful for the neighbors. Ms. Holmes said the reason she is putting skylights in is because she lived in a 1950s house where the wall went straight up and the skylight was sitting at the wall, and you never had to turn the lights on during the day. So, by putting skylights in a bunch of the internal rooms she is hoping to reduce energy usage. She

mentioned again that she is happy to walk anyone through that would like to, if possible on the 27<sup>th</sup>, because she is already paying for a rental.

Chair Ross said it appears to him that if they hold off on their final recommendations to the Planning Commission until the 27<sup>th</sup>, it will not affect the project schedule and will not delay the submission of the plans to the Planning Commission's review. Since they have that opportunity with what he feels is a negligible cost impact in terms of plan revisions and re-submittals on the applicant, he thinks it is an opportunity that they should not pass up. Their positive comments are on the record, along with the neighbor's, who are not talking about de-railing the project.

Chair Ross moved to address the project again at the September 27<sup>th</sup> meeting, and prior to that time have a publicly-noticed site meeting scheduled.

Chair Ross said the applicant can take their comments and discussion into account, and if they feel moved to think about some relatively modest changes and describe those at the site meeting, that would be sufficient for him to then be able to make final recommendations to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Sill seconded the motion.

Commissioner Koch added, as long as this will not hold up the project. Chair Ross said that is his understanding of the current schedule, that it is not actually on the Planning Commission schedule yet.

The motion carried, 5-0.

Mr. Farrell asked if they could get a tentative date for the Planning Commission schedule. Chair Ross said he wouldn't be opposed to this being placed on the Planning Commission schedule pending the Commission's input. Planning and Building Director Russell said they will take this feedback into account when they look at the schedule. She will be mindful of the comments and try to come up with a schedule that does not create any delay, but creates the process steps they want.

Planning and Building Director Russell said staff has clear direction about what the Commission would like to see. They have some logistical things to work through, so they will be in touch with everyone over email to work those things out.

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

### **(4) Commission Reports**

Commissioner Koch said she and Commissioner Sill went up to Firethorn off of Los Trancos, to the project that's been going on for four years. They helped them decide where to place some screening trees. It is a long process because the Los Trancos Road tree removal has not really happened, but they did place some trees where they thought they would be best suited.

Vice Chair Wilson and Chair Ross reviewed the Hillbrook. They will be doing them in two phases. The first phase is going to be the pool house and the pool and some landscaping. The second phase will be where they attached to the house rather than away from the house. She said they made some suggestions. Chair Ross added that the project as originally approved included a structure that was to become an ADU. That is now a pool house, so it is a different

process, plus the landscaping revisions was something that Mr. Garcia brought to them in the last week or so. From what he understands, Commissioner Koch and he had some similar concerns about the exposure of the pool and patio area to the trail area. It is elevated above the trail, and it doesn't look like there's going to be much screening. It's more of a privacy question for the owners than it is protecting the public from watching people in the pool, but they did raise the issue. There were some questions about the lighting. There are steps that descend to that area that will be visible from off-site. The step lights are mounted very low to the steps, and are low lumens. He said he really doesn't see an alternative from a safety standpoint of having the step lights that they were suggesting. They were fairly minimal, one light for every three or four steps, which may just be something that they can't mitigate. Otherwise, he thought the proposed changes were consistent with the guidelines. Jake is going to take their comments back to the applicant.

Chair Ross said he has also been looking at 40 Firethorn. It is apparently going through a number of revisions, some modest, some more profound. He has only looked at the modest things so far, such as changing to stucco color, which appeared to him to be just fine and still within the reflectivity range allowed. There may be some other things coming up to review as well; if so, he will report on them next time. He also commented on 17 Redberry, which is still in progress, but approaching final inspections and has asked for some changes including exterior color, some use of synthetic turf that's incorporated within the driveway area. Chair Ross said that after he reviewed the proposed changes, he approved them. Although they are not big fans of synthetic turf, it is a relatively small quantity in a high wear area. It's decorative and not particularly visible from anywhere offsite. Also, it won't require the use of water, so it seemed like a logical place to use it.

Chair Ross invited comments from the public. Hearing none, he closed the item.

#### **(5) Staff Report**

Planning and Building Director Russell said she didn't have anything to report. Vice Chair Wilson asked if there was anything else scheduled for the 27<sup>th</sup>. Director Russell said there was nothing confirmed for the 27<sup>th</sup>. She will be checking with the planners tomorrow. There is one hand up from the public.

Chair Ross invited comments from the public.

Marcin Pawlowski [phonetic], Stonegate Road, commended the Commission and the Building Director for their work for the community, and wanted to say that neighbors received the mail notification about the ASCC meeting more than a week before the ASCC session. He asked if neighbors in the vicinity of the Spring Ridge Winery could receive such a notice more than a week before the session for the Spring Ridge also. He said having the full week to plan the time and read the materials is tremendously helpful, especially given this has been on hold for so long. Planning and Building Director Russell responded that when they send a notice, it will always be at least ten days before the meeting. The postal mail has slowed down the notices recently, so they've been trying to get them out a little earlier. In regard to Spring Ridge, the Neely Winery project, she said they also have a very extensive email list and will be emailing all of those people directly. If there are any additional residents that want to be on the email list, they can email her and ask to be on the list. They will get that list on that same day, so that could be an extra couple of days' notice as well. Everything will be posted on the website when that project goes forward. Vice Chair Wilson asked Director Russell if she had any rough idea of

when the project is coming forward. Director Russell said they are getting much closer and it could definitely be on the ASCC agenda in October.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

#### **(6) ASCC Meeting of August 9, 2021**

Chair Ross invited corrections, revisions or comments. Hearing none, he invited a motion for approval of the minutes.

Vice Chair Wilson moved to approve the August 9, 2021, minutes as submitted. Seconded by Commissioner Sill, the motion passed unanimously.

Chair Ross thanked the Commissioners, members of the public and applicant teams, and said hopefully they will get a chance to see other in person in the next couple of weeks.

### **ADJOURNMENT** [6:02 p.m.]