



TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY
Wildfire Preparedness Committee
Tuesday, October 5, 2021 5:00 PM
Virtual Meeting

SPECIAL VIDEOCONFERENCE MEETING AGENDA

Remote Meeting Covid-19 Advisory: On September 16, the Governor signed AB 361, amending the Ralph M. Brown Act (Brown Act) to allow legislative bodies to continue to meet virtually during the present public health emergency. AB 361 is an urgency bill which goes into effect on October 1, 2021. The bill extends the teleconference procedures authorized in Executive Order N-29-20, which expired on September 30, 2021, during the current COVID-19 pandemic and allows future teleconference procedures under limited circumstances defined in the bill. Portola Valley Town Council and commission and committee public meetings are being conducted electronically to prevent imminent risks to the health or safety of attendees. The meeting is not available for in-person attendance. Members of the public may attend the meeting by video or phone linked in this agenda.

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Meeting ID: 869 3544 8894

Password: 685792

MEETING AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Open Communications for Items not on Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes from August 17, 2021, Meeting
4. Adoption of a Resolution Confirming the State of Emergency and Need to Continue Conducting Town Public Meetings Remotely
 - a. Adoption of a Resolution of the Wildfire Preparedness Committee of the Town of Portola Valley Confirming Existing State Emergency and Authorizing Continued Remote Public Meetings (Resolution No. __)
5. Wildfire Best Practices: National Fire Protection Association 1140 Discussion (Dale Pfau)
6. Town Relationship with Private Company to Perform Wildfire Mitigation Assessments (Staff)
7. Funding for Additional Vegetation Management on Town-Owned Property (Karen Vahtra)
8. Discussion of Date/Time for Monthly Meetings (Michael Tomars, Chair)
9. Committee Status – Ad Hoc to Standing Committee
10. Subcommittee Updates
 - a. Resident Communications and Outreach/Evacuation Routes
 - b. Home Hardening/Insurance/Infrastructure Back-up
 - c. Vegetation Management/Defensible Space

11. Standing Items- As Needed

- a. Fire Marshal Update
- b. Staff Updates
 - i. Evacuation Study
 - ii. New Assistant Town Manager
 - iii. Veoci and Upcoming County-Wide Preparedness Drill
 - iv. Other updates
- c. Committee Member Updates
 - i. Table at Town Picnic
- d. Review of Committee Correspondences/Items of Note

12. Adjourn

Wildfire Preparedness Committee Minutes

August 17, 2021

In attendance:

Committee Members:

Michael Tomars, Chair
Dale Pfau, Vice Chair
Megan Koch
M.J. Lee
Marianne Plunder
Karen Vahtra
Jennifer Youstra

Town Manager:

Jeremy Dennis

Fire Marshall:

Don Bullard

Town of PV (Host):

Sharon Hanlon

Guest Speaker:

Joe Torres

Mid-Peninsula Open Space District ("MROSD"):

Joshua Hugg

Members of the Public:

V. Baldwin
M. Bercow
D. Breen
D. Cardinal
D. Carlson
R. Day
P. Dewes
L. Duval
K. Eckelmeyer
D. Enea
D. Fischer
T. Godfrey
M. Goodrich
J. Guichard
J. Maxwell
L. Millard
J. Murphy
B. Morgenthaler
J. Maxwell
V. Schachter
J. Shefren

- E. Shuck
- A. Thompson
- B. Turcott

ITEM 1: Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 5:03 p.m.

ITEM 2: Open Communications:

There were no open communications.

ITEM 3: Approval of Minutes:

A motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of March 18, 2021, was made by M. Koch and seconded by D. Pfau. Motion passed unanimously.

ITEM 4: New Committee Member:

M. Tomars deferred Item 4 to later in the meeting.

ITEM 5: Presentation from Joe Torres, All-Risk Shield:

Mr. Torres, founder of All-Risk Shield, a Wildfire Home Hardening Company in CA, addressed the Committee regarding wildfire mitigation measure implemented in the field. It was noted that Torres has 20 years of extensive experience in fighting wildfires and has successfully employed home hardening strategies for residents in Los Angeles County.

- Torres indicated that the centerpiece of a successful risk mitigation strategy is a thorough home assessment, which prioritizes hardening improvements and fuel reduction. To prepare for fire season, homeowners generally start in January.
- Most fire events in the Los Angeles County occur during September, October, and November.
- As a risk mitigation measure, Phos-Chek LC95W, a colorless, odorless, ammonium phosphate fire retardant, is typically applied on property lines for homes near canyons to increase defensible space. Generally, it is applied twice annually.
- Photos were viewed of homes saved during the Woolsey Fire, and it was noted that 100% of structures defended with Phos-Chek were saved.
- As a service to the community, All-Risk has been offering free home evaluations in the area.
- Questions and Answers:
 - M. Koch asked if Phos-Chek harms the environment and habitat. She also inquired about alternative retardants. J. Torres indicated that Phos-Chek is the most effective, environmentally safe fire retardant available.
 - With respect to pool pumps, M. Koch inquired about who operates pumps when homes are evacuated. J. Torres represented that a trained professional generally operates a pump, but homeowners may obtain operational training for shelter in place situations.
 - D. Carlson asked when pumps might be considered an effective tool. J. Torres represented that a proper risk assessment is necessary to know if it's feasible and potentially effective to use a pool or a pond for water.
 - D. Carlson also asked about the effectiveness of exterior sprinkler systems. J. Torres represented that during wind events, sprinkler systems have marginal impact.
 - D. Bullard asked if risk assessments primarily consider vulnerabilities of structures and secondarily anything within the 100-foot zone of structures. J. Torres represented that he begins with the structure, and subsequently considers

the 100-foot zone. Joe commented that three aspects are examined --- Environment, Home, and Vegetation. He also measures slopes when examining structures and considers fire patterns of the area.

- Based on the photos provided, D. Bullard noted that it appears that material quantities of Phos-Chek were applied outside of the home ignition zone. J. Torres represented that since homeowners generally complete mitigation around structures, Phos-Chek is applied outside of the footprint. The main goal of Phos-Chek is to increase defensible space. As such, it's applied on perimeters that can't be managed through mechanical fuel reduction.
- D. Bullard also noted that homes shown in the presentation were stucco and hard scaped as compared to wood sided construction, which is predominately existent in the Portola Valley.
- B. Morgenthaler inquired whether interior sprinklers combat wildfires. J. Torres represented that interior sprinkler systems mitigate structure fires from an internal event (not from an external threat).
- B. Morgenthaler also inquired about the half-life of active ingredients in Phos-Chek. Joe indicated that he would research this matter.
- B. Morgenthaler asked if J. Torres had any information on technology mishaps during wildfire emergencies (e.g., communication failures). He represented that although communication infrastructure was not his core competency, he was impressed with San Mateo County's Zonehaven system, which has done tremendous work with CalFire to implement evacuation zones and routes.
- J. Murphy commented that most of these wildfires are in chaparral, and we are in woodland. She noted that for most of us, it's essentially impossible to eliminate brush even if we do extensive vegetation management and home hardening on our properties. She questioned if it would be necessary to apply retardant to our forest. J. Torres represented that Phos-Chek is not a panacea, and that a proper risk assessment is the most important thing to complete. Chaparral, coyote brush and sumac burned fast in Woolsey event. But in the Glass fire, an emergency application of Phos-Chek was used for woody areas --- vegetation in that area is very similar to Portola Valley.
- D. Breen requested that J. Torres provide his impressions of Portola Valley from a fire perspective. In response, Joe deferred to the local jurisdiction, and noted that he can't comment on Portola Valley without more extensive local knowledge. His primary goal is to conduct assessments on a property specific basis.
- M. Koch inquired about the efficacy of adding a foam retardant roof system. J. Torres encouraged M. Koch to submit inquiries to local authorities and added the following information:
 - Foams and gels are quite different.
 - Foams in a wildfire setting deteriorate because they require water to retain their structure.
 - LTR are more durable and retain integrity after two inches of rain;
 - Although gels can be used for extreme cases, they require lots of water to retain efficacy. These should be applied within 2-4 hours of an advancing fire.

ITEM 6: PV Canyon Fire Preparedness:

J. Youstra presented her report on fire preparedness as it relates to PV's canyons.

- To find out how to address fire risk, the Canyon Working Group studied the canyon bordered by Alpine, Westridge, Cervantes, and Minoca. The challenges: decades of

fuel buildup on private properties, a desire to preserve habitat and native vegetation, and heavy slopes.

- Report was completed by three residents representing the two WPV-Ready team (approximately 40+ residences) that border the canyon: Robert Seidl, Bob Turcott and Jennifer Youstra.
- PV's Safety Element identifies the canyons within Town among the highest risk, fire-prone areas. WIND + EMBERS + CANYONS = Explosive Hurricane-like Fires due to the physics of fire and slopes.
- The study group consulted with the following experts on a tour of the canyon, and followed up with questions and answers:
 - Don Bullard, WFPD Fire Marshal
 - Solomon Pineda, Vegetation management Contractor
 - Alex Von Feldt, Executive Director of Grassroots Ecology
 - Lucas Ottoboni, Romig Soils Engineer
 - Darren Donkin, Romig Geologist
- Key Findings:
 - Extend defensible space to 200 feet around structures on steep slopes (>30 degrees).
 - Clear ladder fuels and raise the lower reaches of the canopy so that a vegetation-free gap exists to 8 feet above ground.
 - Native plants can occupy the area 1 to 2 feet above ground.
 - Islands of vegetation are permissible if they don't provide a ladder to the canopy.
 - 80% of ladder fuels are made up of dead wood and woody branches, poison oak, scotch broom and chemise. Target trees are pine and eucalyptus which are part of the Flammable Five.
 - Stay 25 feet back from creek beds and riparian corridors.
 - Before removing trees from slopes, check slope stability on the Town's Ground Movement Potential Map.
 - Wildfire risk mitigation and habitat preservation are not mutually exclusive.
- Report Elements include the following:
 - Canyon Tour video and verbatim transcripts of Q&A interviews with each expert;
 - Perspective piece on creating sustainable, habitat sensitive fire solutions;
 - PV Vegetation Management Contractor List; and
 - Contractor Instructions (for habitat-friendly fire mitigation) in English and Spanish.
- J. Youstra emphasized that the report serves a discussion starter and follows an open-source model, meaning that anyone can use the report as source material, add their thoughts and comments, and extend the lessons to other canyons.
- Questions and Answers:
 - L. Duval asked if there are fundraising alternatives to get the work done given the costs contemplated. Alternatively, she suggested that some neighbors could agree to help others that can't afford the work on their property.
 - J. Youstra represented that fundraising possibilities have been considered multiple times, but lack of success has made this a nonviable approach. To date, all work has been funded by private property owners.
 - J. Youstra mentioned that with respect to Pine Ridge, some neighbors did assist others before this year's chipping day. J. Youstra represented that this approach could be considered going forward.
 - K. Eckelmeyer indicated that residents of Sequoias could benefit from the Canyon Report and offered to share it with the Sequoias.
 - J. Dennis agreed to consider whether the Town will be posting the report on its website and believed that sharing it would start a discussion.

ITEM 7: Karen Vahtra Vegetation Management Proposal

- K. Vahtra proposed the following recommendation that was approved by the Vegetation Subcommittee:
To encourage people to remove dead and dying Redwood trees, the recommendation was to waive the permit removal fee. Karen noted that the Town has many unhealthy Redwoods that were planted in inappropriate locations and won't not survive drought conditions.
 - Currently, a \$82 permit fee is required for removal, which would be waived pursuant to the recommendation.
 - Residents should still apply for a permit, and Conservation Committee can evaluate and offer guidance.
 - The Flammable Five do not require permits for removal.
- D. Pfau disagreed with the recommendation because he believed that Redwoods were very fire tolerant.
- D. Carlson commented that Redwoods burn with difficulty if significantly old, and their bark is reasonably fire resistant. However, young Redwoods are quite flammable. If a tree is drought stressed or has some underbrush, it can act as a torch if ignited. So, she supported the proposal, and noted that stressed trees should be given high priority for removal.
- J. Murphy mentioned that the Conservation Committee is revising guidelines, hoping to create a map to outline clearly where Redwoods should be situated, and noted that they do not belong in all locations.
- Motion: J. Youstra motioned to approve. K. Vahtra seconded the motion. Roll call vote was taken. Yes: Tomars, Pfau, Lee, Vahtra, Youstra; Absent: Koch, Plunder, Aalfs. Motion passed.

ITEM 8: Michael Tomars Fire Committee Re-Formation

- M. Tomars requested discussion regarding the Committee's current structure. He noted that we currently operate as three subcommittees with some areas having more actionable items than others. M. Tomars requested feedback as to whether the Committee should maintain the status quo or adopt a more open architecture.
- D. Pfau expressed support for maintaining status quo which facilitates specific expertise.
- K. Vahtra noted that more emphasis should be placed on home hardening and infrastructure. She expressed her appreciation for MJ's support of communications.
- Others echoed these comments, and the group agreed to consider alternatives, but no formal decision was made to alter the current structure.

ITEM 4: Michael Tomars Welcomed MJ Lee to the Committee (backtrack)

- Appointed by Town Council in April 2021. MJ serves on Cable and Undergrounding committee.
- MJ will be working on the Committee's communications.

ITEM 9: Michael Tomars on Moving from an Ad hoc to a Standing Committee

- M. Tomars proposed moving to a standing committee, with monthly meetings at a standard time.
- D. Pfau moved to pass the motion, and J. Youstra seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Motion passed.

ITEM 10: Dale Pfau on Evacuation Planning Update

- D. Pfau updated the group on the Evacuation study RFP.

- D. Pfau noted that the Council approved the Committee's RFP recommendation. The RFP requires consultants to provide information for traffic evacuation study, as well as satisfy Safety and Circulation elements of the General Plan and compliance with SB 99 (single access neighborhoods) and AB 747 (Hazard Mitigation). RFP requests include identification of infrastructure improvements and other mitigation efforts to facilitate evacuation.
- The RFP was released in May, and the Town has only received two responses. The Communications Subcommittee and Town Staff have interviewed both respondents. A final recommendation will be provided to the Town in September.
- D. Pfau presented the following details/information regarding modeling:
 - Approximately 7,500 vehicles would evacuate the Town and environs over Alpine Road and Portola Road; data from Zonehaven*
 - Single lane roads like Alpine and Portola can handle between 1700 and 2000 cars per hour during normal circumstances
 - Consultants use 950/1000 cars per hour, per lane for evacuation modelling
 - The Town has no evacuation routes to the West
 - Ladera and I280 intersections pose the greatest potential bottlenecks
 - Consultants currently do not model impacts to account for accidents, decreased visibility, rogue drivers, horse trailers, smoke, embers, and time of day (day versus night)
 - Consultants do not have viable dynamic traffic models
- D. Pfau indicated that efforts are focused on achieving a Dynamic Traffic Model:
 - D. Cardinal has developed his own dynamic traffic model, which appears to be far more flexible than what is used by consultants
 - Additional data will be generated from a traffic study that should improve the model and sensitivities
 - Most scenarios currently show evacuation times of between 2 and 3 hours to completely evacuate. Efforts are underway to incorporate more complex variables (e.g., accidents) into the model.
 - This model could be an important planning tool moving forward
 - Lessons learned: Leave Early!
- M. Plunder sought clarification as to whether other variables were considered (e.g., road closures for jacked-knifed horse trailers).
 - D. Pfau commented that we'll use D. Cardinal's model, and that residents need have SMC alert in place. Sheriff support will be provided at all major intersections.
- B. Morgenthaler requested further details regarding evacuation metrics.
 - J. Dennis commented that we have two lanes on Alpine with 1,000 cars inbound and outboard on a busy morning. The capacity of a single lane is 2,000 cars per hour. Portola Valley has 1,700 households. If households have two cars each, that equates to 3,400 cars. The model doubled 3,400, so the estimate is conservative.
 - D. Pfau mentioned that realistically we don't have the right-of-way to increase lanes.
 - D. Pfau indicated that the more information we have about evacuation, the better we can plan and set expectations.
- B. Turcott thanked D. Pfau for the work and added that we are legally required to increase our population by 15%. In this regard, he wondered if modelling would assist in determining where additional housing should be located. B. Turcott mentioned that he's concerned about the possibility of cars are lined up by canyon, which can become their

own weather systems. He also questioned if the Committee was considering temporary refuge areas to get cars downhill and out of canyon areas.

- D. Pfau mentioned that we have considered safe zones. Depending on what the consultants determine, this approach may offer a viable option. As far as housing, we need to know how people normally evacuate.
- D. Carlson requested clarification as to how schools enter the evacuation mix.
 - D. Pfau mentioned that we need to consider schools in the planning process.
- MJ requested clarification regarding how the Stanford Wedge figures into the projections.
 - D. Pfau commented that with current traffic numbers, and projected occupant size, the Wedge is not significant in the overall scheme of things.
- M. Plunder requested information on the number of contractor cars included in the estimate.
 - D. Pfau indicated that 7,500 cars is the baseline for ALL vehicles, which is very conservative metric and includes contractor's cars as well as residents.
- K. Vahtra asked if we have started conversations on Shelter-in-Place locations (e.g., Alpine Hills).
- B. Morgenthaler requested that the final product be a written evacuation plan provided to all PV residents, included the Sequoias.
 - MJ commented that the MPV-Ready group for Sequoias has a huge evacuation plan, and any new product can be used in conjunction with the existing plan.

ITEM 11: Karen Vahtra update from the Home Hardening Subcommittee

- J. Dennis has arranged a public event with Insurance Commissioner and Josh Becker.

ITEM 12: Karen Vahtra update from the Vegetation Management Subcommittee

- K. Vahtra updated the Committee on efforts to get PG&E to assist with tree removal. She mentioned that PG&E doesn't want to remove trees cited by the Committee. Instead, PG&E wants to remove Oaks, and the Committee wants to remove 61 Pines that will impact evacuation. So, other ways must be found to finance tree removals.
- On the topic of financing for fire preparedness, K. Vahtra indicated that three different models were considered, and each were stifled by various forms of resistance. As such, financing should probably be its own effort or committee. In the absence of that, K. Vahtra suggested a tax initiative to remove trees and support other fire preparedness measures in Town (e.g., Utility Tax or Property Tax).
 - B. Turcott expressed his belief that voters would support a tax and encouraged Committee to not feel restrained in following this approach.
 - J. Dennis noted that people seem open to the conversation and suggested a possible Parcel Tax, which would support infrastructure related items, and vegetation removal.
 - D. Pfau indicated that if the financing was well thought out, with very specific items (e.g., widen Alpine, remove eucalyptus, put a buffer at Windy Hill, etc.), the Town would garner support from the community.
 - D. Carlson agreed with Dale's comments and indicated that photographic demonstrations of risks would be helpful.
 - J. Youstra provided thoughts regarding the Utility User Tax and other potential revenue sources.
 - M. Tomars indicated that the Committee needs to look at financing vehicles, uses of funds, and possible related issues, including pain points.
 - J. Dennis noted that a conversation between the Vegetation Subcommittee and Town staff should move quickly.

- M. Plunder noted that we need the list of items to accomplish if we get money. She also noted that we could get Boy Scouts to count the hazard trees, as well as acknowledged that the Council did not include a Woodside-style resident reimbursement program as a priority.

ITEM 13: Fire Marshall Don Bullard Updates

- D. Bullard reported that he introduced the Committee's second set of recommendations to San Mateo County and Town of Woodside.
 - Woodside and San Mateo County both had comments, especially regarding the Slope Initiative (i.e., 200 feet of defensible space on slopes). Some of the comments dealt with homeowner costs and privacy screening.
 - Don will share the letters from San Mateo County and Woodside, both of which were dated in June 2021.
 - J. Youstra commented that she supported these recommendations because they are needed to strengthen fire resiliency in a WUI. She also noted that the Town's work can't be complete without a funding source to assist private homeowners. She indicated that people need to feel that the Town is a partner in these projects with them.

ITEM 14: Staff Updates from Jeremy Dennis

- J. Dennis had the following updates from Town staff:
 - PG&E is removing some trees, but the numbers people had hoped.
 - The Town Picnic is scheduled for October 9th. The Committee is tentatively contemplating booth.
 - Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire multijurisdictional effort assisted in obtaining a grant for fire prevention in Portola Valley. J. Dennis gave a shout out to D. Bullard for helping us become the fourth Community in California to receive this grant.
 - Home hardening items on the Committee list have not been delivered within the desired time frame since the planning consultant vacated his position. We have restaffed the position and are hoping that this item will move quickly.

ITEM 15: Meeting Adjourned:

Open a motion duly made and second, the Committee meeting was adjourned at 8:34 p.m.



TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

STAFF REPORT

TO: Chair Tomars and Members of the Wildfire Preparedness Committee

FROM: Cara Silver, Town Attorney

DATE: October 13, 2021

RE: Adoption of Resolution Confirming the State of Emergency and Need to Continue Conducting Town Public Meetings Remotely

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Wildfire Preparedness Committee adopt the attached Resolution Confirming the State of Emergency and Need to Continue Conducting Town Public Meetings Remotely. The Committee is required to adopt this resolution to address the “gap” period between the effective date of the new law and the Town Council’s next scheduled meeting. Subsequent renewals of this resolution will be acted on by the Town Council.

BACKGROUND

On September 16, the Governor signed AB 361, amending the Ralph M. Brown Act (Brown Act) to allow legislative bodies to continue to meet virtually during the present public health emergency. AB 361 is an urgency bill which goes into effect on October 1, 2021 and expires on January 1, 2024 (portions of the bill applying to the State legislature and school districts expire earlier). The bill extends the teleconference procedures authorized in Executive Order N-29-20 (set to expire September 30, 2021) during the current COVID-19 pandemic and allows future teleconference procedures under limited circumstances defined in the bill. Effective October 1, 2021, cities must comply with AB 361 if they want to conduct entirely remote meetings.

AB 361 varies from Executive Order N-29-20 in several key areas, including:

- **Scope:** AB 361 applies to meetings during a proclaimed state of emergency and state, or local officials have imposed or recommended measures to promote social distancing. (“State of emergency” is defined as a state of emergency declared by the Governor under Government Code Section 8625.) It also applies to other states of emergency proclaimed by the Governor where holding in person meetings would “present imminent risks to the health or safety of attendees”. An example of this is an ongoing wildfire in the area. The legislative body must make an initial finding that meeting in person would “present an imminent risk to the health or safety of attendees”.

- Requirements during meeting: AB 361 requires several procedural safeguards, such as giving the public ability to address the legislative body directly, providing information on how to address the body, providing either a call-in or internet-based service option, requirement to stop meeting if call-in or internet-based option fails, comments may not be required to be submitted in advance, and pre-registrations (except as required by call-in or internet platform) are prohibited.

- Comment periods: Public members must be given a reasonable time to register to provide public comment and agencies that provide a timed public comment period shall not close the public comment period until that time period has expired.

- Renewal of emergency findings: If the appointed body desires to continue using the teleconference exception, it must confirm the circumstances of the state of emergency 30 days after the first teleconference meeting and every 30 days thereafter.

DISCUSSION

Staff is planning on returning to in person meetings soon. However, some members of the Council, its commissions/committees, staff and the public may want to continue attending remotely. To accomplish this, staff has been working with a vendor to install equipment in the Schoolhouse to accommodate hybrid remote meetings. Until that service is installed, staff recommends that all public meetings continue to be remote.

SB 361 requires the Council to make a regular finding confirming the state of emergency and the need for continued remote hearings. Staff will therefore be agendaizing this finding on every Council, Commission, and Committee meeting agenda until a decision to transition to in person meetings has been made. Council will also be requested to make these findings on behalf of its commissions and committees as well, so there is a uniform policy on public meetings.

ATTACHMENT

1. Resolution
2. [AB 361](#)

RESOLUTION NO. _____

**RESOLUTION OF THE WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE OF THE
TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY
CONFIRMING EXISTING STATE EMERGENCY AND AUTHORIZING CONTINUED
REMOTE PUBLIC MEETINGS UNDER AB 361**

The Wildfire Preparedness Committee of the Town of Portola Valley does RESOLVE as follows:

WHEREAS, on March 4, 2020, the Governor of the State of California declared a state of emergency, as defined under the California Emergency Services Act, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the State of Emergency remains in effect;

WHEREAS, beginning in March 2020, the Governor’s Executive Order N-29-20 suspended Brown Act requirements related to teleconferencing during the COVID-19 pandemic provided that notice, accessibility, and other requirements were met, and the public was allowed to observe and address the legislative body at the meeting;

WHEREAS, Executive Order N-08-21 extended the previous order until September 30, 2021;

WHEREAS, the Town Council and the Town’s boards, commissions, and committees have conducted their meetings virtually, as authorized by the Executive Order, since March 17, 2020;

WHEREAS, on September 16, 2021, the Governor signed into law AB 361, an urgency measure effective upon adoption, that provides flexibility to government bodies, allowing them to meet virtually without conforming to the Brown Act teleconferencing rules during a declared state of emergency if: (i) State or local officials have imposed or recommended measures to promote social distancing; (ii) the legislative body is meeting to determine whether, as a result of the emergency, meeting in person presents imminent risks to the health or safety of attendees; or (iii) the legislative body has determined that meeting in person would present imminent risks to the health or safety of attendees;

WHEREAS, Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards (“ETS”) require certain employers to implement social distancing requirements in the work place during the current COVID-19 pandemic; the Santa Clara County Public Health Department currently recommends measures to promote social distancing in combination with other safety precautions when activities occur in shared indoor spaces to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission; the San Mateo County Public Health Officer has directed face coverings to be worn, regardless of vaccination status, over the mouth and nose, in all indoor public settings, venues, gatherings, and workplaces, such as, but not limited to: offices, retail stores, restaurants and bars, theaters, family entertainment centers, conference centers and government offices serving the public; and on July 12, 2021, the Town Manager issued work place guidelines imposing safety protocols on persons attending Town Hall facilities;

WHEREAS, in the last few months, the Delta variant has surged in the United States and become the predominant COVID-19 variant, accounting for more than 99% of COVID-19 cases and higher hospitalization rates;

WHEREAS, the Delta variant is believed by medical experts to be twice as contagious as previous variants, and data has shown the variant has increased transmissibility even among some vaccinated people;

WHEREAS, due to uncertainty and concerns about the Delta variant and current conditions, many workplaces that had announced a return to regular in-person operations have pushed back the full return date until later in the year or next year;

WHEREAS, virtual meetings have not diminished the public's ability to observe and participate and have expanded opportunities to do so for some communities; and

WHEREAS, given the heightened risks of the predominant variant of COVID-19 in the community, holding meetings with all members of the legislative body, staff, and the public in attendance in person in a shared indoor meeting space would pose an unnecessary and immediate risk to the attendees.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Wildfire Preparedness Committee of the Town of Portola Valley that:

1. The Town Committee adopts the recitals set forth above as findings of fact.
2. The Town Committee hereby determines that, as a result of the emergency, meeting in person presents imminent risks to the health or safety of attendees.
3. In accordance with AB 361, based on the findings and determinations herein, meetings of the Town Council and Town commissions and committees will be held virtually, with Brown Act teleconferencing rules suspended.
4. This resolution shall be effective upon adoption and remain in effect so long as the Council confirms the continuing state of emergency and need for remote meetings as required under AB 361.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 5th day of October 2021.

By: _____
Michael Tomars, Committee Chair

ATTEST:

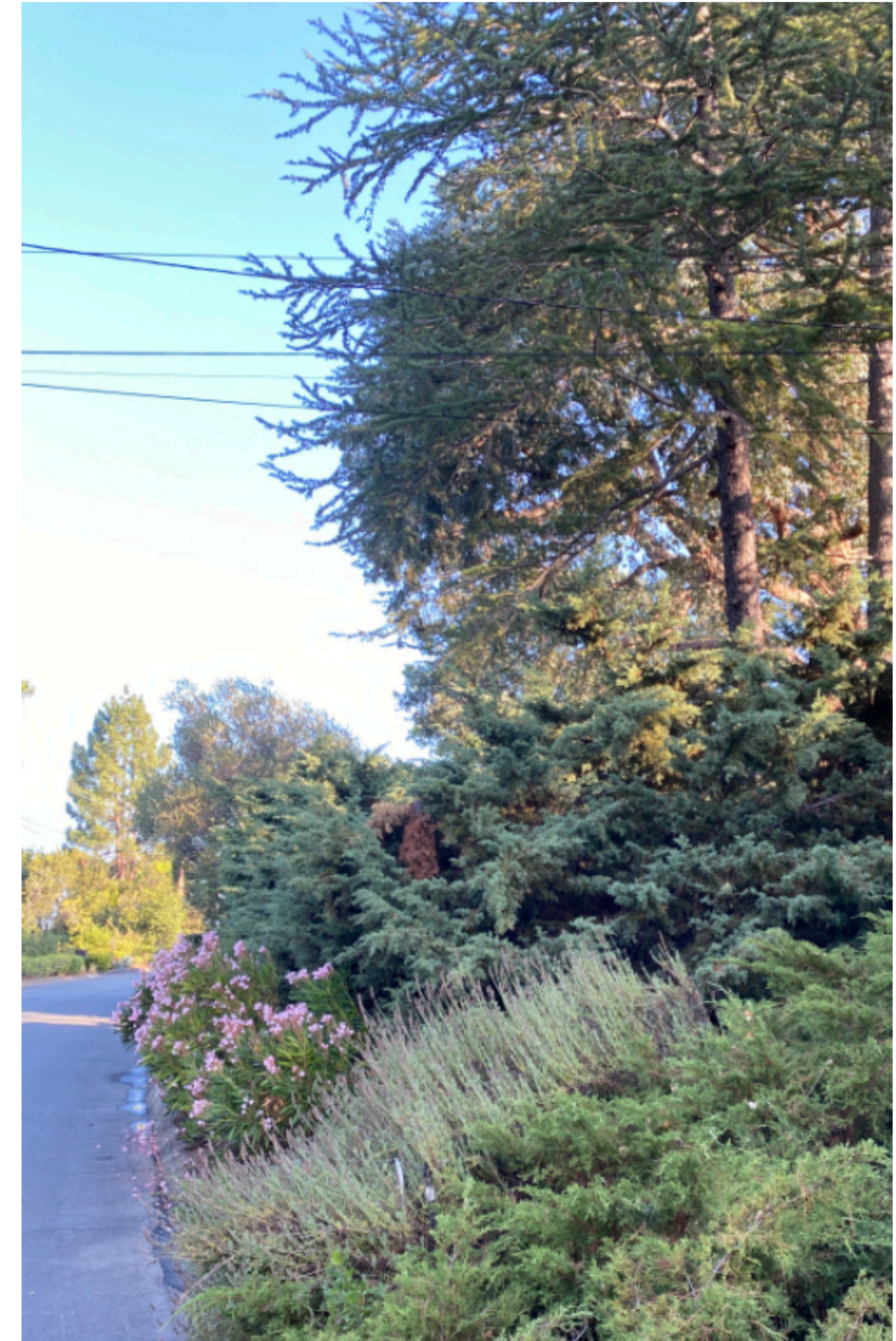
Sharon Hanlon, Town Clerk

FUNDING OPTIONS

Portola Valley Town Vegetation Removal

NEEDS

- The town of Portola Valley owns land
 - The right of way along the street
 - Open Space lands
- All rights of way are evacuation routes
- We are slowly cleaning up the brush in the right of way
- We are not currently removing any flammable trees
- We have a lot of Eucalyptus and Pine trees



DOLLAR AMOUNTS

- Right of Way Tree Removal
 - PG&E chose to remove oak trees not pine trees
 - The town has 75 pine trees overhanging roadway due to power lines (Estimated removal cost \$120,000 + unknown PGE additional fees)
 - An additional 83 pine trees in the right of way. (Estimated removal cost ~\$140,000)
- Town Owned Eucalyptus
 - The town owns 92 Eucalyptus estimated removal costs ~\$250,000
- General Open Space Cleanup - unknown dollar amount
- In progress brush cleanup of right of way \$151,000 for 2021 budget

FUNDING OPTIONS - FEE

➤ Fees

- Advantages — Only Town Council approval required
- Proposition 26 passed in 2010 need to be directly related to the activity
- Fees for classes for example 1:1 correlation
- Very difficult to do for a general fund
- Problem with fee is identifying the category of users responsible for paying fee (i.e. anyone who drives on the road or just people owning vegetation in the right of way).
- Hard to implement and hard to enforce

FUNDING OPTION – UUT TAX

- Utility Users Tax (UUT)
 - Advantages - Existing UUT in town
 - Energy, Water, Garbage, Cable, Telephone
 - Tax is currently at 4.5% to support Open Space generating 1.3 Million in 2021
 - 1% for Wildfire abatement would generate \$300K / year but likely insufficient funds
 - Not particularly equitable and generally one fee per household. Like sales tax it can be regressive in nature.
 - Can be legally added an additional 1% with Town Council approval
 - Additional amount above 1% would require a ballot measure

PARCEL TAX

- Parcel tax can be structured equitably
 - Based upon lot size
 - Based upon square footage
 - Generally the bigger the lot or bigger the house the more vegetation in right of way
 - We have about 1,700 lots
 - Only a few lots do not have to pay property tax
- Requires 2/3 passage of voters

SUMMARY

- To clean up the town, we need on the order of \$2-3 Million Dollars.
- **(Very general estimates)**
 - \$1,000,000 to clean up brush on all evacuation routes
 - \$500,000 to remove pines on evacuation routes (including PGE fees)
 - \$250,000 to remove eucalyptus on town owned property
 - \$500,000 to clean up open space lands
- Our current budget is spending \$151,000 on right of way cleanup annually
- UUT Increase of 1% would generate an additional \$300,000 per year
- Parcel Tax could be structured as desired

DISCUSSION

- Which funding vehicle to choose
 - UUT 1% addition with Town Council approval
 - Other UUT addition with voter approval
 - Parcel Tax with voter approval
 - Lot sized based
 - Square Footage Based
- How many years to complete project? 5, 10, etc...
- Can we have a general 'consensus' to have a study session with Town Council



TOWN of PORTOLA VALLEY

Town Hall: 765 Portola Road, Portola Valley, CA 94028 - Tel: (650) 851-1700 Fax: (650) 851-4677

August 23, 2021

Commissioner Ricardo Lara
California Department of Insurance
300 Capitol Mall, 17th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Director Gustavo Velasquez
California Department of Housing and Community Development
2020 West El Camino Real
Sacramento, CA 95833

Chief Thom Porter
CalFire
1416 9th Street PO Box 944246
Sacramento, CA 94244

Commissioner Lara, Director Velasquez, and Chief Porter,

Recently, the Portola Valley Town Council appointed a subcommittee for long-term engagement with HCD, CalFire, the State Insurance Commissioner, state legislators, and other relevant parties on the intersection of wildfire and housing issues. We are proud to serve as this subcommittee.

We appreciate the opportunity to engage with your three state agencies/departments on the challenges of communities like Portola Valley when faced with what can feel like conflicting mandates: adding badly-needed housing to our Town (of which this Council has been very supportive) while controlling the long-term dangers of wildfire, particularly while it is increasingly difficult for existing homeowners to retain fire insurance.

While we are optimistic that the upcoming Housing Element process will find ways to accommodate Portola Valley's regional housing needs allocation of 253 new housing units, we are very concerned that CalFire's new very high fire severity zone maps will be released during/shortly after the publication of our draft Housing Element and Safety Element. Should there be a major change to those maps, we would need to revise those plans, which may require significant time that may cause non-compliance issues with HCD.

Additionally, if insurance non-renewals continue, it may prove impossible for newly constructed homes to be insured, let alone existing properties.

While we understand that the most recent RHNA process, at the regional planning level, took into account reduced allocations for communities with wildfire risk, it is unclear to us what level of coordination there has been between the three state parties that play a role in the nexus of these issues – HCD, CalFire, and the Department of Insurance.

Specifically, we request that HCD begin a dialogue with the State Insurance Commissioner’s Office and CalFire to allow for a more comprehensive approach to the allocation of housing during the housing element process, as well as a role in working with state legislatures on inclusive contemplation of bills that may be contradictory.

Portola Valley wishes to participate in these discussions as well, in order to share our observations of the challenges related to accommodating housing in areas that are impacted by fire/insurance issues. We would be happy to host (virtually or in person, as appropriate) such discussions, including any that may be useful with our residents.

The Town of Portola Valley stands by to assist in any way, and wishes to continue to productively and positively contribute to solutions for these challenges.

Sincerely,

Vice Mayor Craig Hughes
Subcommittee Member

Councilmember John Richards
Subcommittee Member

cc: Portola Valley Town Council
Portola Valley Planning Commission
Portola Valley Wildfire Preparedness and Emergency Preparedness Committees
Senator Josh Becker
Assemblyman Marc Berman
San Mateo County Supervisor Don Horsley