



December 9, 2021

To Interested Residents of Portola Valley,

There has been great interest in recent months regarding ways the Town (though Town Government and the Woodside Fire Protection District) are jointly addressing the threat of wildfires to our community.

As you know, Town Government and the District work very closely on such issues, and we are mutually proud of the collaborative efforts between the two agencies. In recent months, the Town and the District have

- Continued [right of way fuel reduction efforts](#)
- Collaborated on a joint resource grant from [Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire](#) (CPAW) to support increased wildfire mitigation, resiliency and adaptation efforts across land use, communications, evacuations, and other related matters
- Published a stringent fire safety [checklist](#) for all ADUs built within Town setbacks, per recent state law requirements
- Initiated evacuation scenario planning for the ongoing evacuation study, due to be completed early next year
- Jointly supported [Wildfire Preparedness Committee](#) efforts, including “Ban the Flammable Five” and continued discussions on increased slope defensible space requirements and large property owner wildfire mitigation efforts

Recent inquiries regarding how further efforts may be achieved led us to pen this joint letter to provide information on this important process.

The Woodside Fire District’s primary administrative tool for such matters is the Fire Code. The District’s staff, on a three-year basis, update the Code based on new information and research. The District’s Board of Directors then reviews and adopts the code update, and the code is then shared with the entities that the District supports – the Towns of Portola Valley and Woodside, and the County of San Mateo. These three entities then hold their own reviews, in public meetings, of the updated Code and can either “ratify” the code, or modify with local amendments and ratify. The next Fire Code update is set to be finalized in December 2022.

The Town does not play a primary role in the development of this code, but as partners, the District works closely with all the entities it serves to ensure that potential proposals can be successfully implemented.

At its November meeting, the Wildfire Preparedness Committee considered two proposals that could be included in the 2022 Fire Code update, including a proposal to require that all future buildings in Portola Valley be 30 feet apart. The Committee did not choose to make a recommendation to the Council at that time. Fire Marshal Don Bullard did not make a recommendation on these proposals at the meeting, and stated that he

continues to work with CPAW and other experts on a comprehensive code update that will be presented toward the end of 2022.

It is appropriate for the District, with its partners, to continue its due diligence to determine what should be included in the upcoming Code update. Until that time, the District and the Town will continue its discussions at the staff, committee and Council level, on these critical matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Lindner".

Rob Lindner
Chief, Woodside Fire Protection District

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeremy Dennis".

Jeremy Dennis
Town Manager