



**TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY**  
**Joint Meeting of Wildfire Preparedness, Emergency**  
**Preparedness, Sustainability, and Geologic Safety**  
**Committees on Safety Element**  
**October 26, 2022, 2:00 PM**

**SPECIAL VIRTUAL MEETING**

**REMOTE MEETING COVID-19 MEETING ADVISORY:** On September 16, 2021, 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. COVID-19 is still a major health concern and virtual attendance to the Town Council meeting is encouraged, particularly during case increases.

**ASSISTANCE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the Town Clerk at (650) 851-1700 or by email at [mthurman@portolavalley.net](mailto:mthurman@portolavalley.net) 48 hours prior to the meeting start time. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the Town to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting.

**VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION VIA ZOOM**

**To access the meeting by computer:**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88093638358?pwd=ZkxCV1dOWEpmVHp1czZCMmhrLzJRdz09>

**Webinar ID: 880 9363 8358**

**Passcode: 648038**

**To access the meeting by phone:**

1-669-900-6833 or

1-888-788-0099 (toll-free)

*Mute/Unmute – Press \*6 / Raise Hand – Press \*9*

1. **CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL**
2. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA**  
*Speakers' time is limited to three minutes.*
3. **NEW BUSINESS:**
  - a. **Joint Committee Review of Draft Safety Element**
4. **ADJOURNMENT**



# TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

## STAFF REPORT

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**TO:** Mayor and Members of the Emergency Preparedness, Geologic Safety, Sustainability, and Wildfire Preparedness Committees

**FROM:** Melvin E. Gaines, Assistant Town Manager  
Laura Russel, Planning & Building Director

**DATE:** October 26, 2022

**RE:** Portola Valley Draft Safety Element Draft

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the four committees receive a presentation from the Town's Safety Element Technical Team. With Mayor Craig Hughes serving as meeting chair, the committees should ask any clarifying questions and provide any feedback to the technical team.

### **BACKGROUND**

Portola Valley is in the process of updating its Safety Element (2010) in coordination with the 6<sup>th</sup> cycle 2023-2031 Housing Element update. The Safety Element addresses protection of its people from unreasonable risks associated with disasters, including earthquakes, floods, fires, landslides, and other hazards identified by the local community. The Safety Element must identify hazards and hazard abatement provisions to guide local decisions related to zoning, subdivisions, and entitlement permitting, and should also integrate hazard and risk reduction strategies.

In May 2022, the Town's Safety Element technical team (staff and consultants), prepared a series of memos focused on different topic areas of the Safety Element. These memos were presented to related Town committees. The Geologic Safety Committee reviewed a memo on Geologic, Seismic, and Flooding Hazards, the Sustainability Committee reviewed a memo on Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience, and the Emergency Preparedness Committee reviewed memos on Wildfire Hazards, and Analysis of Developments with One-way of Ingress and Egress (Senate Bill (SB) 99 Analysis). The Wildfire Preparedness Committee was unable to hold a meeting to review any of the memos.

After receiving public and committee input on the draft safety element memos, the Town's technical team incorporated memos into relevant portions of the draft safety element ([Attachment 1](#)).

## **DISCUSSION**

The draft safety element reflects the Town technical team's effort to create a safety element update based on the existing Safety Element, State law, guidance from State and regional agencies, best practices, and community input. Woodside Fire Protection District and CPAW (Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire) have reviewed the draft and their comments are included as Attachment 2. Nevertheless, it is a draft, and there are opportunities for Portola Valley community members to provide further input that could enhance the Safety Element update before it is adopted. The purpose of this joint committee meeting is for the Emergency Preparedness, Geologic Safety, Sustainability, and Wildfire Preparedness Committees to receive a draft safety element presentation from the technical team and to discuss the draft safety element.

### Next Steps

Committee members may provide feedback to the technical team during the joint committee meeting but are also encouraged to discuss the draft safety element at individual committee meetings during November and December 2022, and to make committee recommendations on the draft safety element for the Planning Commission to consider when reviewing the draft safety element in January or February 2023. The four committees may hold an additional joint committee meeting to develop joint recommendations to the Planning Commission and/or Town Council. The individual Committees may appoint a subcommittee to develop comments. Committees are encouraged to develop written comments on the Draft Safety Element.

Under the current schedule, Committee feedback is requested by January 13, 2023. All committee recommendations will be provided to the Planning Commission and Town Council. If multiple Committees request additional time, the timeline may be adjusted. The technical team will provide feedback to the Planning Commission on committee recommendations related to State law, guidance from State and regional agencies and best practices.

Following the Planning Commission review of the draft safety element, the Town Council will review the draft safety element along with recommendations from the Planning Commission. The Town Council will also receive the recommendations provided by the committees, and the technical team's feedback on those recommendations, as well as any other input on the draft safety element from committees or the public. Following Council review, the draft Safety Element will be forwarded to the State Board of Forestry and Woodside Fire Protection District for review. The Town Council will adopt the safety element after receiving input from the Board of Forestry and making any necessary changes.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. [Draft Safety Element](#)
2. Comments from Woodside Fire Protection District and CPAW



# WOODSIDE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU  
808 PORTOLA ROAD PORTOLA VALLEY, CA. 94028  
(650) 851-1594

[WWW.WOODSIDEFIRE.ORG](http://WWW.WOODSIDEFIRE.ORG)  
DON BULLARD – FIRE MARSHAL

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To: Laura Russel, Planning Director, Town of Portola Valley  
From: Don Bullard, Fire Marshal, Woodside Fire Protection District  
Re: Safety Element Review  
Date: September 13, 2022

Dear Laura,

Overall, the safety element update looks good. There are some additional comments I would like to have considered:

## **Fire Severity Maps**

“The district does not approve of or support the use of the limited CalFire map from 2008 as it is too old and too limited based on our assessments. You may recall that the district rejected this map as too limited even back in 2008. It is not a safe and accurate map to approve in 2022 either.” Matt Miller, WFPD Board President (January 20, 2022).

## **Multi Jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan**

The district does not agree with the FEMA Hazard and Risk Ranking given for Wildfire for the 2021 MJLHMP for Portola Valley. The district feels that the Town should update the wildfire ranking to be more in alignment with the Fire District and the Town of Woodside. Both the Fire District and the Town of Woodside have ranked wildfire of the highest hazard where Portola Valley has it ranked as medium to almost low hazard. The Town of Portola Valley should update their MJLHMP as soon as possible to reflect the true wildfire hazards faced by the Town.

## **Minimize Risks to Existing and New Land Use**

### **Existing Development**

- Policy Increase resilience of existing development in high-risk areas built prior to modern fire safety codes or wildfire hazard mitigation guidance. Create a track to increase resilience of existing development.
- Policy Ensure that public and private landowners for all existing land uses comply with all applicable state

and local requirements and implement site-specific safety measures that mitigate to a low risk condition around or near public facilities, infrastructure, and natural resources.

- Policy Use public and private funding, where available, to the greatest extent practical to assist private landowners in implementing defensible space and building retrofits to achieve a low-risk condition.
- Policy Ensure public and private landowners minimize the risk of wildfire moving from wildland areas to developed properties, or from property to property, by increasing structural hardening measures (e.g., fire-rated roofing and fire-resistant construction materials and techniques), maintaining and improving defensible space on site, and supporting vegetation management in adjacent undeveloped areas.
- Policy Publicly disclose development locations without sufficient emergency route access or capacity.
- Program Develop a comprehensive WUI risk reduction program and associated funding/financing for Existing development to improve defensible space, increase home and structural hardening, and increase vegetation and fuels management in wildland areas adjacent to existing development.

### **Infill Development**

- Policy Require all infill development projects within the SRA or VHFHSZ to comply with all applicable state or local fire safety and defensible space regulations or standards, and any applicable fire protection or risk reduction measures identified in locally adopted plans.
- Policy Discretionary infill projects may be required to prepare a project-specific fire hazard and risk assessment and incorporate project-specific risk reduction measures, subject to the determination and approval of the local agency.
- Program Develop streamlined wildfire risk assessment and mitigation procedures for infill projects in the SRA and VHFHSZ.
- Program Conduct a feasibility study for a TDR program that identifies undeveloped wildland areas within High or very high FHSZ's or subject to extreme threat as "sending areas" and areas outside of FHSZ's or high fire threat areas as "receiving areas".  
<https://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/app/legacy/documents/transfer-development-rights-policy-toolkit.pdf>

### **New Growth**

- Policy Avoid significant expansion of new development, critical facilities, and infrastructure in areas subject to extreme threat or high risk, such as High or Very High FHSZ's or areas classified by CalFire as having an extreme threat classification on Fire threat maps, unless all feasible risk reduction measures have been incorporated into project designs or conditions of approval.
- Policy Encourage the use of conservation easements or establish a TDR program in undeveloped wildland areas within high fire hazard severity zones.

- Policy** Plan and construct urban development to resist the encroachment of uncontrolled wildfires from adjacent WUI or wildland areas.
- Program** Update local zoning and subdivision codes to designate wildfire hazard overlay zones and associated conditional use, site development standards, and design criteria to mitigate wildfire hazards and reduce risks to new development within the overlay zones.
- Program** Update local code and ordinances to require preparation of a project -specific fire protection plan (FPP) for all new development projects in high fire hazard severity zones and require that such Projects incorporate all recommended risk reduction measures from the FPP into project designs or conditions of approval.

## **Fuel Modification and Land Management**

### **General Considerations**

- Policy** Coordinate with Cal Fire, local fire agencies, Fire Safe Councils, private landowners, and other responsible agencies to identify the best method(s) of fuel modification to reduce the severity of future wildfires, including:
- Prescribed fire
  - Forest thinning
  - Grazing
  - Mechanical clearing
  - Hand clearing (piling, burning/chipping)
  - Education/outreach
  - Defensible space
- Program** Create a special assessment district to fund and maintain a fuel modification program to reduce wildfire risk.
- Program** Develop a local program to identify, prioritize, and fund fuel modification projects in the Local Responsibility Area, and leverage the California Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP) and Program EIR for eligible projects in the State Responsibility Area.

### **Defensible Space**

- Policy** Prioritize public and private funding for fire risk hazard reduction to assist private landowners in implementing safety measures to achieve a low-risk condition.

### **Wildland Considerations**

- Policy** Monitor plant communities in wildland areas over time for changes in potential fire hazard severity or risks. (Including Town owned properties).

## **Urban Considerations**

- Policy Prepare a site-specific fuel modification plan prior to the construction of any structure, whether residential, recreational, or commercial. The location and development of any road, or any other man-made structure that may act as a fuel barrier, will be done in consideration of its maximum benefit as a fuel barrier/fire break. The plan will cover the entire parcel and include measures for modifying fuel loading prior to development and a plan to maintain that protection over time.
- Policy Maintain open spaces and urban forests so that ground fuels do not promote the spread of wildfire  
And aerial fuels do not allow the spread of a fire through the tree canopy.
- Policy Use public open spaces as demonstration areas and examples to neighborhood residents for fire-Adapted landscapes.
- Policy Update site landscaping standards to be fire-adapted using native vegetation or fire-resistant planting palettes and prohibit flammable landscaping plantings or materials storage within the structure ignition zone (e.g., within the 0-5 feet of the structure).
- Policy Develop a comprehensive vegetation management and weed-abatement program for open-space areas, including those that are in or adjacent to existing subdivisions and new development areas.
- Program Develop a program to reduce highly flammable invasive species that have a low drought tolerance  
And easily spread without intentional propagation.

## **Protecting Public Health and Safety**

### **Disaster Preparedness activities**

- Policy Ensure completeness and availability of identified emergency supplies and resources to all segments of the population, focusing especially on vulnerable and disadvantaged communities, including temporary shelter or housing, and items such as medical supplies and services, generators, pumps, sandbags, road clearing, and communication facilities.
- Policy Maintain and improve disaster response and recovery capabilities to protect and meet the needs of all members of the community, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.
- Program Update existing emergency preparedness and response plans and conduct community-facing exercises to enhance disaster preparedness and build local capacity to better address and mitigate health and safety impacts resulting from wildfires.
- Program Engage with Firewise USA, Fire Safe Councils, and other networking organizations to improve local and regional coordination when addressing wildfire risks.

## **Public Education and Financial Assistance**

Program Identify or develop programs to provide financial incentives or assistance to low-income households for defensible space maintenance, home hardening, and other measures to reduce risk.

## **Disaster Response, Recovery, and Maintenance**

### **Wildfire Response**

Policy Identify low risk fire safety areas, including locations that may serve as temporary shelter or refuge areas during wildfire events.

Program Develop and adopt coordinated emergency notification and evacuation procedures that may be required across jurisdictional boundaries under extreme wildfire event scenarios.

Program Review and update emergency response and evacuation plans and procedures at least every 5 years to reflect current conditions and community needs.

### **Long-Term Considerations**

Policy Periodically review trends and projections of future fire risk and fire risk reduction capabilities to ensure that mitigation measures are adequate.

Policy Incorporate forecasted impacts from climate change into trends and projections of future fire risk and consideration of policies to address identified risk.

Policy Require defensible space maintenance agreements for new development projects and require extension of defensible space maintenance agreements to subsequent landowners.

Program Periodically review fire history and lessons learned to ensure that hazard mitigation measures and future disaster recovery needs are being managed to optimize effectiveness.

Program Using best available data and tools, update the fire hazard and risk assessment regularly to account for climate change or other factors, and alert public and private landowners in future high-risk areas regarding changes in hazard severity or risk levels.

## **CPAW SAFETY ELEMENT UPDATE COMMENTS**

Laura,

Regarding the Safety Element update, there are some additional comments we would like to have considered:

1. Include the importance that all outreach and educational material be available in Spanish for the Latino community in the area. When discussing solutions and impacts for wildfire preparedness and mitigation it is important to include this growing segment of the population, as the effects of a wildfire can have an equal, if not a greater impact on them.



2. Under "New Developments", include language that requires a developer to assign all "fuel modification" requirements on common land to the association or other common owner groups. This will guarantee that those requirements will continue with the development once the developer is out of the picture.
3. Possibility including a section on increasing structure setbacks on slopes.
4. Would it be beneficial for this document to include support for a change in the citation process, allowing WFPD the ability to cite on the first violation if so desired? The language would not need to be specific, but any support here may help the fight down the road.

Overall, it looks really good from our end and they seemed to have addressed all of the other concerns we had. It is reassuring to see that many of the recommendations coming out of this group align with the recommendations the CPAW team has flushed out.

Doug

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Doug Green

Program Manager

Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire (CPAW)

[doug@cpaw.headwaterseconomics.org](mailto:doug@cpaw.headwaterseconomics.org)

Sincerely,

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