

From: webmaster@portolavalley.net
To: [Town Center](#)
Subject: New Entry on Town Council Comments Survey
Date: Wednesday, October 11, 2023 3:46:41 PM

A new entry to a form/survey has been submitted.

Form Name: Comment on an Agenda Item for Town Council Meeting
Date & Time: 10/11/2023 3:46 PM
Response #: 38
Submitter ID: 7105
IP address: [REDACTED]
Time to complete: 2 min. , 57 sec.

Survey Details

Page 1

1. First and Last Name

Karen Vahtra

2. Email address (will not be publicly displayed)

[REDACTED]

3. Organization (Enter name of organization, business, or non profit if you are submitting comments on their behalf.)

Not answered

4. Street address (will not be publicly displayed)

[REDACTED]

5. City

Portola Valley

6. State

CA

7. Zip Code

94028

8. Date of Meeting you are submitting comment for.

10/11/2023

9. Agenda Item number or name

E-Communications Policy

10. Comment

Dear Town Council,

I have a few points on the Electronic Communications Policy Update for tonight's meeting on Oct 11, 2023.

Karen Vahtra

II.b.

Electronic communications (e-communications) should also include direct messaging (dm). Although quite similar to instant messaging, direct messaging is typically used on social media platforms for primarily 1:1 conversations, whereas instant messaging generally refers to platforms more specifically created for chats such as Slack, Telegram or WhatsApp.

III b. & c

What is the time frame and procedures for storing the e-communications?

The town has a procedure to store email by using a designated Town email address. How long does the town plan to retain these emails?

In 2023, a lot of communication occurs outside of email. Since these communications can occur through a variety of different applications, what is the procedure for storing these communications? An iPhone for example offers the options to keep messages for 30 days, 1 year or Forever. Without an explicit time frame, many of these messages will be deleted.

Since a variety of platforms for e-communications are available, this policy should include general procedures how to save these communications. Perhaps downloading conversations when the option is available or saving screenshots.

e.

Restricting these communications to only family members is too narrow. I would generalize this statement to include other personal situations. Perhaps the person texting is a neighbor or someone with whom they are in relationship but have no legal status. I think the wording would be more inclusive with the phrase "urgent personal matter".

11. Optional: You can upload a copy of your comments.

Thank you,
Portola Valley, CA

This is an automated message generated by Granicus. Please do not reply directly to this email.

From: [REDACTED]
To: main@pvforum.us
Cc: [Town Center](#); [Town Council](#)
Subject: new Electronic Communications Policy comments #IMPORTANT
Date: Tuesday, October 24, 2023 3:48:46 PM

I read through the proposed Electronic Communications Policy and have some concerns about parts of it. The policy is going to be voted on tomorrow evening at the Town Council Meeting.

[17838 \(portolavalley.net\)](https://www.portolavalley.net)
<https://www.portolavalley.net/home/showpublisheddocument/17838>

My biggest concern is about the section II d:

Electronic Communications between Council members or Commissioners/Committee Members Concerning Town Business. Electronic communications should not be sent by a Council or Commission/Committee member to **more than one other Council or Commission/Committee member** concerning Town business and should never be used to form or attempt to form a consensus on an issue within the Town's business.

I've highlighted the issue. By limiting email communication between members of a committee to only one other person essentially obliterates the ability of subcommittees (made up of less than a majority of a committee) from getting any meaningful work done. As an example, the Sustainability committee puts out monthly Public Service Announcements that typically get edited and proofed by two other members (thus 3/7 members). With this new policy, we would not be allowed to have several viewpoints review the information for accuracy and clarity before it goes out to the public. It's impractical and unreasonably restrictive, for no good reason.

Also, when I look at section II c, I have concerns about practicality and usefulness:

E-Communications by Commissioners and Committee Members. Commissioners and Committee members who have not been issued a Town email address may use their personal accounts for Town business. In order to ensure that the Town has a record of all e-communications concerning Town business, e-communications concerning Commission/Committee business should **include a copy to a Town e-mail address** (staff or Council liaison or alias). Commissioners and Committee members shall keep a record of all e-communications other than email communications (such as social media or text conversations) relating to Town business and provide a copy to the Town Clerk upon request in the event of a Public Records Act request.

Does it really make sense for the Town to retain copies of emails discussing purchasing smart plugs for Amazon? Or details about who is going to staff what shift at the Town picnic. Is that really the most useful piece of information for the Town taxpayers to pay for storage? Much of what is discussed offline is irrelevant sausage making that has no relevance to the public.

What concerns me the most about these types of policies is there is an implicit suggestion that the Town volunteer residents who serve on the Town Council, Town Commissions, and particularly Town

Committees are engaging in malfeasance, secretive negotiations, or are incompetent. After the bogus Brown Act lawsuit, people have become increasingly accusatory of their fellow volunteer residents. And most of these accusers don't serve on ANY committees so they have no idea what is needed in order to make progress on goals.

As with the recent fire regulations, there will be many unintended consequences and impracticalities in these policies.

I miss the more congenial atmosphere of Portola Valley.

Rebecca Flynn
Sustainability Committee
ASCC
PVForum Moderator

From: [JW](#)
To: [Rebecca Flynn](#)
Cc: main@pvforum.us; [Town Center](#); [Town Council](#)
Subject: Re: [PVForum] new Electronic Communications Policy comments #IMPORTANT
Date: Tuesday, October 24, 2023 4:26:11 PM

I agree with Rebecca regarding the Electronic Communications Policy and would go further.

I will not release my right to be in communication with my family or friends/acquaintances during meetings - some of which have lasted for 5 or 6 hours. Nor will I have the residents of this area decide upon what they consider to be an 'emergency' for me, when I am an unpaid volunteer.

This is a reach too far, and I hope the instigators of this policy are fully prepared to step up into the vacancies of volunteer positions that will undoubtedly follow.

Jane Wilson

On Tue, Oct 24, 2023 at 3:48 PM Rebecca Flynn [REDACTED] > wrote:

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Rebecca Flynn

Sustainability Committee

ASCC

PVForum Moderator

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From: [Steve Toben](#)
To: [REDACTED]; main@pvforum.us
Cc: [Town Center](#); [Town Council](#)
Subject: RE: [PVForum] new Electronic Communications Policy comments #IMPORTANT
Date: Tuesday, October 24, 2023 7:11:13 PM

As a former mayor of Portola Valley and longtime town volunteer, I strongly agree with Rebecca's objections to the proposed policy on electronic communications. Much of the essential work of our town's committees gets done by way of subcommittees that have no decision-making authority but require communication among members in order to carry out subcommittee assignments. A policy prohibiting communication with more than one other committee member would be grossly counterproductive.

Similarly, the requirement that our town's commissioners and committee members keep a record of all communications relating to town business is overbroad and unnecessary for the proper conduct of the town's business.

These onerous provisions are not required by the Brown Act. They would add yet more headaches to the experience of volunteering in our town, which in recent years has become far less rewarding than it used to be.

From: main@pvforum.us <main@pvforum.us> **On Behalf Of** Rebecca Flynn via pvforum.us
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2023 3:48 PM
To: main@pvforum.us
Cc: Towncenter@portolavalley.net; towncouncil@portolavalley.net
Subject: [PVForum] new Electronic Communications Policy comments #IMPORTANT

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From: [Ronny Krashinsky](#)
To: [Steve Toben](#)
Cc: [Rebecca Flynn](#); [pvforum](#); [Town Center](#); [Town Council](#)
Subject: Re: [PVForum] new Electronic Communications Policy comments #IMPORTANT
Date: Tuesday, October 24, 2023 9:10:01 PM

I agree with all of these comments and would like to pile on in opposition to the proposed policy. I submitted comments directly to the Town Council both on the draft ordinance reviewed in the 10/11 meeting and the updated ordinance set to be enacted tomorrow.

This is one thing that I wrote:

I would like to reiterate my opposition to Section III.e [Use of E-Communication During Meetings]. I disagree with further prohibiting communication beyond what is legally required by the Brown Act and the 2022 PV Texting Policy. Purportedly the intention is to encourage members to focus on Town business without distraction. However, I would note that there are no similar prohibitions against browsing the Internet, reading a magazine, working on a crossword puzzle, daydreaming, etc. The fact is that we have dedicated volunteers who know how to pay attention in meetings. I would encourage the Town Council to trust our volunteers and perhaps provide guidance in a handbook rather than creating onerous and intimidating laws.

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Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2023 3:48 PM
To: main@pvforum.us
Cc: Towncenter@portolavalley.net; towncouncil@portolavalley.net

Subject: [PVForum] new Electronic Communications Policy comments #IMPORTANT

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<https://www.portolavalley.net/home/showpublisheddocument/17838>

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I miss the more congenial atmosphere of Portola Valley.

Rebecca Flynn

Sustainability Committee

ASCC

PVForum Moderator

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From: [Jennifer Torres](#)
To: [Jennifer Torres](#)
Subject: FW: public comment for 10/25 PV Town Council meeting
Date: Wednesday, October 25, 2023 10:08:03 AM

From: Ronny Krashinsky <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2023 5:51 PM

To: towncouncil@portolavalley.net; Jeff Aalfs <JAalfs@portolavalley.net>; Sarah Wernikoff <swernikoff@portolavalley.net>; Judith Hasko <Jhasko@portolavalley.net>; Ctaylor@portolavalley.net; Mary Hufty <Mhufty@portolavalley.net>; Catherine C. Engberg <[REDACTED]>

Subject: public comment for 10/25 PV Town Council meeting

Dear Town Council,

Please find below my public comment for the 10/25 PV Town Council meeting pertaining to agenda item 3.c Approval of Updated Electronic Communications Policy.

Note that I previously commented on the draft for the 10/11 meeting, but these are updated for the new version.

Regards,
Ronny Krashinsky

==

First, I would like to bring to your attention that there are a lot of comments coming in on PVForum. The fact is that many committee members are just seeing these new proposed ordinances for the first time. A theme of the comments -- why are you imposing restrictions on our volunteers beyond the legal requirements of the Brown Act (and the 2022 PV Texting Policy)?

In Section II.b the definition of Social Media Platform remains unclear. It now says, "includes online forums". This is an antiquated term which does not have a precise meaning as far as I can tell. These days people often use Google Groups to create private email lists. I tried to determine if a Google Group is an online forum and I found this: <https://hiverrhq.com/blog/google-groups>

Google Groups is a platform that enables users to create, manage, and participate in online discussion forums and email-based groups.

So does any Google Group qualify as an online forum?

Even after it was updated, Section III.d still does not seem to accommodate communications

between "Brown Act buddies" and subcommittees. When a committee has 7 or 9 members such groups can include more than one other person. Additionally, the resolution does not seem to accommodate the recommended practice of sending informational emails with all committee members on bcc. Overall, what are you trying to accomplish here? Are you trying to restrict E-Communications beyond what is already stipulated in the Brown Act?

Finally, I would like to reiterate my opposition to Section III.e. I disagree with further prohibiting communication beyond what is legally required by the Brown Act and the 2022 PV Texting Policy. Purportedly the intention is to encourage members to focus on Town business without distraction. However, I would note that there are no similar prohibitions against browsing the Internet, reading a magazine, working on a crossword puzzle, daydreaming, etc. The fact is that we have dedicated volunteers who know how to pay attention in meetings. I would encourage the Town Council to trust our volunteers and perhaps provide guidance in a handbook rather than creating onerous and intimidating laws.

From: webmaster@portolavalley.net
To: [Town Center](#)
Subject: New Entry on Town Council Comments Survey
Date: Wednesday, October 25, 2023 11:56:17 AM

A new entry to a form/survey has been submitted.

Form Name: Comment on an Agenda Item for Town Council Meeting
Date & Time: 10/25/2023 11:56 AM
Response #: 39
Submitter ID: 7107
IP address: [REDACTED]
Time to complete: 30 min. , 12 sec.

Survey Details

Page 1

1. First and Last Name

Sarah Dorahy

2. Email address (will not be publicly displayed)

[REDACTED]

3. Organization (Enter name of organization, business, or non profit if you are submitting comments on their behalf.)

Not answered

4. Street address (will not be publicly displayed)

[REDACTED]

5. City

portola valley

6. State

ca

7. Zip Code

94028

8. Date of Meeting you are submitting comment for.

10/25/2023

9. Agenda Item number or name

Electronic Communications Policy

10. Comment

Dear Town Council,

Thank you as always for your service.

I would like to express my opposition to the proposed Electronic Communications Policy. Councillors and Committee volunteers are already bound by the Brown Act. This is sufficient. It is not necessary for Portola Valley to pile on onerous restrictions and rules around communication between its volunteers. As others have stated, we risk repelling future volunteers from serving our community.

Further, this proposal was put forth by a small group of residents who DO NOT represent the majority. It is beyond frustrating that so much volunteer time and tax payer money is wasted pandering to this small band of residents - most of whom have never served as volunteers on any committee.

Please shelve this proposal and focus on the real work that needs doing, like submitting a compliant Housing Element.

Thank you.

11. Optional: You can upload a copy of your comments.

Thank you,
Portola Valley, CA

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From: webmaster@portolavalley.net
To: [Town Center](#)
Subject: New Entry on Town Council Comments Survey
Date: Wednesday, October 25, 2023 12:19:41 PM

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Form Name: Comment on an Agenda Item for Town Council Meeting
Date & Time: 10/25/2023 12:19 PM
Response #: 40
Submitter ID: 7108
IP address: [REDACTED]
Time to complete: 3 min. , 40 sec.

Survey Details

Page 1

1. First and Last Name

Felicity Barringer Taubman

2. Email address (will not be publicly displayed)

[REDACTED]

3. Organization (Enter name of organization, business, or non profit if you are submitting comments on their behalf.)

Self

4. Street address (will not be publicly displayed)

[REDACTED]

5. City

Portola Valley

6. State

CA

7. Zip Code

94028

8. Date of Meeting you are submitting comment for.

10/25/2023

9. Agenda Item number or name

Section II(d) of the electronic communications item

10. Comment

I'd request the council table the proposed resolution on electronic communications to allow further discussion and explanation of the origin and purposes of the idea. I believe it will hamper town colunteers in ther performance of their duties and dissuade people from volunteering.

11. Optional: You can upload a copy of your comments.

Thank you,
Portola Valley, CA

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To: [Town Center](#)
Subject: New Entry on Town Council Comments Survey
Date: Wednesday, October 25, 2023 12:57:52 PM

A new entry to a form/survey has been submitted.

Form Name: Comment on an Agenda Item for Town Council Meeting
Date & Time: 10/25/2023 12:57 PM
Response #: 41
Submitter ID: 7109
IP address: [REDACTED]
Time to complete: 22 min. , 54 sec.

Survey Details

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1. First and Last Name

Jane Wilson

2. Email address (will not be publicly displayed)

[REDACTED]

3. Organization (Enter name of organization, business, or non profit if you are submitting comments on their behalf.)

Not answered

4. Street address (will not be publicly displayed)

[REDACTED]

5. City

Portola Valley

6. State

CA

7. Zip Code

94028

8. Date of Meeting you are submitting comment for.

10/25/2023

9. Agenda Item number or name

3. C.

10. Comment

I strongly oppose item 3 C of the Consent Agenda. As a volunteer, I will not be constrained by a Town Policy from communicating with family/friends or acquaintances during a town meeting if I deem it pertinent. The notion that town residents can decide what constitutes an emergency for myself or any other volunteer, is immoral and offensive. Complying with the Brown Act for all communications is sufficient.

At a later point, I also wish to challenge the Fire Safety policy you recently passed. It's lack of consideration for the environment in which we live, the native habitats that surround us, and the flora and fauna that it will destroy if adhered to, is horrendous.

Jane Wilson

11. Optional: You can upload a copy of your comments.

Thank you,
Portola Valley, CA

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To: [Town Center](#)
Subject: New Entry on Town Council Comments Survey
Date: Wednesday, October 25, 2023 1:01:10 PM

A new entry to a form/survey has been submitted.

Form Name: Comment on an Agenda Item for Town Council Meeting
Date & Time: 10/25/2023 1:01 PM
Response #: 42
Submitter ID: 7110
IP address: [REDACTED]
Time to complete: 1 min. , 44 sec.

Survey Details

Page 1

1. First and Last Name

David Cardinal

2. Email address (will not be publicly displayed)

[REDACTED]

3. Organization (Enter name of organization, business, or non profit if you are submitting comments on their behalf.)

Not answered

4. Street address (will not be publicly displayed)

[REDACTED]

5. City

Portola Valley

6. State

CA

7. Zip Code

94028

8. Date of Meeting you are submitting comment for.

10/25/2023

9. Agenda Item number or name

2. Oral Communications

10. Comment

Thanks to Rebecca for taking the time to go through the proposed text. I completely agree with her, Sarah, Jane, and likely others that those portions of the proposed policy, while perhaps well-intentioned, and maybe forced by the hostage-taking lawsuit from last year, are massively counter-productive and insulting. They are also sort of a weird throwback to an era decades ago before we all (with a few vocal exceptions here in PV) began to rely heavily on electronic communications.

First, electronic devices are an important real time tool for everyone who wants to get things done. A quick text to check on a fact or availability of a staff member is 15 seconds well spent. Or even a head's up about "hey, that's not current" or "you forgot we have a new staff member" is the sort of real time communication flow that has become essential to almost every institution in the US (sure, big cities have a staffer for each council member run off and do the texting, but we don't have that luxury).

Second, is it seriously true that committee members won't be able to send an email or text to more than one other committee member? If anyone on this list can tell us about any kind of organization that they have managed successfully with that restriction, please do. Our Fire District Board already suffers from that as a 3-member Brown Act Board, and they certainly wouldn't wish the problem on anyone else.

Then there is the whole "personal messages" thing. Most of our volunteers have, reasonably, a lot going on in their lives. It is insane to expect a parent (for example) to be unreachable for many hours when they are planning and replanning a complex family schedule. It's also really insulting. I trust my colleagues to only send/answer texts that are really important when we are meeting. Treating them like poorly trained children with no ability to control themselves is not just sad and demeaning, but a great way to make sure we lose out on some of our best volunteers.

Finally, the "save your records" is a bit of a practical joke. Stand up if you know if you have all of your texts and social media posts for the last year or two ready to send off for a PRA. Better yet, extra credit if you have them organized so that you only send off the ones about town business, and not the ones about your medical appointments. Ironically, some of the loudest voices for this type of transparency have produced exactly nothing after multiple PRA requests, so it appears to be more of a scare tactic than an honest attempt to preserve records.

Sorry for the aggressive rhetoric, but our wonderful town depends on awesome volunteers, who are always difficult to find, without throwing more stumbling blocks into recruiting them and hampering their ability to do a great job for us.

PS I know this draft policy was forged under fire, so I have no complaints about it being crafted. But now is the time to take a step back and create something better. -- Dave Cardinal

11. Optional: You can upload a copy of your comments.

Thank you,
Portola Valley, CA

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