



TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

Emergency Preparedness

Committee Meeting

December 7, 2023

8:00 AM

REGULAR MEETING

HISTORIC SCHOOLHOUSE – 765 PORTOLA RD. – PORTOLA VALLEY, CA

Dale Pfau, Chair
Lynn Eisberg, Member
Craig Heberer, Member
Marianne Plunder, Member
Chris Raanes, Member
Ray Rothrock, Member
Jerry Shefren, Member
Vic Schachter, Member
Bud Trapp, Member
Robert Younge, Member
Randy True, Member

Chris Raanes will be attending remotely from the following location:
Best Western Plus Flathead Lake Inn and Suites
Business Center Conference Room
4824 US-93
Kalispell, MT 59901

REMOTE MEETING ADVISORY: On March 1, 2023, all committees in Portola Valley will return to conducting in-person meetings. A Zoom link will be provided for members of the public to participate remotely; however, the Town cannot guarantee there will be no technical issues with the software during the meeting. For best public participation results, attending the meeting in-person is advised.

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 towncenter@portolavalley.net. 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/87828632537?pwd=ToA8v0RaJE41aP6K0Xh4tNV94eRfaR.1>

Webinar ID: 878 2863 2537

Passcode: 293608

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

The times listed on the agenda are used by the Chair and are estimates only. The times are subject to change at any time, including while the meeting is in progress.

1. 8:00 Call to order
2. 8:01 Roll Call
3. 8:03 Oral Communications
4. 8:04 Review and approval of minutes;
 - o Minutes of November 2, 2023
5. 8:06 Town Status Reports (Etman)
 - o Modification of Town LAN for use with AM radio
 - o Internet Backup for Town Center
 - o Discussion of AM Radio protocol
 - o EOP update/implementation
6. 8:16 WPV-CERT/WFPD Report (Brown/Cuschieri)

7. 8:20 Evacuation Plan Status (Younge)
 - o Town Council Update (Craig Taylor)
8. 8:30 Portola Valley Support for CERT/EPiC (Pfau)
 - o Update
9. 8:35 Approval of AM Radio Audio Message Processing (Rothrock)
 - o Attached to packet
10. 8:40 Backup Power on Wireless Base stations in Town (Shefren)
11. 8:45 AM Radio Signs (Eisberg/Heberer)
 - o Discussion of options (see report)
 - o Recommendation/Approval by EPC
12. 8:50 Hawthorne’s Parking Plan (Plunder/Heberer)
 - o Update
13. 8:56 Subcommittee Reports
 - o Communications (Rothrock)
 - o Evacuation (Younge)
 - o Neighborhood Outreach (Schachter)
 - o Resident Outreach/Marcom (Plunder/True)
 - o Ad Hoc Safety Element (Younge)
14. 9:00 Next regular meeting is January 4, 2023
 - o Quorum check
15. 9:00 Adjourn

Land Acknowledgement:

The Town of Portola Valley acknowledges the colonial history of this land we dwell upon—the unceded territory of the Ramaytush (rah-my-toosh) Ohlone, Tamien Nation, and Muwekma (mah-WEK-mah) Ohlone, who endured a human and cultural genocide that included removal from their lands and their sacred relationship to the land. Portola Valley recognizes that we profit from the commodification of land seized from indigenous peoples and now bear the ecological consequences. We seek to understand the impact of these legacies on all beings and to find ways to make repair.

Emergency Preparedness Committee Minutes 02NOV2023

1. **05Oct23 In-Person Meeting** called to order by Chair Pfau at 0802.

2. Individual **Roll Call** taken and a quorum was established.

- Lynn Eisberg was not present
- Bud Trapp present via Zoom

3. Oral Communications

- Pfau pointed out that efforts to define Brown Act/non-Brown Act committees was still in process and could be sent to Town Council in January
- Pfau alerted committee members to a new Electronic Communications Policy that could affect committee activity and suggested members take a look.
- Pfau offered a SPECIAL recognition to Ray Rothrock who almost single-handedly has upgraded the AM radio at Town Center
- Pfau said that the agenda order would be shifted to allow comments from Town Manager Sharif Etman who would not arrive until approximately 8:30.

4. Motion to approve 05Oct23 Minutes was made and the Minutes were approved unanimously without changes.

5. Town Reports

- Town Manager Sharif Etman reviewed the open action items and told the committee he would come back at the next meeting with some updates.

6. WPV-CERT/WFPD Report (Brown/Cuschieri)

- Upcoming weekend is a Red Flag warning and extra staff will be available
- Second CERT training in progress
- 2024 CERT training schedule will be released soon
- A special "When Disaster Strikes" training program will take place on January 19-20 at Station 19

7. Evacuation Plan Status (Younge)

- Craig Taylor asked for a list of specific questions from the subcommittee/EPC
- Pfau agreed to send

8. AM Radio Relocation Status (Rothrock)

- AM Radio back at Town Center and operating with HPR antenna
- Operating at approximately 8 watts
- Thanks to volunteers and also members of WFPD who helped with antenna installation

9. Portola Valley Support for CERT/EPiC (Pfau)

- Letter to Town Council sent by CERT/EPiC

10. Emergency Communication in PV (Rothrock)

- No update

11. Backup Power on Wireless Base stations in Town (Shefren)

- No update

12. AM Radio Signs (Eisberg/Heberer)

- Considerable discussion of memo
- Subcommittee will come back with final recommendations for approval at next meeting

13. Hawthorne's Parking Plan (Heberer/Plunder)

- Dec 16 – Site tour

14. Wildfire Tabletop Oct 18 (Pfau)

- Report update on memo that was attached in packet.

15. No Additional Subcommittee reports

17. Motion to adjourn at 0923 was made and approved unanimously.

**Portola Valley EPC December 7, 2023 Meeting
Communications Subcommittee Report
Submitted Nov. 27, 2023**

Radio Communications Status (details: radio.rothrockfamily.com)

1. Repeaters and AM: as of this report – all radios/repeaters fully functional
 - a. AM Radio (AM, WRML513). Operational at 8W .
 - b. PVARC (KM6DLG) amateur repeaters – 2m/220/6m – fully operational.
 - c. NVN (FM WB5NVN) amateur analog repeater fully operational.
 - d. NVN (DMR WB5NVN) amateur digital repeater fully operational.
 - e. San Mateo Sheriff's (f.k.a. OES) (KC6ULT) UHF link - fully operational.
 - f. WPV-CERT Portola Valley GMRS (WQBS772) repeaters (PV1, PV2) - fully operational.
 - g. WPV-CERT Easter Cross WD1 repeater – fully operational.
 - h. LTW/VV GMRS (FM) repeaters are fully operational.
 - i. CERT Easter Cross (Woodside) and Granada (Portola Valley) DMR repeaters operational. Microwave link and repeater co-transmission operational.

2. Emergency Communications Trailer.
 - a. Ready to go. Trailer is located at Station 8.

3. Town Hall EOC Equipment Status.
 - a. Bluetti 2 KWhr power supply for all radios, AM operational and on timed recharging.
 - b. All radios are working, antennas tested well, batteries replaced 10/1/23
 - c. Bluetti in place for DC and AC backup.

4. AM Radio.
 - a. Internet link for simulcasting operational.
 - b. ***No update provided by Town***: Need to reprogram LAN for remote message updating.
 - c. **Not completed**. HPR antenna needs fine tuning and completion of ground plane installation. Antenna operating at SWR of 2.11 (should be very closer to 1.1)
 - d. **AM Audio Processing**. Memo prepared and reviewed by several members of EPC. Attached for the record. Will send to Town staff on the AM radio team if EPC supports this.

Color Key

Good status

Concerning status

Urgent need status

On going

New Item this report

ACTION REQUESTS



TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE REPORT

DRAFT

TO: Architectural and Site Control Commission (ASCC), Town Council

FROM: Emergency Planning Committee, TIS Sign Subcommittee, Lynn Eisberg, Craig Heberer

DATE: November 27, 2023

SUBJECT: Recommendation to Install Proposed Traveler's Information Station (TIS) Signs

RECOMMENDATION

It's recommended that the Town of Portola Valley consider installing Traveler's Information Station (TIS) signs along Portola and Alpine Roads to help bring awareness to traffic entering Portola Valley of its local TIS radio station, AM1680, as a source for important information. To that end, several options detailing sign type, locations, and installation are presented to assist in making decisions. Questions and feedback to the EPC are welcomed and encouraged.

BACKGROUND

Portola Valley has an FCC licensed and fully operational AM 1680 (AM 1680kHz) call sign WRML513 Traveler's Information Station (TIS) (as of Nov 2023). The broadcasting equipment is located at Town Center and is operated and maintained by Town staff and local volunteers. AM1680 is referenced in the document "Town of Portola Valley Evacuation Plan v1.0 *DRAFT* July 2023". In October 2023, the radio antenna was upgraded, and coverage of Portola Valley was greatly improved. The radio station is also live streamed via the internet at <http://bit.ly/PortolaValleyAM1680>.

AM1680 currently broadcasts general information continuously with a message directed at residents and visitors to Portola Valley. It is envisioned that the TIS would also broadcast information important in emergencies such as Wildfire, Earthquakes, and the like. It may also be used to broadcast timely information about special events, such as the annual Zotts to Tots Race, that is helpful to both residents and visitors.

While AM1680 is described on the Town Website (Ref. 1.), the installation of TIS signs is thought to greatly increase awareness of the TIS, especially for those visiting the Town. The radio station can also be streamed via the internet at <http://bit.ly/PortolaValleyAM1680>.

POSSIBLE CODE REQUIREMENTS

Federal, State and Local requirements for the proposed TIS signs were researched on line and, in the case of CalTrans, supplemented via email and phone conversations (Public Information Support Line at 510-286-6173). There appears to be no FCC or DOT requirements cited for TIS signs. CalTrans stated that they have no highway signs in Portola Valley and suggested to consult with local officials about installing and/or deploying TIS signs.

Various local Portola Valley ordinances or regulations may apply to TIS signs.

Mr. Bill Baker, CEO of Information Station Specialists (vendor of the Portola Valley TIS radio system), at theradiosource.com (Ref. 2) was also contacted and provided the following information via email. The governing authority for sign appearance would likely refer to the MUTCD – the Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices or its equivalent.

DISCUSSION

Concepts of the types of signs, locations, and installation options are presented and illustrated below, and are briefly summarized in table 1. Potential pros and cons of each option are also presented. Section A is a discussion only of TIS sign text options. Section B is a discussion of sign type, location, and installation options.

Generally, the locations proposed for the TIS signs are to alert traffic entering the town of Portola Valley from Hwy 280, Portola Road, and in options 4 and 5 below, Arastradero Road. The TIS signs proposed are passive and permanent. All except option 4 take advantage of installing TIS signs as an addition or as “riders” to existing signs.

Costs were researched (Ref. 3, 4) and rough estimates are provided. Note that these costs are for hardware only, do not include any other costs such as labor to install the signs, and have not been confirmed or vetted

Mr. Baker recommended that the more standard the TIS sign appearance is, the more likely it is to be noticed. He stated that the standard appearance for TIS signs is either blue background with white text, or yellow background with black text. Both formats meet the MUTCD guidelines. Mr. Baker also stated that the most widely used and hence recommended text for TIS signs are presented below in section A of this report.

Section A. TIS Sign Text Options

Text Option 1 "Community & Emergency Info Tune AM Radio to 1680"

Text Option 2 "Community & Emergency Info Tune To 1680 AM"

Mr. Baker stated that text Option 1 is more commonly used.

Section B. TIS Sign Type, Location, and Installation Options

Option 1

Add TIS signs to existing signs in the Town described below.

“Town of Portola Valley”, two signs, one on Portola Road near Montecito Road and another on Alpine Road near Westridge Drive

“Town Center Facilities”, two signs, one at the north the other at the south entrance to Town Center

Appearance – These existing signs are wood with engraved or carved white text. The proposed TIS sign would be fabricated to match as closely as possible the look and feel of the existing. Approximate costs per sign are expected to be between \$100 and \$500. See Figures 1 and 2 “Option 1” for illustrated concepts.

Pro-

These existing signs are under control/purview of the Town
Message seems consistent with existing (listings of Town facilities)
Aesthetically pleasing

Con-

The Non-Standard colors and appearance may not draw much attention

Option 1a

Same as option 1 except the added TIS sign would be in a color and font more recognizable, i.e. Blue background with White font (or Yellow background with Black Font). Approximate costs per sign are expected to be between \$100 and \$500. See Figures 3 and 4” Option 1a” for illustrated concepts.

Pro –

More visible / recognizable than Option 1

Con –

Appearance is inconsistent with existing signs

Option2

Add, as a “rider”, a TIS sign to ~~the~~ existing “Neighborhood Watch Community” ~~sign(s)~~signs such as ~~the~~one located near the “Town of Portola Valley” sign on Portola Road, and another located near the Town of Portola Valley border on Arastradero Road. The proposed TIS sign would be fabricated to match as closely as possible the look and feel of the existing. Approximate costs per sign and mounting hardware are expected to be around \$100. See Figure 5 “Option 2” for illustrated concepts.

Pro –

Takes advantage of existing sign
Aesthetically pleasing – matching look and feel of existing

Con –

potentially confusing messages

limited coverage – adding TIS only to existing Neighborhood Watch Community signs

Option 2a

The same as option 2, however, the proposed “rider” would be a more traditional TIS type sign in appearance. As in Option 2 above, approximate costs per sign and mounting hardware are expected to be around \$100. See Figure 6 “Option 2a”, for illustrated concepts.

Pro –

Takes advantage of existing signs
Traditional look of TIS sign

Con –

Potentially confusing messages
Not as aesthetically pleasing as option 2

Option 3

Add TIS signs as a “rider” to several selected existing speed limit signs for traffic entering the Town of Portola Valley at or near the locations listed below.

Portola Road – near existing Neighborhood watch sign

Portola Road – Town Center

Alpine Road – between San Francisquito Creek and Westridge Roads

Alpine Road – between Arastradero and Golden Oak Roads

Approximate costs per sign and mounting hardware are expected to be around \$100. See Figure 7 “Option 3” for illustrated concepts.

Pro –

Takes advantage of existing speed limit signs
Locations could easily be expanded to include outbound traffic (potentially valuable for evacuations)
Traditional look of TIS sign

Con –

May not be in optimal locations

Option 4

Install New Standalone TIS Signs in general locations listed below and/ or additional locations.

Locations – generally traffic entering the Town of Portola Valley:

Portola Road – near existing Neighborhood Watch sign

Portola Road - Town Center

Alpine Road – between San Francisquito Creek and Westridge Roads

Alpine Road – between Arastradero and Golden Oak Roads

Hardware (sign, u-channel post, and mounting hardware) costs are roughly estimated to be \$150. See Figure 8 “Option 4” for illustrated concepts.

Pro –

- Potentially optimized locations
- High visibility

Cons –

- Unknown what approvals are required
- Expected to be costly
- Aesthetics of additional signs on Portola Valley roads

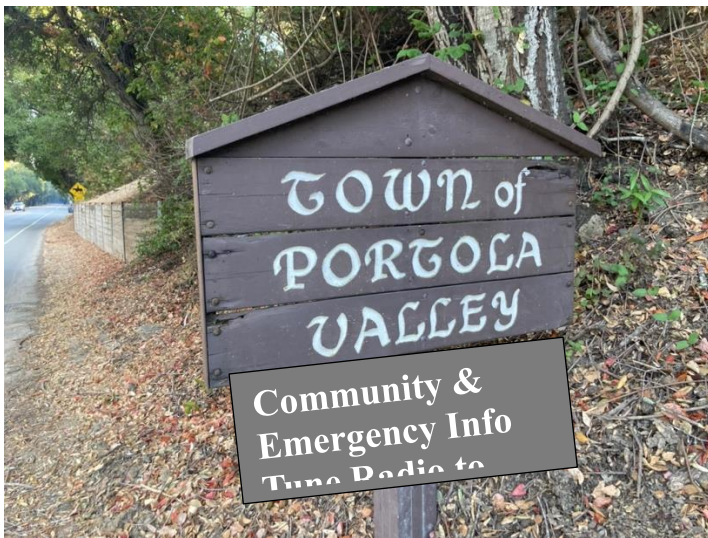


Figure 1. Option 1 Concept – Town of Portola Valley Sign with TIS Sign to Match as Closely as Possible with Exiting



Figure 2. Option 1 Concept – Town Center Sign with TIS Sign to Match as Closely as Possible with Exiting

DRAFT



Figure 3. Option 1a Concept – Town of Portola Valley Sign with TIS Sign in More Traditional Appearance



Figure 4. Option 1a Concept – Town Center Sign with TIS Sign in More Traditional Appearance



Figure 5. Option 2 Concept - TIS sign as a “rider” to existing Neighborhood Watch Community Sign.
TIS rider to Match as Closely as Possible with Exiting



Figure 6. Option 2a Concept - TIS sign as a “rider” to existing Neighborhood Watch Community Sign.
TIS rider in More Traditional Appearance.



Figure 7. Option 3 Concept - TIS Sign as "rider" to existing speed limit sign



Figure 8. Option 4 Concept - TIS Sign as Stand Alone.

DRAFT

| TABLE 1 | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|--|---|---|
| Options | 1 | 1a | 2 | 2a | 3 | 4 |
| Description | Addition to Existing Town Signs at Town Center and Entries to Portola Valley | Addition to Existing Town Signs at Town Center and Entries to Portola Valley | Addition / Rider to Existing Neighborhood Watch Signs | Addition / Rider to Existing Neighborhood Watch Signs | Addition / Rider to Selected Existing Speed Limit Signs | Newly Installed Stand Alone Posts and Signs |
| Sign Material | Wood | Wood | Metal | Metal | Metal | Metal |
| Sign Color | Brown to match existing | Traditional blue color of TIS signs | Brown to match existing | Traditional blue color of TIS signs | Traditional blue color of TIS signs | Traditional blue color of TIS signs |
| Text Color | White to match existing | Traditional white color font of TIS signs | To match existing | Traditional white color font of TIS signs | Traditional white color font of TIS signs | Traditional white color font of TIS signs |
| Font | Style to match existing as closely as possible | Style to match existing as closely as possible | Style to match existing as closely as possible | Style to match existing as closely as possible | Traditional TIS sign | Traditional TIS sign |
| Additional Details | Appearance to match as closely as possible to existing | | Appearance of rider sign to match as closely as possible to existing sign | | | |
| Pros | Blends in well with existing, attractive, existing signs under purview of the Town | Traditional color of TIS signs, attracts more attention | Blends in well with existing, attractive, existing signs under purview of the Town | Traditional color of TIS signs, attracts more attention | Takes advantage of existing speed limit sign infrastructure. Coverage may be easily expanded to include outbound traffic. | Locations may be optimized for coverage, single uncluttered message |
| Cons | Doesn't stand out, may be easily overlooked, non-traditional TIS sign blue/white or yellow/black. Limited coverage. | Blue and White color of TIS sign doesn't blend in with the look and feel of existing signs. Limited coverage. | Possible confusion combining messages of Neighborhood Watch and TIS. Limited coverage. | Possible confusion combining messages of Neighborhood Watch and TIS. Limited coverage. | Coverage limited to existing speed limit signs.. Unknowns regarding regulations e.g. MUTCD* etc. | Questions remain regarding road easements, engineering. Expected higher total costs than other options. |
| Approximate Hardware Costs per Sign | \$100 - \$500 | \$100 - \$500 | \$100 | \$100 | \$100 | \$150 |
| Number of Possible Signs | 4 | 4 | 2 or more | 2 or more | Multiple | Multiple |
| Concept Figures | 1, 2 | 3, 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| | | | | | * MUTCD - Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices | |

Ref. 1

<https://www.portolavalley.net/community/important-contact-information>

Ref. 2

<https://theradiosource.com/products/applications-signs.htm>

<https://theradiosource.com/products/sign-fas6000.htm>

Ref. 3

<https://www.trafficsigns.com>

Ref. 4

<https://www.bayarearedwood.com/custom-signs>

Notes:

From Portola Valley website

“The primary radio with information about Portola Valley for its residents and visitors is the 1680 AM radio. You can receive this continuous broadcast on any AM radio in your car or home. It transmits 24x7x365 recorded information about being prepared. Should an emergency be declared, the AM radio will be updated accordingly.”

<https://www.portolavalley.net/community/emergency-preparedness-information/radio-frequencies#:~:text=In%20the%20case%20of%20an,station%20via%20the%20internet%20here.>

“Portola Valley AM Radio - an AM broadcast radio system has been installed at Town Center as a means of communicating with residents during emergencies. It broadcasts at the frequency 1680 kHz with call sign WQQA726. It is also available via the internet at <http://bit.ly/AM1680PortolaValley>. Tune in during an emergency.”

<https://www.portolavalley.net/community/emergency-preparedness-information/additional-information-for-emergency-preparedness>

Portola Valley Ordinances

https://library.municode.com/ca/portola/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT17ZO_ARTIVSP_ARSPUSRE_CH17.76SI

note: 17.76.040 - Definitions.

flashing sign may be considered an “animated sign”

"Institutional" means uses whose primary function is furtherance of the public health, safety and welfare, generally, not exclusively noncommercial in nature, including, but not limited to the following: Hospitals and similar health care facilities, airports, cemeteries, recreational clubs and lodges, museums, theaters and similar cultural institutions, churches and similar religious institutions, detention facilities, fire and police stations, emergency shelters, marinas, parks and similar recreational facilities, schools and similar educational institutions, public utility facilities and offices used for other than-business purposes.

17.76.050 - City manager's discretion.

When exercising discretion pursuant to any section of this chapter, the city manager or his or her designee shall make the decision in light of, and in a manner consistent with, the purposes of this chapter, consideration for the health, safety and welfare of Portola residents, and consideration for the aesthetic appeal of the City of Portola.

(Ord. No. 339, § 1, 4-24-2013)

17.76.130 - Sign design regulations for permanent signs adopted.

The planning commission may adopt sign design regulations for permanent signs in this chapter, as written in Section 17.76.250. The purpose of adopting sign design regulations is to assist and guide the planning department in reviewing applications made pursuant to this chapter. Sign design regulations for permanent signs will be available to the public at Portola City Hall.

(Ord. No. 339, § 1, 4-24-2013)

17.76.250 - Sign design regulations for permanent signs.

To: Craig Taylor
From: Dale Pfau, Evacuation Subcommittee, EPC
Date: November 21, 2023
Re: Evacuation Plan – Questions and Comments for Town Council

The EPC has brought up several concerns and questions during the past two meetings that have not been addressed. Craig Taylor asked that those questions be sent to him. They are summarized below:

Specifically:

1. What exactly did the TC do on its meeting of 13 Sept 2023? The minutes said the TC “received” the Evacuation Plan. A report from Mary Hufty said that the TC “accepted” the Evacuation Plan.
2. What specifically are the legal reasons that the TC has not chosen to “Adopt” the Evacuation Plan in the face of multiple municipalities that have adopted evacuation plans. Is there a legal reason that the plan cannot be adopted?
3. What are the specific changes that the full Town Council would like to adopt the plan?
4. The Plan has been vetted and approved by WFPD, the Sheriff’s Office, and the DEM. This was a significant effort and took substantial time. In particular we have Dave Barnett from the DEM stating: “The document shows the effort and time put in to keep the community safe and prepared for evacuations. We want to emphasize that the work done is excellent and we support the issuing of the plan.” Major changes to the plan should require approval by the same agencies and could take months.
5. The EPC would prefer to adopt the current Evacuation Plan with only minor changes and make additional changes as necessary over time. Is there a specific reason the full TC would not support this?

Going forward,

1. We are aware of the interest from the GSS to add a section on Earthquake/Fire/Compound Events to the Evacuation Plan.
2. We are also aware that San Mateo County is working toward a comprehensive County Evacuation Plan that may be completed in the next two years or so.
3. NIST has also recently released new recommendations for Evacuation.
4. We have recently received the Austin TX, evacuation plan

Updates to the Plan can be incorporated over time as information becomes available and as manpower is available. In the interest of time and efficiency the Committee sees no substantial work that should or needs to be completed on the Evacuation Plan in the near term.

Evacuation Subcommittee Report 7 December 2023

Updated evacuation traffic projections

The EPC Evacuation subcommittee is in the process of updating the evacuation traffic projections to understand the impact of evacuation traffic times due to increased vehicles at specific locations in the town for existing restaurants, schools, open space parking, and retirement communities; as well as planned new developments in open space parking and housing.

The subcommittee will be using the Ladriss evacuation modeling software that the town has a license for which runs out at the end of this year. We would like to thank Sharif Etman (our new town manager) for helping expedite the use of the Ladriss software before the license runs out.

The subcommittee is working hard to be able to get the desired projections out of the Ladriss simulation by the end of this year.

Portola Valley AM Radio Message Audio Processing

The Portola Valley AM TIS (Travelers Information Station) Radio plays recorded messages or live transmissions. Recorded messages are uploaded to the audio player on the radio equipment itself either by a USB insertion or web upload via the Internet. A message stored there will play 7x24x365 until it is changed, or the radio is turned off.

While most new digital equipment records high fidelity audio whether on a smartphone or a computer, but it is generally known that normal audio recordings don't sound well when transmitted on an AM radio signal but may sound great to our ear when played on the device recorded. These new digital devices do not automatically make an audio track best for the AM radio. Thus, it is highly recommended that all recorded audio messages be post-processed with software to sharpen them and adjust levels for the various frequencies one finds in a voice recording. This is all in the interest of having clear messages, especially if the AM signal is not particularly strong at a particular location.

It's not a bad thing to just put a smartphone recorded message on the AM radio, but if there is time it is always better to post process.

Steps for Post-Processing

1. Record the audio message on any digital device desired, phone or computer. It typically is saved as an MP3 file or similar. It really doesn't matter as the vendor can handle it.
2. Email the file to bill@theradiosource.com¹ and put in the Subject line "Audio File Portola Valley"
3. The Radio Source will in very short order process and test the file and then send it right back to the sender.
4. Upload the file to the AM radio via USB or the web interface.

Tips for good messages

1. A one minute message is a long message. So, try to keep the total length to 30 seconds or so. This is not a hard a fast rule, simply a guideline.
2. Speak in relatively short sentences, pausing a bit between sentences to create some "dead air." The "dead air" provides good demarcation for the post processor and will make the message much more readable to the ear.
3. Message must always contain the radio call sign. Presently that call sign is WRML513. A closing sentence like, "You are hearing this broadcast on sixteen-eighty kilohertz, TIS radio WRML513, Portola Valley, California."
4. Final point, it is helpful to also add this sentence or similar either at the beginning or the end or both, "This message was recorded by XXX on November 9, 2023 at 9:27 am". Should the messages change often like during an emergency, knowing the time a message was created could be very helpful to listeners.

¹ The Radio Source is the vendor for the AM radio. This service is free. The Radio Source will also catalogue the messages for Portola Valley and thus provide a history and an offsite storage for all messages.