



# TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

6:00 PM – Architectural Site Control Commission Meeting  
Monday, July 22, 2024

## SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

**HISTORIC SCHOOLHOUSE - 765 Portola Road, Portola Valley, CA 94028**

**Remote Public Comments:** Meeting participants are encouraged to submit public comments in writing in advance of the meeting. Please send an email to [asmith@portolavalley.net](mailto:asmith@portolavalley.net) by 12:00 PM on the day of the meeting. All comments received by that time will be distributed to Commissioners prior to the meeting. All comments received are included in the public record.

### VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION VIA ZOOM

**To access the meeting by computer:**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84403175309?pwd=BVM5JrZ04JFyVblOo9bcMvOzT1yLin.1>

**Or:** Go to Zoom.com – Click Join a Meeting – Enter the Meeting ID

**Meeting ID:** 844 0317 5309 **Passcode:** 736615

**To access the meeting by phone:**

1.669.900.6833 or

1.888.788.0099 (toll-free)

Enter same Meeting ID and Passcode

\*6 - Toggle mute/unmute.

\*9 - Raise hand.

**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 Planning Department at (650) 851-1700 or [asmith@portolavalley.net](mailto:asmith@portolavalley.net). Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the Town to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting.

**Public Hearings:** Public Hearings provide the general public and interested parties an opportunity to provide testimony on these items. If you challenge any proposed action(s) in court, you may be limited to raising only issues you or someone else raised at the Public Hearing(s) described in this agenda, or in written correspondence delivered to the Architectural and Site Control Commission at, or prior to, the Public Hearing(s).

**6:00 PM - CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Warr, Vice Chair Flynn, Commissioners Breen and Dixon

**ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

Persons wishing to address the Architectural and Site Control Commission on any subject not on the agenda may do so now. Please note however, that the Architectural and Site Control Commission is not able to undertake extended discussion or action tonight on items not on the agenda.

**NEW BUSINESS**

1. Committee Discussion Item: Create an optional Conceptual Design Review step in the ASCC review process

**COMMISSION, STAFF, COMMITTEE REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. Commission Reports
3. Staff Report

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

4. March 25, 2024

**ADJOURNMENT**



# MEMORANDUM

## TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

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**TO:** Architectural and Site Control Commission (ASCC)

**FROM:** Adrienne Smith, Senior Planner

**DATE:** July 22, 2024

**RE:** Chair Warr and Commissioner Dixon Colleagues Memo

### **BACKGROUND**

Chair Warr and Commissioner Dixon have prepared a Colleagues Memo for the purpose of a holding an ASCC discussion on the topic of adding an optional Conceptual Design Review step in the ASCC's project review process. This would create a two-step process of review – conceptual project review followed by formal project approval. The Colleagues Memo is attached for the ASCC's consideration.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Warr and Dixon Colleagues Memo



# TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

## Colleagues Memo

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**TO:** Architectural and Site Control Commission (ASCC)

**FROM:** Carter Warr and Gina Dixon

**DATE:** July 22, 2024

**RE:** Committee Discussion Item: Create an Optional Conceptual Design Review Step in the ASCC Review Process

### BACKGROUND

In an effort to provide better service to applicants and neighbors of applicants this subcommittee would like to discuss revisions to the design review process for significant projects. There seems to us there is a problem with the current design review process. The problem is that by the time the ASCC sees the project the design has had too much time and money invested to make any significant changes. Applicants have been challenged by the application requirements and staff review to complete the designs to such a degree that there is little appetite for even minor adjustments. This problem presents the ASCC, applicants, and neighbors with an inherent conflict borne out of satisfying the Town's Municipal Code application requirements for Site Development Permits. While the application requirements have been developed to help streamline the approval process it has created a schism in the historically friendly and supportive nature of the design review process in Portola Valley.

#### The Problem

Too many times over the last several years the design review process has ended with substantial conflicts the Town had to defend because of the Municipal Code-required process. The current application requirements establish a roadblock to applicants from seeking advice on design in advance of the formal ASCC application.

The Municipal Code in Portola Valley, the ASCC and Planning Commission approves all building and site development projects. Planning and building staff act as the project managers and are supporting members of the approval process.

Prior to approximately 2012, a more informal practice of project review was observed where the ASCC often saw projects multiple times during the gestation of the designs as they matured. The ASCC was utilized as a feedback loop to confirm designs were responsive to the comments and suggestions and commissioners could develop their own opinions and conditions of approval. Often, ASCC approvals were provided with conditions where full compliance for all technical calculations and engineering would be reviewed at the time of building permit or would come back to the ASCC as a follow up item without an extensive staff report.

## DISCUSSION

### Suggested Solution

Separate the design review from the detailed numeric and engineering analysis. Provide a pathway for designs to be presented to the ASCC for comments and conditional approval while designs are still immature and attuned to comments and potential changes. This process would give the ASCC and neighbors an opportunity to express concerns, ideas, and help projects understand the adjacent context.

Woodside, for example, has a conceptual design review process in advance of the formal design review process. This process has a much shorter list of submittal requirements and very rudimentary staff review requirements. The focus on conceptual review is on design of site placement, building design, general grading and driveway/patio placement, and broad-brush strokes of the landscape concept. This conceptual review ensures the parts of the design are in the right places on the site with the appropriate relationships. This process is intentionally nontechnical so that there has been little investment in calculations and engineering. It is after the general schematic design parameters have been conditionally approved that the applicant is encouraged to complete the design review application including all of the currently required technical calculations and engineering.

By avoiding expensive and time-consuming application requirements the design review process has greater opportunity to mutually adjust the designs to better coordinate within the environment. It further improves the opportunity for neighbors to work toward mutual resolutions rather than forcing the ASCC to be arbitrator.

Create an OPTIONAL Conceptual Design Review Step in the ASCC review process

- Reduce the application requirements to those generally equivalent to Schematic Design
  - Site plan with grading, impervious surface, and landscape concepts based on a topographic survey
  - Floor and roof plans to explain the building arrangements
  - Elevations of the buildings
  - Sections of building site to explain the design concepts
  - Illustrative support of design concepts including images of pictures/materials to explain the concepts
  - Basic compliance of development standards for setbacks, height, floor and impervious surface areas
  - Protected tree removals identified as well as trees identified for removal with sizes/species
- Reduce the application review by staff to the most basic of planning and site development
  - Site plan with grading, impervious surface, and landscape concepts
- Require basic story poles for major building masses (not detailed)
- Require public ASCC site meeting to collect recon and allow neighbors to provide feedback and concerns

### Goals

- Less expensive
- Less stress
- More community oriented
- Better solutions
- Maintain the Portola Valley Ethos
- Increase ASCC's opportunity to guide development that meets the combined goals of applicants and neighbors before a design has been "fully baked."

- More productive and fun
- ASCC meetings will occur more regularly because projects in the conceptual design phase will have more simplified submittal requirements and thus will be ready for review more expeditiously

## DRAFT MINUTES

**ARCHITECTURAL AND SITE CONTROL COMMISSION**  
**Hybrid Meeting – In Person at Schoolhouse and via Zoom****March 25, 2024****CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Carter Warr.

Present: Danna Breen, Gina Dixon (arrived at 6:30 p.m.), Rebecca Flynn, and Carter Warr.

Absent: Kenny Cheung

Town Staff: Adrienne Smith, Senior Planner and Jon Biggs, Interim Planning & Building Director.

Council Liaison: Councilmember Craig Taylor

**ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

Commissioner Breen reflected on the recent passing of Mr. Dave Ross, a respected colleague from the Architectural and Site Control Commission (ASCC). She noted that it had been just over a month since Mr. Ross's death on February 16, 2024. Commissioner Breen expressed appreciation for the Planning Commission's recognition of Mr. Ross's passing and shared the sentiment that Mr. Ross is deeply missed by the community.

Councilmember Craig Taylor advised that the agenda included both Planning Commission and ASCC Commissioners and needs to be corrected before it gets finalized.

Senior Planner Adrienne Smith apologized and confirmed that the meeting minutes would be updated to reflect the correct Commissioner.

Zoom attendee Rita Comes thanked Commissioner Breen for acknowledging the loss of Mr. Ross, who was a very active volunteer to the community. She stated that she was very happy at the Planning Commission meeting last week and to hear the voices of the ASCC.

Chair Warr and Senior Planner Smith confirmed there were no additional public comments.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- (1) A workshop to review and provide feedback to the Planning Commission on the Portola Valley Draft Zoning Code and Zoning Map Amendments required to implement the 2023-2032 Housing Element**

Adrienne Smith, Senior Planner, presented the item as detailed in the staff report and provided an overview of the Portola Valley Draft Zoning Code and Zoning Map Amendments required to implement the 2023-2032 Housing Element.

## DRAFT MINUTES

Chair Warr invited questions from the Commissioners.

Vice Chair Flynn inquired about the objective standards under evaluation and the absence of a discretionary review plan for the projects.

Monica Szydlik, Senior Associate with Lisa Wise Consulting, clarified that the new zones are accompanied by a list of objective design standards, established in response to the adoption of SB 330. She emphasized that local jurisdictions are now prohibited from denying or rejecting housing projects based on anything subjective in nature and not easily quantifiable.

Vice Chair Flynn sought clarification on whether these standards apply exclusively to the three new districts or to everything across the board.

Ms. Szydlik confirmed that the standards apply to all housing projects with two or more units, reflecting the State's initiative to prevent local jurisdictions from arbitrarily rejecting such projects.

Vice Chair Flynn commented that in addition to all of the objective standards that the applications for the multi-family projects are subject to, we could still require them to come before the ASCC for some type of evaluation.

Ms. Szydlik affirmed that Conditions of Approval could be imposed, with a maximum of five meetings allowed for each project. The utilization of these meetings is at the Town's discretion.

Vice Chair Flynn acknowledged this information as beneficial, pointing out that the current amendments do not reflect this provision. She highlighted a discrepancy where non-residential projects are required to undergo ASCC review, but residential ones are not, expressing a desire to address this inconsistency.

Chair Warr agreed.

Vice Chair Flynn addressed the clarity of the Objective Standards, noting a lack of understanding regarding the significance of certain requirements. She suggested that a detailed explanation be provided either in the current session or within the guidelines themselves. This would facilitate a better comprehension of the standards' intent and necessity. Vice Chair Flynn also mentioned the potential increase in time investment for architects and applicants to comply with detailed Objective Guidelines, as well as the



## DRAFT MINUTES

additional time required for the planning department to verify adherence to these standards.

Vice Chair Flynn and Ms. Szydlik engaged in a discussion concerning the staff's approach to detailing the Objective Guidelines.

Commissioner Breen remarked on the generous nature of a 10-foot plate height and noted the disproportionate focus on signage over architectural elements within the meeting packet.

Chair Warr reminded the Commission that this was the time for staff inquiries rather than comments.

Senior Planner Adrienne Smith responded to Commissioner Breen's comment, clarifying that the sign section was only amended to include mixed-use applications, with no other alterations.

Commissioner Breen felt that was a voluminous amount of information on signs compared to everything else.

Commissioner Dixon sought clarification on the term "Bridge Housing."

Senior Planner Adrienne Smith commented that it is under the emergency shelter definition. She believed it was taken directly from the State language and agreed to note the request for definition.

Commissioner Dixon suggested adding a definition for 'plate height' and questioned whether the intention described in the Multifamily District Regulations could be incorporated into the Design Guidelines, citing concerns about subjectivity.

Senior Planner Adrienne Smith replied that it was just for continuity with the rest of the code. It is a standard section at the beginning of every chapter.

Chair Warr expressed confusion regarding the rationale behind the lack of reductions in parcel sizes as depicted in the zoning map, where there is a parcel close to 1,000 feet long that has an average depth of 50-60 feet. He suggested that reducing its size could allow for alternative uses such as park dedication. He added that that if you take the 17 acres and apply the 35% coverage factor, it is an enormous number. At an acre, the coverage factor produces a 15,000 square foot coverage number, and 17 times that on the parcel makes no sense.

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Commissioner Dixon commented on page 34, table 18.15.050 in the R-MF-23 column. She thought it was interesting because R-MF-4 has a max height and a vertical height, and wondered why there was not a vertical height for the R-MF-23. It might be beneficial to have that in the future if there is another site that gets placed in this to not have a redo over the code or table.

Ms. Szydluk explained that the reason for the max height and the vertical height is because staff try to be as consistent as possible with the existing code, the way the standards are laid out, and the way the standards are produced. Right now, the town draws a distinction between a max height and vertical height. She acknowledged that while this convention suits the new zone, the R-MF-23's significant increase in density warranted a fresh approach to height regulations due to the site's constraints. She agreed that the potential application of these zones to support increased density in other areas should be considered.

Commissioner Dixon expressed concerns about the visual impact of a 42-foot-high building placed atop a high topography, noting that it would stand out more than if sitting down lower.

Vice Chair Flynn pointed out a typographical error in the same table. The R-MF-23 footnote number one incorrectly refers to property development standards for 4394 Alpine Road, which has moved into MU. She recommended the removal of this footnote.

Commissioner Dixon sought clarification on the definition of the dooryard. She found the code's description confusing, as it seemed to suggest that the defining wall or hedge of a dooryard should be set further out, while diagrams appeared to show yard areas extending up to the houses.

Commissioner Breen joined the discussion to point out that hedges are generally discouraged within the town.

Vice Chair Flynn echoed the confusion regarding the distinction between a dooryard and a stoop.

Ms. Szydluk clarified that within the context of the discussion, a dooryard is considered a type of building entry design. The dooryard area is defined by a low wall, perimeter, fence, or hedge serving as a buffer. She acknowledged that if the proposed dimensions are not right for Portola Valley, this should be a topic of further discussion.

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Commissioner Dixon inquired about the minimum 18-inch finished floor level above the sidewalk.

Ms. Szydlik replied that in a lot of areas, we find that there is a desire to create some privacy from the public in residential spaces. In terms of accessibility, sometimes that requires an alternate ramp area and not all of the units can comply with that.

Chair Warr stated that he would like to know how the standards support the rural character of Portola Valley and examples of how the standards have been used and utilized in other rural towns. In the preamble of the MF section, it talks about encouraging establishment maintenance of suitable gently density. Gentle density needs a definition. He also inquired about the fair housing rules and if there is an ideal unit size or unit size blend that meets fair housing rules.

Ms. Szydlik addressed the state's mandate for local jurisdictions to actively promote fair housing through policy implementation as part of the Housing Element. She recommended that the preparers of the Housing Element discuss the AFFH section in detail. Ms. Szydlik expressed reluctance to delve into the broader implications of AFFH and how it has been integrated into Portola Valley's Housing Element. She noted that the process highlighted the necessity for establishing multi-family and mixed-use zones to support the site inventory.

Chair Warr emphasized the importance of visualizing potential buildings and their occupancy to adequately plan for parking, environmental impact, and traffic considerations. He asked whether there were any illustrative plans available that could aid in understanding the scale of the buildings and questioned the potential application of a density bonus for affordable housing.

Senior Planner Adrienne Smith responded that while the exact nature of the project remains uncertain, an estimate of 10 units is anticipated.

Vice Chair Flynn mentioned that the staff had discussed the possibility of integrating modular homes, with each unit being approximately 500 square feet at most.

Chair Warr inquired about the vetting process for the MF-23 zone, seeking examples.

Ms. Szydlik explained that staff developed very schematic site plans for parking, how the site is accessed, and what the building envelope is.

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Chair Warr asked how parking would be possible with a 6,600 square foot limit on the size of the building.

Ms. Szydluk clarified that this footprint was determined by the buildable area, considering the rear setback from the scenic corridor and the side setbacks.

Chair Warr further detailed the dimensional challenge, noting that the building's width and depth, combined with the required setback, would not allow for two rows of parking, which require 61 feet. Tested examples are needed to better understand the rules.

Commissioner Dixon inquired about the availability of visuals to assist in understanding the various scenarios being modeled.

Senior Planner Adrienne Smith highlighted an extensive chapter in the Housing Element dedicated to Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing, with a goal to diversify housing types across the community, beyond just affordability.

Vice Chair Flynn asked if it was yet known who Ladera Church is planning to house.

Senior Planner Adrienne Smith responded that the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) anticipates eight units for very low to low-income residents, indicating a focus on affordable housing.

Chair Warr concluded that the project's alignment with affordable housing expectations could make it eligible for an 80% density bonus and potential concessions on setbacks and height limits from the town.

Senior Planner Adrienne Smith commented that was correct.

Chair Warr inquired about whether it needs to be geared to get that level of density. He stated that the jump to the density of 20 units an acre was intended to automatically qualify for housing because 20 units an acre would produce a minimum of three units of affordable housing per acre.

Senior Planner Adrienne Smith stated that she knows the community is nervous about the application of density bonus because it is unknown what iteration it could take on a given project. She explained that it could be up to 80% if that is what the applicant decides to do.

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Chair Warr inquired regarding whether there are examples of using incentives in the code. He felt that incentives should be used and asked if there was a problem with using incentives in an objective SB 330 context.

Commissioner Breen believed that also included the participation of ASCC in a gestational way from the very beginning because every parcel in the town is very different.

Ms. Szydlik responded that it is understood that the town has a very rural character. The vast majority of the town is single family residential areas, and staff understands that the ASCC, Planning Commission, and Design Guidelines have worked to encourage and keep that. She stated that the staff were charged with ensuring they develop standards that support the density in the site inventory identifies as being supported. In doing that, the standards were tailored so that they reflect the building massing, size, and scale to the extent possible while still supporting the density. The ASCC Commissioners' input on how to better represent the town's rural character is desired.

Ms. Szydlik presented Conceptual Site Plan examples on screen. She provided a comprehensive overview of the building footprint and showed the level of detail of some potential configurations that a designer could propose.

Vice Chair Flynn asked if it was possible to put into those Design Guidelines a requirement for a certain amount of green space on the lots and a certain amount of screening in the front. She requested including it as a design guidelines because the houses should not be visible from the street to fit into Portola Valley's rural aesthetic. Adequate screening is needed that is not too close together to meet fire codes, and creating a rural atmosphere in terms of providing green space on the lots so that people do not feel like they are in Redwood City. She referred to the diagram shown for Ladera's site and asked if the anticipation was for 10 units.

Ms. Szydlik confirmed there were 10 units, which showed two stories over ground level shared parking.

Chair Warr stated that regarding MF-33, the Planning Staff are suggesting 55% in building coverage and 75% in impervious surface, which adds up to 130% of the lot. There is no room for landscape at all. He felt there needed to be a level of preservation of natural ground and/or landscape besides the setbacks.

Vice Chair Flynn asked for a reminder of what the percentage that allowed impervious coverage is for the rest of Portola Valley.

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Chair Warr replied that 7.5M lots allow 30%, 15M lots allow 26%, 20M lots allow 25%, one-acre lots allow 18%, and two-acre lots allow 13%.

Vice Chair Flynn advocated for better limitations on square footage to promote affordable housing.

Chair Warr suggested that establishing an average unit size for multi-family housing could help achieve rural character massing while maintaining affordability.

Ms. Szydluk replied that the Planning Staff would need to look into that.

Vice Chair Flynn questioned the current focus on bicycle regulations, suggesting that it might be more appropriate for the Bicycle and Pedestrian & Traffic Safety Committee to handle, given the urgency of other matters.

Ms. Szydluk clarified that while there is no immediate urgency for bicycle regulations, the goal is to establish clear standards for feasible and livable design. There are all kinds of details that are not being addressed in the Zoning Code. It is not urgent but recommended.

Senior Planner Adrienne Smith added that multi-family housing lacks the same storage options as single-family homes, highlighting the need for proper bicycle parking and storage solutions to prevent aesthetic issues.

Commissioner Dixon asked about letter G in the Required Conditions for Mixed-Use. She found it unclear and unhelpful for determining the intensity and wanted to know if there was some way to define that. Additionally, she inquired about the terminology used on page 63 for multi-family and duplexes. She felt that it should read "dwelling unit" because when traced back to the definition, it almost reads as if a multi-family dwelling has multiple dwelling units. This could lead to misunderstandings, for example, you could have two parking spots but 14 units.

Ms. Szydluk stated that the terminology would be modified to include "units."

Vice Chair Flynn asked for clarification on what "accessory structure" means in the context of the MF-4 and MF-23.

Senior Planner Adrienne Smith stated they are talking about accessory structures, not ADU's.

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Chair Warr invited comments from the public.

Craig Taylor commented that when he was a Planning Commissioner, they did talk about the Ladera Church site potentially asking for concessions, including reducing the setback on the scenic corridor to fit various units. He loved the idea of providing incentives.

Zoom attendee David Cardinal addressed the town's plan submitted to the State, highlighting concerns about the feasibility of building affordable housing in Portola Valley. He emphasized the need for a clear and achievable plan to ensure the development of affordable housing, referencing Ladera Church as a potential site. Anyone who wants to get affordable housing built needs to ensure that they lay out a runway and pathway that is possible.

Zoom attendee Rita Comes shared her initial hesitation to continue attending ASCC meetings due to their infrequency but expressed her current enjoyment and appreciation for the community's efforts to come together and discuss building and aesthetic guidelines.

Zoom attendee ending in phone #7562 expressed gratitude for the committee's dedication and acknowledged the confusion surrounding the housing discussions. She raised a concern regarding the Woodside Priory as an example of multi-housing and the subsequent issues faced by the Fire District due to inadequate equipment for buildings of such heights. She wondered if three levels could be reduced to two and a half. She questioned the possibility of reducing building levels from three to two and a half to enhance practicality and cost-effectiveness, highlighting the need for the Commission's expertise in these matters.

Zoom attendee Kristi C. commented that the pictures shown differed from what she had in mind for a multi-family and multi-use visual concept and felt that resident participation would be valuable in creating the visualization. She emphasized the importance of including bikes and involving the BPTS Committee. She expressed concern about the 42-foot building height and explained that additional percentages for the space between each level, the roof, and measuring from the ground should all be factored into the total height. With the Density Bonus Law, the height could increase by 33 to 50 percent in the height that was given to a developer. Ladera had a zero-foot setback with the Portola Valley property and there is cement padding at the edge between those properties. She believed that the town could put the State parameters on the guidelines and encouraged the Planning Commission, Town Council, and the ASCC to realize what the legal options are to write things properly for the town.

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Commissioner Breen stated that the ASCC would not be in the room had they not been asked by the Planning Commission to participate.

Greg Franklin felt this was a substantial change to Portola Valley, particularly the Alpine Road corridor and the lots under rezoning consideration. He encouraged representatives from the ASCC, Planning Commission, and Town Council to conduct a site visit with the neighborhood before getting through the process, or that it does not get sufficiently far along that people who attend that site visit do not have an opportunity to see what is being proposed. The Commission may like to suggest to the owners that they erect story polls, so that as part of that site visit, the residents can get a better visualization of what is likely to be the impact of the height limits.

Chair Warr invited comments from the Commissioners.

Chair Warr clarified his position regarding potential conflicts of interest due to his architectural practice in Portola Valley. He stated that while he has no conflicts with most zoning changes, he was conflicted with the MU portion of the Zoning Code and inclusionary properties at Woodside Priory School, as the owners are his clients. He felt conflicted, stating that would like to compartmentalize their discussion of comments so the Commission can finish when he leaves the room. Proposed the creation of a subcommittee to compile notes from the current meeting and outline the Commission's issues with the Zoning Ordinance changes. He volunteered to join the subcommittee, which would prepare for the next meeting's discussion.

Vice Chair Flynn volunteered for the subcommittee and inquired about the deadline for the packet.

Ms. Szydlik confirmed that the packet should be sent out by Friday, with a preference for Thursday end-of-day.

Chair Warr emphasized that the Commission's role is not to rewrite the code but to identify areas of concern and necessary adjustments. He specified that discussions should focus on topics within their purview, such as the impact of bicycles on site planning and design, and parking in relation to site development, rather than traffic implications. He also suggested a need for dialogue on the balance between specificity and objectivity in the guidelines. He stated that ordinances do not make good design. The ordinance is to provide incentives, and the ASCC's role could be to provide opportunities for improved design and site responses, benefiting both property owners and developers.



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Chair Warr presented a spreadsheet detailing multi-family zones MF-4 and MF-23. He explained that if the minimum lot size in the two districts was 43,560 square feet, the coverage limit of 35% and 55% would yield allowable coverage of 15,000 square feet in the MF-4 Zone and nearly 24,000 square feet in the MF-23 Zone. He suggested implementing a floor area ratio (FAR) to regulate square footage regardless of whether it is stacked or spread out, with potential bonuses for adhering to zoning district height limits. He mentioned his plan to email the spreadsheet to Senior Planner Adrienne Smith for distribution among the members. Regarding any other changes within the ordinance, Chair Warr called for clear definitions of plate height and general density, consistent floor area and height limits across all districts, and established minimum lot sizes. He emphasized the importance of setting vertical height limits based on natural grade to avoid discouraging proper design practices.

Ms. Szydlik and Chair Warr had a discussion regarding an error with the Building Height, Vertical diagram.

Chair Warr stated that he was unsure what the recommendation should be, but a floor to ceiling height of 18 feet is pretty good, and then creating for space as much as two feet gives you the opportunity to have enough structure and space for all the other things that go into it, and the acoustic separation required for the SPC ratings to have living units on top of other living units.

Commissioner Dixon reiterated Chair Warr's comment on plate heights. She agreed that 42 feet seems really high and thinking more about plate heights feels like a better method. Another advantage is that it gives flexibility of roof form. She pointed out that some of the diagrams are not in conformance with what is being asked for in the Zoning Code. She said getting rid of the restriction on pitch would be helpful because it would allow created freedom and anything that is discouraging the third story embedded in a sloped roof form is really disadvantageous. She felt the regulation on page 39 for the length of individual dormers not exceeding 8 feet in length was not achieving what they would want. With no regulation of spacing, or what percentage of façade dormers can be, you could end up with facades that have tons of little crazy dormers in them. She noted that Atherton has a regulation on the percentage of façade length that dormers can occupy and thought that was something that may serve Portola Valley better.

Vice Chair Flynn wanted to touch on the 42-foot height. She thought it was such a departure from what the town has had in the past that if they were to allow something at three stories, she would prefer to embed something into the guidelines stating that three stories are limited to areas against a hillside or in an area with deep tree cover that is very tall. The Ladera Church site has a pretty steep hillside behind it, so three stories might

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work there if the Ladera Church is interested in building at that height. She stated that in terms of the fire department, it turns out that Portola Valley Fire Department does not actually have ladder trucks because they are too big to fit on most of the streets. In the event of a structure fire in town, the normal procedure is to call out to the neighboring fire departments, Menlo Park and Redwood City, to have them come and help out with a fire. Depending on the street, 42 feet would be acceptable. She suggested stating something to the effect that not every property can possibly have that kind of height because the fire department cannot handle it in large portions of the town. She thought some of the guidelines were really complex and needed a little more thinking.

Chair Warr voiced concerns that the current guidelines might deter modest development efforts due to a stringent numeric checklist. He suggested considering a lower threshold that would not necessitate such extensive criteria.

Ms. Szydluk stated the Planning Staff observed that Portola Valley's rustic and authentic architectural style should be maintained. The Planning Staff will include language that ensures this intent is clear.

Commissioner Breen commented that even more than height are things like siding and things the town does not have, especially on ADUs.

Chair Warr proposed the concept of a unit mix average limit to establish a floor area ratio suitable for medium-density housing. He questioned why upzoning single-family residential areas had not been considered to increase housing variety. He stated that if a person has one acre and divides it into four lots, you get four units per acre.

Ms. Szydluk responded that a subdivision process would be required.

Chair Warr countered that rezoning could also be a viable approach.

Ms. Szydluk agreed.

Chair Warr remarked that they still produce the number of units. The advantage to the property owners is that the pieces can be sold, potentially leading to more housing as each lot could accommodate an ADU and a single-family mix.

Ms. Szydluk expressed reservations, suggesting that simply creating smaller lots might not contribute to a diverse range of housing types within the community but could result in more of the same on a reduced scale.

Chair Warr said that the MF-4 on 17 acres of Glen Oaks destroyed a significant part of Portola Valley that he had come to love thirty-five years ago. He explained that the 3,000 square foot limit produces five buildings per acre, and on the 4-acre parcel, it produces 120,000 square feet of building, which he did not want.

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Ms. Szydluk pointed out that the Planning Staff identified a maximum of 16 units for the site in question within the Housing Element.

Chair Warr noted that while the footprint may be limited to 35% of the lot, the absence of size specifications could result in large units.

Ms. Szydluk mentioned existing setbacks that would define the usable area.

Chair Warr responded yes, but it also can be two stories tall. He said that he could figure out how to get 30,000 square feet in 16 units, and that is a lot of square footage. He thought there should be a smaller size if affordable housing is the goal.

Vice Chair Flynn expressed concern regarding the roof decks, stating that they should be restricted to locations where they do not look directly into another property's occupiable space, directly into windows, or an adjacent residential property.

Chair Warr stated that maybe they should be limited to the first and second floors.

Vice Chair Flynn explained that if the third floor is required to be set back by 10 feet, that space would typically be used as a roof deck.

Chair Warr expressed his dissatisfaction with the step-back and asserted that he found it unhelpful. He suggested that the Commission require buildings to have only first and second floors, unless approved by the ASCC. He felt that some sites would be excellent, but none were currently being proposed. Writing zoning codes around a single lot can be challenging. Regarding fire management, he stated that if you ended up with a site that is overall protected from fire danger coming from elsewhere or from getting off that site, and cluster those buildings more closely, you can end up with more affordable structures. It is necessary to end up with materials that can be affordably assembled offsite and brought to Portola Valley, so it does not end up being the kind of expense that ADUs have incurred.

Vice Chair Flynn asked if a requirement for a certain percentage of affordable units could be included in the New Zoning Requirements.

Ms. Szydluk explained that a program needs to be developed to achieve inclusive and affordable housing as outlined in the Housing Element.

Vice Chair Flynn thought that it could fall into the incentive.

Ms. Szydluk suggested discussing incentives with the City Attorneys as well. The task is to establish standards that support the densities placed in the Housing Element. Those have to be supported without any additional incentives and the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) will want to ensure the densities are supported. She asked that the Commission consider what they want to grant for the design measures in mind.

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Ms. Szydlik was asked by Chair Warr if she had considered floor area per unit when conducting unit counts for the Housing Element.

Ms. Szydlik did not believe unit size was considered. There might have been something in the AFFH about units that are large and support families, but she was unsure.

Senior Planner Adrienne Smith stated that she did not believe staff went into those specifics, but she would have to go back through the AFFH chapter.

Vice Chair Flynn said she would see incentives being a slight increase in floor area. She provided an example, stating that if you went through the ASCC or provided a specific amount of affordable housing, you may be eligible for a little more square footage.

Chair Warr asked if anyone else thought it was weird that they did not have a floor area number per unit.

Ms. Szydlik stated that she did not. Planning Staff typically regulate residential area by dwelling units per acre. She said she understood there is a tradition of establishing floor area for the single-family areas throughout Portola Valley. Typically, the building bulk and massing is regulated for residential development based on density.

Chair Warr proposed picking a number that the State is already using— 800 square feet, which would give you 19,000 square feet per acre and floor area ratio (FAR) of 44%.

Vice Chair Flynn asked where the 19,000 square feet came from.

Chair Warr explained it is 800 square feet multiplied by two. He continued that at 44%, if you stack it up then that is a coverage of 22%, which allows a lot of space on the site for landscape.

Vice Chair Flynn commented that the developer could decide to have a bunch of 500 square feet and 1,200 square feet.

Chair Warr replied yes, or fewer because you could do 20 units instead of 23 if you wanted bigger ones.

Commissioner Dixon stated that is creating the potential for larger multi-room units by pulling square footage away from the 800 square feet, which creates that variety.

Chair Warr said if the developer used every square inch of his two-and-a-half story building, he could end up with 2,600 square foot average. That means he could have some at 5,000 square feet and some at 500 square feet.

Commissioner Dixon thought it was an interesting idea to regulate how much square footage can go into the buildings.

Vice Chair Flynn said she did, too.

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Chair Warr stated that it would not negate the number of units.

Commissioner Dixon asked if that would be done in lieu of trying to create an FAR percentage.

Chair Warr replied no, this would be how to get to 44%. He noted the Fire Code states that if you create an imaginary property line between two buildings and it is more than three feet on each side, those walls do not have to be rated.

Vice Chair Flynn stated that one incentive she would include would be to add a percentage of Green Space to that lot.

Commissioner Dixon inquired regarding the topic of Green Space. She wanted to know if it would vary based on whether you were providing a one-story solution versus a two-story solution. She thought it was an interesting thing to think about from the perspective of screening and also screening in conjunction with the Fire Code overlay. The plan for Ladera for the sample had relatively thin planter strips, and when you are that close to the building, it is not as if trees could really be planted there to screen the building. She felt there needed to be something that better addresses meeting the goals of screening while also taking into consideration the Fire Code and what can and cannot be placed close to the building.

Vice Chair Flynn said she was viewing screening along the street, not so much between houses or between buildings. She inquired regarding how much screening is between the buildings versus protecting the scenic corridor from the property.

Chair Warr liked the idea that a one-story building results in a lower number of required landscapes.

Ms. Szydlik commented regarding the Ladera site. The site has 10 units and around 8,000 square feet, and not all of the parking will be able to fit in the scenic corridor.

Chair Warr disagreed, stating that only 108 by 65 feet is needed. Currently, the Zoning Ordinance is talking about a 15-foot buffer in the front. The depth of the parking lot is 66 feet, which gets you comfortable parking getting in and out. The width of the property is 130 feet, so if you came in and came out, you can end up with twelve in the front and twelve in the back. He felt that they would end up with setback issues with having the higher density with smaller buildings because it is going to grow exponentially. He asked Ms. Szydlik where the 15 feet from side and rear and 12 feet between buildings came from and commented that makes sense for a two-story building but not a one-story building.

Ms. Szydlik explained that there was a back and forth about preserving open space and visibility of new development from abutting properties. Planning Staff started with what the standards are now, given the existing zoning and similar zones. She stated that if the

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property owners, ASCC, and the community would prefer to see shallower setbacks and a more developable area in the middle of the site, that is good information and something the staff would like to know.

Commissioner Dixon said it does feel like the setbacks would work for one-story buildings, but then if a building does get taller, that it would want to be larger just from a daylighting perspective. She thought that may be worth doing because it achieves what needs to be done to make single story development possible.

Chair Warr pointed out that the buildings located at Willow Commons are much closer to each other, with a distance of approximately 7.5 feet at the closest point. This is possible due to the utilization of density bonus, incentives, and concessions. Walking between these buildings does not pose any problems from a light and air standpoint. He asked how the Commission can avoid the Brown Act conflict.

Senior Planner Adrienne Smith stated that if it is just a subcommittee of two, working together on forming the list can begin. She expressed concern about not getting everything done in time for the joint meeting with the Planning Commission.

Chair Warr thought the Commission could create a concise list of concerns and potential resolution concerns to share at least a progress list with the Planning Commission. He felt that if the extrudability floor area is more limited, then some of the objective concerns about things like the lengths of walls will probably be less problematic. The insightful information from the public comments was to ensure that more affordable projects with smaller budgets that are less sophisticated might be a great way to get really affordable housing. There is a need for stepping up the complexity as the building gets taller to help make it feel more rural.

Ms. Szydluk stated that what she was hearing is that for the new multi-family zones, the desire is to try to take the building envelope anticipated and translate that into a combination of building footprint and floor area.

Chair Warr interjected that he was not suggesting that staff and consultants work on anything. He thought the direction and consensus around last week's Planning Commission meeting was that the ASCC do this without much support. The Ladera Community Church property is extraordinarily challenging due to its geometry and enormous scenic corridor setback. He did not want another parking lot on the same corridor, but the way the zoning ordinance and scenic corridor was established, there is not much room for other solutions.

Senior Planner Adrienne Smith remarked that she appreciated what Chair Warr was saying in terms of who would do the bulk of the work and think through the intricacies of the solution, but staffing consultants need to ensure that conformance to State law can be obtained and that everything being proposed will work. She believed that opportunity

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would be provided when the subcommittees list of comments and suggestions is turned over.

Chair Warr believed that would be a more beneficial use of staff planning. He added that it was not a big deal for a one-story solution to have a bunch of objective standards because the issues of massing are pretty limited

Vice Chair Flynn said she tends to default to a two-story solution because of wanting more green space in a property.

Commissioner Breen stated that a well-designed building does not need a lot of screening.

Commissioner Dixon inquired about how the SB 330 interfaces with guidelines that start with nothing and become more discretionary.

Ms. Szydlik suggested that a discretionary review be conducted, and the applicant be informed about the desired outcomes.

Vice Chair Flynn articulated that the primary objective of the proposed designs is to safeguard the town from potentially impractical or outlandish proposals.

Ms. Szydlik confirmed that to be accurate.

Senior Planner Adrienne Smith added that it gives the applicant more assurance about what they have to prepare and what standards they have to meet.

Commissioner Dixon asked if she could take a quick bathroom break.

Chair Warr said the meeting was finished aside from the minutes.

Senior Planner Adrienne Smith suggested taking a five-minute break before resuming to do the minutes and take public comments.

Chair Warr called the meeting back to order at 9:33 p.m.

Chair Warr stated that the goal was to resolve outstanding issues and form a subcommittee to utilize the discussion from the current meeting to make a report to the Planning Commission. He noted that Vice Chair Flynn had volunteered to be part of the subcommittee and asked Commissioner Dixon if she was also interested.

Commissioner Dixon expressed her willingness to join, but only if they needed an extra member.

Chair Warr and Vice Chair Flynn explained that an extra member was not possible.

Commissioner Dixon told Chair Warr and Vice Chair Flynn to proceed without her.



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**Motion** made by Vice Chair Flynn that the ASCC form a subcommittee of Commissioner Flynn and Chair Warr to write up the discussion on the zoning amendments to be provided to the Planning Department by Thursday, March 28, 2024. Seconded by Commissioner Breen.

**The vote was taken.** The motion passed by voice vote.

**COMMISSION, STAFF, COMMITTEE REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. Commission Reports

3. Staff Report

There was no staff report.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Time: 01:43:24

4. February 12, 2024

Chair Warr invited public comments regarding the minutes. There were none.

Chair Warr invited comments from the Commissioners regarding the minutes.

Commissioner Breen said she read the minutes and noticed name typos, but aside from that, the minutes were satisfactory.

Vice Chair Flynn thought the minutes seemed accurate except for Commissioner Danna Breen's name.

Commissioner Breen sought clarification on the spelling of Jon Biggs' name, confirming it was spelled J-O-N rather than J-O-H-N.

Senior Planner Adrienne Smith stated that was correct.

**Motion** to approve the minutes by Commissioner Breen. Seconded by Vice Chair Flynn, the motion was carried unanimously.

**ADJOURNMENT** [9:38 p.m.]