



**TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY**  
**Open Space Committee**  
**Special Meeting October 18, 2024**  
**5:00 PM**

**Betsy Morgenthaler**, Chair  
**Nona Chiariello**, Vice Chair  
**Ticien Sassoubre**, Secretary  
**Gary Nielsen**, Member  
**Beverly Lipman**, Member  
**Terry Lee**, Member  
**Carter Warr**, Member

**Agenda**

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

**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/83495511655?pwd=mNobqLZQTnYRQKmba10wQU8fybylP.1>

**Webinar ID:** 834 9551 1655

**Passcode:** 225975

**To access the meeting by phone:**

1-669-900-6833 or 1-888-788-0099 (toll-free)

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

- 1. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL**
- 2. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA**  
*Speakers' time is limited to three minutes.*
- 3. APPROVE MINUTES**  
Minutes from September 26, 2024. (attached)
- 4. OLD BUSINESS:**
  - A.** Mid-Peninsula Regional Open Space District Hawthorns project: Review draft letter and consider making a recommendation to the Planning Commission and Town Council
- 5. ADJOURNMENT**

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**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



**TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY  
Open Space Committee Meeting  
Thursday, Sept 26, 2024 5:30PM**

**IN-PERSON, SPECIAL MEETING  
HISTORIC SCHOOLHOUSE**

**DRAFT**

**OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

**1. CALL TO ORDER: 5:30 PM**

- a. **Members present** – Betsy Morgenthaler (Chair), Nona Chiariello (Vice Chair), Terry Lee, Bev Lipman, Gary Nielsen, Carter Warr
- b. **Members absent:** Ticien Sassoubre (Secretary), Judith Hasko (Council Liaison)
- c. **Also attending:** in person: Lynda Brothers, Mike Green, John Keller, Judy Murphy, Nancy Powell; via zoom: Harold Cranston, Diana Fischer, Leslie Kriese, Lana Norris, L. Olson, David Polnaszek, possibly others

**2. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA: none**

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

- a. **Minutes from July 16, 2024.** A correction was noted for the first sentence in item 4b which stated that Betsy Morgenthaler is the OSC representative to the PAWG; she is the representative to the Town Ad Hoc Committee. Carter made a motion to approve the minutes as amended; Bev seconded. All voted in favor.

**4. OLD BUSINESS**

**Agenda items 4a and 4b (Open Space Fund and Hawthorns) were switched.**

**a. The Open Space Fund: Guidelines regarding maintenance**

Gary began with an overview of the history of guidelines for the Open Space Fund (OSF). Reading from the 2015 guidelines regarding post-acquisition spending, he said the OSF could be used only for initial upgrades and improvements to transition a parcel to an appropriate condition. He said that over the years he has been the lone voice on the OSC in favor of considering maintenance as an appropriate use of UUT revenue.

However, last year, due to the Town financial constraints, the Town Council directed \$44k from the OSF's UUT revenue to open space maintenance. Betsy noted that the Town Attorney had determined that the wording of the UUT ballot measures allows this. The Town Council had considered a higher amount, \$90k. In a letter to the Council, the Open Space Committee opposed an amount higher than \$44k because no justification was provided, nor information on how the additional money would be spent. Going forward, there has been discussion within the Finance Committee as to whether a UUT ballot measure should be brought to the voters again, likely in March.

Discussion focused on guardrails to prevent emergency measures from establishing a precedent that becomes the norm. The guardrails might consist of 1) a fixed limit on the amount of UUT revenue used for maintenance; 2) an approved process for setting the dollar amount in any year, such as an itemized budget request from the town staff; and 3) coordination between the Conservation Committee and the town to determine the priority needs of open space parcels. The last would likely be an iterative process.

Judy Murphy described how the history of the process could inform the coordination between Conservation, the town staff, and the OSC going forward. For many years, the process was that Conservation submitted a list of priorities to the public works director (Howard Young), Howard responded with a budget estimate, and then, if needed, a request was submitted to the Town Council for more funds. Judy said a decision would be needed on whether Conservation continued in that role or whether it would be OSC.

Carter advocated maintaining a clear bifurcation between routine maintenance and improvements, and suggested that other funds might address some maintenance needs. For example, funds for fire safety might help cover mowing costs.

*Action item: A subcommittee consisting of Gary Nielsen and Nona Chiariello was appointed to work with a Conservation subcommittee to propose a process for defining and budgeting the needs of open space parcels.*

## b. Hawthorns update

### i. Midpeninsula Open Space Planning & Natural Resources (PNR) Committee Meeting 9/17/24 Update

Betsy began with appreciation for all the benefits provided by MROSD, and then provided updates on the PNR's unanimous approval on Sept 17 of the PAWG's recommendations. She focused on the largest issue before the PNR—parking. Presenting a map of the parcel boundaries within the Hawthorns (shown below), Betsy read from the Conservation Easement that a parking lot is prohibited in the unimproved portion. This would seem to disallow Parking Options 9 and 10, the two options on the table.

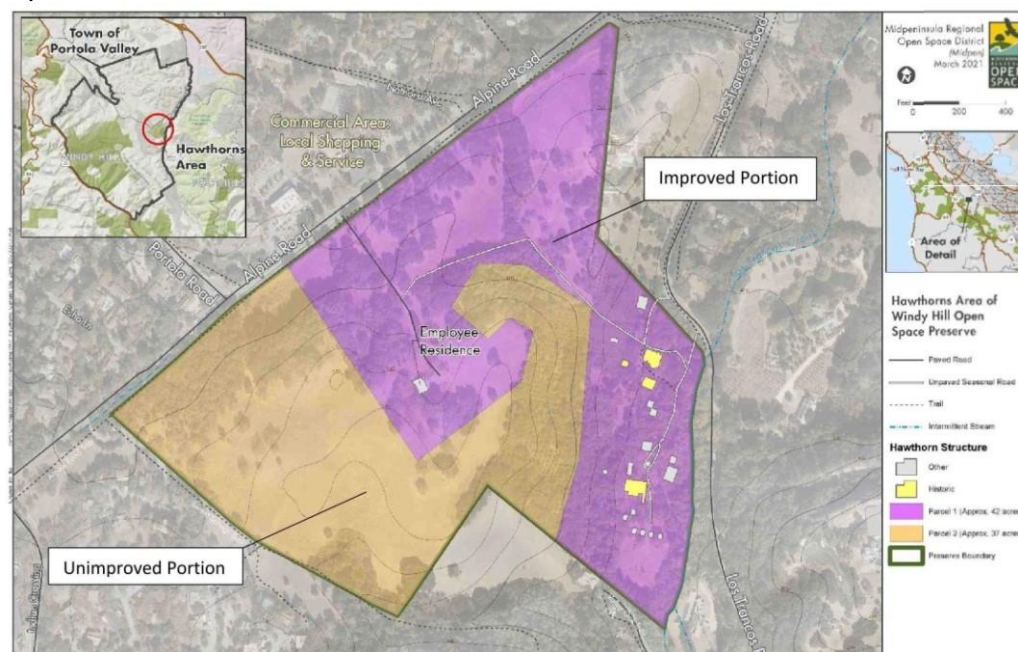


Figure 1: Hawthorns Area Improved and Unimproved Areas per the Conservation Easement (2005)

ii. **Workflow ahead - (WebPage pdf – agenda page 2) :**

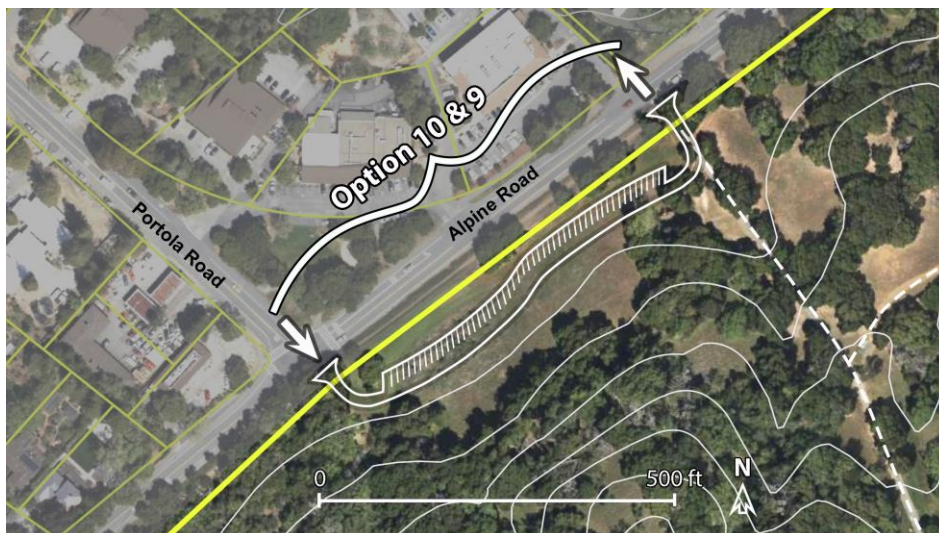
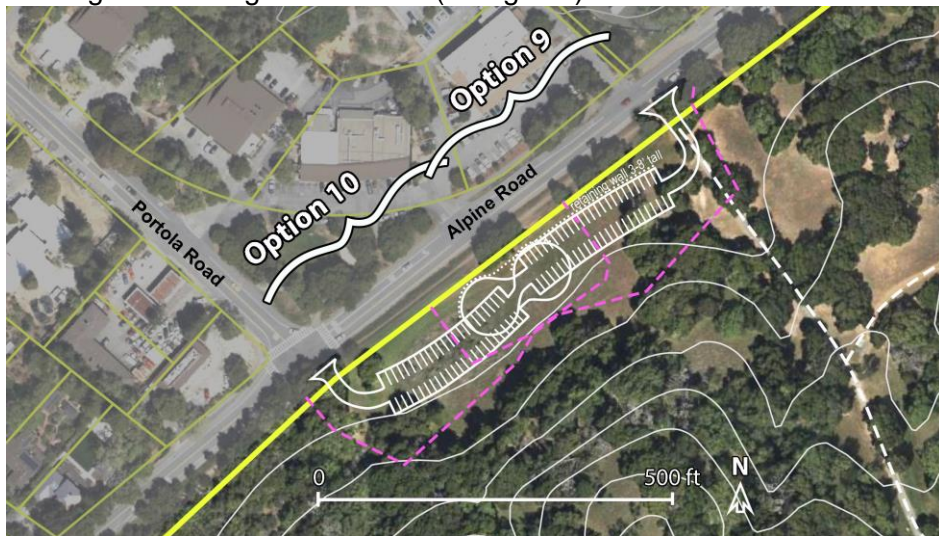
<https://www.openspace.org/sites/default/files/ATT%207-PAWG%20Workflow%20Engagement.pdf>

However, if the PNR’s vote approving the PAWG’s recommendations indicates that the prohibition on a parking lot has been lifted, then Parking Options 9 and 10 have stronger legs. The Hawthorns near-term workflow includes “Town Council Engagement” in the Fall of 2024. Specifically, the PAWG’s recommendations, having been approved by the PNR, will go to the Town Council “for feedback”:

iii. **Open Space Committee product –**

**1. Common goals: Safety, Aesthetics, Sustainability and Environment**

Betsy said that in order for OSC to provide input to the Town Council (and, presumably, the Planning Commission), she had organized several visits to Alpine Trail to visualize Parking Options 9 and 10 (first figure below). In the process, she envisioned combining them as a one-way lot with ingress at Option 10, diagonal parking, and egress at Option 9 (second figure below). Betsy and Nona suggested that separate ingress and egress may be safer than combining them at a busy intersection or at a point with no traffic control; it insures a second entry/exit; it reduces the amount of grading and tree removal; it increases sustainability by utilizing the existing access road (for egress).



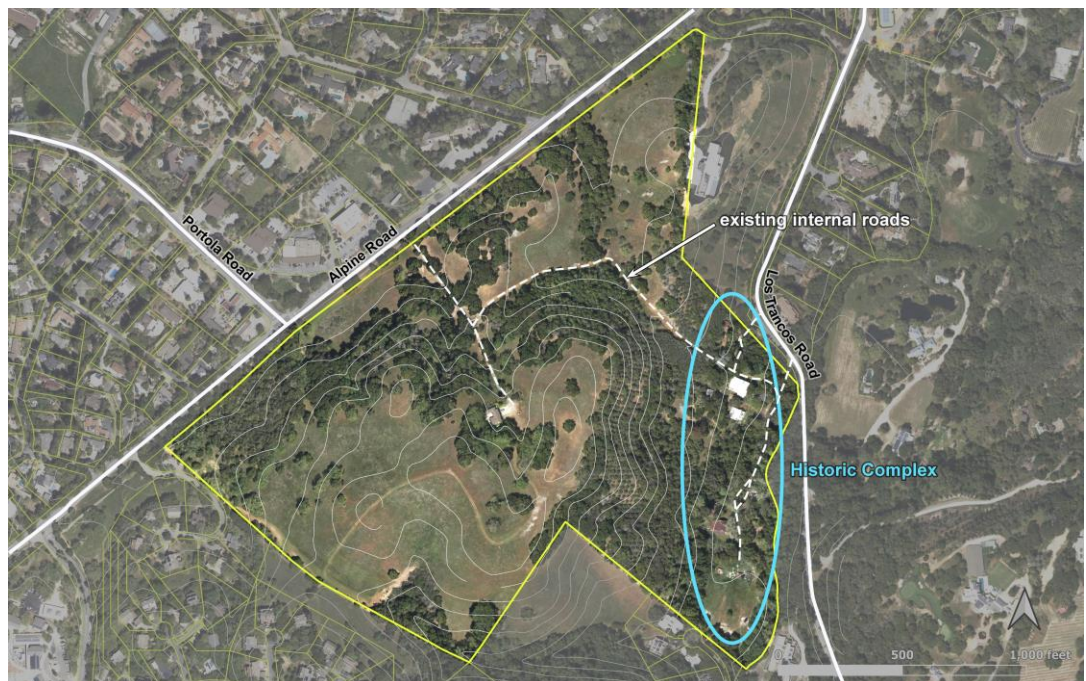
Mike Green advised getting a written statement on how Parking Option 10 could be allowed in the unimproved area. Nona noted that the turnaround of Option 9 would also be partly in the unimproved area.

Lynda Brothers expressed concern that the PAWG had not addressed traffic issues. She cautioned that the one-way option described by Betsy might have problems with drivers entering at the egress point.

Carter stated that discussion of parking options is premature because the plans have not been presented to the town. A conditional use permit will be necessary. Leslie Kriese noted that presentations to the Town will happen soon.

## 2. Common concerns: Easements

Returning to the issue of easements and parking, Betsy gave an overview of the Hawthorns Historic Complex (shown below) and read from Item 4 of the posted agenda for the October 9, 2024 meeting of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space Board ([https://www.openspace.org/sites/default/files/4%20-%2020241009\\_HawthornsHistoricComplexLowerBarnPartnership\\_R-24-122.pdf](https://www.openspace.org/sites/default/files/4%20-%2020241009_HawthornsHistoricComplexLowerBarnPartnership_R-24-122.pdf))



Betsy focused on several of the “Board-Approved Historic Complex Goals”:

“4. Balance long-term financial and operational sustainability with potential benefits.”

“8. Consider housing, either short-term or long-term, that supports the District’s mission.”

“9. Incorporate the Historic Complex holistically within the overall Hawthorns Area Plan.”

Betsy noted that the size of the historic buildings (e.g., the 4,400sf Lower Barn) would allow a scale of programming that requires parking, and that the overall integration of Hawthorns might mean that parking Options 9 or 10 along Alpine Road would service activities taking place in the Historic Complex, which is much closer to Los Trancos Road.

Betsy said that another factor with potential relevance to the Hawthorns is that the recently enacted Assembly Bill 2091 would allow public agencies, such as MROSD, to open up land that has existing roads and trails for nonmotorized activities without requiring CEQA analysis. This suggests that MROSD, with a single public meeting, could open the Hawthorns to the public.

Mike Green questioned how the goal of financial sustainability (Board goal 4 above) related to the Easement's prohibition on commercial use.

Nancy Powell recommended consulting the Grantor/successor trustee about interpreting prohibitions in the Easement/Grant Deed.

John Keller, President of the Portola Valley Ranch (PVR) Association, said PVR is the largest abutter of the Hawthorns, and MROSD's plans for Hawthorns had generated a lot of interest and varying opinions among residents of PVR. He stated that the PVR Board has not taken an official position on Hawthorns, but two principal concerns have been voiced within PVR: safety, especially for school children using Alpine Trail and crossing Alpine Road at Portola Road, essentially at the ingress/egress for Parking Option 10; and unresolved legal issues regarding trails and liability. John expressed his personal opinion that combined ingress and egress via Option 10 has significant visibility problems. John and Duf Sundheim met with Betsy and Nona at that location to compare Options 9 and 10.

Leslie Kriese congratulated the committee on a complex meeting. She encouraged people to go the MROSD website and review handouts, and to attend the October 23 meeting where the Town Council will have a study session on the Hawthorns, including parking Options 9 and 10.

Gary said he would like more information on why the parking layouts include 50 spaces for cars. Given the much smaller size of Hawthorns relative to Windy Hill OSP, why is the Hawthorns parking design of comparable or larger size?

Nona noted that the prohibitions on grading and tree removal are explicitly listed in the Hawthorns FAQ of the PAWG. She voiced concern that this leaves the OSC wondering whether to focus on those prohibitions or whether to assume those issues have been settled and to move on to details of the plans, like parking.

Terry said that as a parent of school-age children who use Alpine Trail and cross at the Option 10 site every day after school, he is very worried about safety. As a parent, trail-runner, and resident of PV Ranch, he is very familiar with the flow of traffic, pedestrians, and cyclists, which even now raise concerns about safety. Terry stressed that he is extremely grateful for the MROSD open spaces in Portola Valley and in the entire region, and looks forward to the addition of Hawthorns, but he is alarmed at the thought of the 3-way intersection of Portola Road and Alpine Road becoming a 4-way.

Betsy noted that on October 4<sup>th</sup> at noon MROSD will open reservations for a "Hawthorns Area Hike" on October 18. There will be another in November.

**5. NEXT MEETING:** Betsy will work on scheduling another meeting before the Town Council's October 23 study session on the Hawthorns.

**6. ADJOURNMENT – 7:10 pm**