

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING, TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY, FEBRUARY 2, 2011, SCHOOLHOUSE, TOWN CENTER, 765 PORTOLA ROAD, PORTOLA VALLEY, CA 94028

Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni called the Planning Commission regular meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Mr. Vlastic called the roll:

Present: Commissioners Arthur McIntosh and Alexandra Von Feldt, and Vice Chair Leah Zaffaroni

Absent: Commissioner Denise Gilbert and Chair Nate McKitterick

Staff Present: Tom Vlastic, Town Planner  
George Mader, Town Planning Consultant  
Ann Wengert, Town Council Liaison

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Jon Silver, Portola Road, noted that he was shocked to see the word “upgrades” used in the Notice of Preliminary Review of Proposed Soccer/Softball Field Upgrades to Artificial Turf because “upgrades” connotes “a good thing.” He said, “If this is a change, call it a change or call it a conversion.” Unless the decision has been made that this is indeed an upgrade, which could be one of the issues to be heard, he said, it should not have been noticed the way it was. He also expressed a “leery” feeling about going to a field meeting on this topic, in part because of an email sent by a Priory staff member that Mr. Silver said belittled anyone who might have concerns about artificial turf. After the meeting, too, he said that a partisan – not a Priory employee – “kind of threatened” him, making it clear that he would be *persona non grata* if he continues to express concerns about artificial turf.

Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni noted that Item 2, which involves the artificial turf installation at the Priory field, has been pulled from tonight’s meeting.

Mr. Silver said that even though the Planning Commission has not approved the proposal, the way it was noticed may suggest, to the uninitiated, that the likely outcome is approval.

REGULAR AGENDA

(1) Public Hearing: Site Development Permit X9H-623, 727 Westridge Drive (Fred and Tracy Wang)

Mr. Vlastic referenced the January 27, 2011 staff report setting forth the proposal for redevelopment of the parcel, noting that a preliminary review was conducted with the ASCC in December 2010, with two Planning Commissioners (Von Feldt and McIntosh) present. The project initially proposed earth movement of about 2,100 to 2,200 cubic yards – part to cut the house into the site, part for fill and part to be off-hauled. Previous work done on the property, including removal of a pool and cabana, disturbed an area on the southerly portion of the lot. The ASCC encouraged the applicant to consider using more dirt onsite, reduce the amount of cut and off-haul, and achieve a more balanced project.

The outcome of the preliminary review was a revised plan reducing the cut associated with the house. Mr. Vlastic explained that there is no basement, the structure all counts as floor area, it is being placed exactly in the location of the existing house, the driveway has been modified somewhat, and the fill that’s being kept onsite will go into the back area, where there had been disturbance. The ASCC found the revised plan acceptable. Staff spent more time reviewing it with the Town Geologist and Public Works Director, and encouraged the applicant to soften the slope. According to Mr. Vlastic, this will result in a less abrupt, smoother and more feathered transition, with less depth of fill. The Town Geologist, Town Engineer and Health Department all reviewed the proposal, and the ASCC completed its architectural review – recognizing that the current driveway is more parallel to and closer to Westridge Drive, providing a more gracious turn up to the site. The ASCC debated whether any additional landscaping would soften views and keep a more open aspect through the oaks on the property. They agreed that one larger oak in the area would be helpful in terms of the transition, and the applicant incorporated that suggestion into the revised landscaping plan. In terms of landscaping, the cedar tree on the rear portion of the property – where there are more oaks and a more open environment – will be removed.

In response to a comment from the Public Works Director, Mr. Vlastic said that the project design team has increased the separation between the drainage outfall and the property line from 10 to 50 feet, providing more opportunity for dispersal of the drainage on the site.

The Health Department noted that the existing septic system and leach lines could be used unless additional investigation into the depth and length of the lines and a dry-weather percolation test suggests that line extensions are needed. According to Mr. Vlastic, a new septic tank may be needed as well, but the Health Department considers it a repair/upgrade rather than a complete replacement.

Mr. Vlastic concluded by saying that staff supports approval of the project as it has been revised and subject to the conditions set forth in the staff report and any relevant recommendations that may come from the Conservation Committee.

Commissioner McIntosh noted that the staff report indicates total volume increase of cut and fill from 2,030 to 2,710 cubic yards and that the scope of the cut was reduced. He said he didn't quite understand that. Mr. Vlastic clarified that the fill increased, but the amount of cut was reduced.

Commissioner Von Feldt said that she is happy to see that people are starting to use Native Mow-Free sod. She said she is aware that there are no limitations on native sod compared to the traditional sod, but asked whether the Town has any specifications or rules in place regarding frequency of irrigation for this sod. No, Mr. Vlastic said, but the reason for one of the ASCC conditions is to get a better understanding of how it would be irrigated and review that in terms of the Town's water-efficiency ordinance. He said the specific standards in terms of that sod may not be solid, but the idea is to discourage excess watering. He expects that the Town will work on this with the applicant and Bob Cleaver, the landscape architect, on this project.

Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni, who was unable to attend the site meeting, had some questions about the fill to be deposited onsite. Having observed a trend toward discouraging off-haul by leaving more fill onsite, she said that she always questions it because the General Plan encourages minimal grading to avoid disturbing natural contours of the land. She didn't see an indication of where the additional fill on the site will go, Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni continued, and she was not sure what Mr. Vlastic meant by "prior disturbance." She also questioned whether fill, particularly if placed near a property line, would be compacted or engineered in such a way as to minimize the likelihood of earth movement dislocating it to the adjacent property.

In response, Mr. Vlastic said that the disturbance was created by removal of the pool, so that area can accommodate additional dirt in a very spread-out way without changing the general character of the natural contours of the property. He pointed out another area, too, that was steeper; the Town Geologist, Public Works Director and Planning Department all looked at it and told the architect that it should be smoothed out.

Commissioner Von Feldt said that she, too, had been concerned about the fill, partly because she feared it would bury native vegetation. However, she said that at the site meeting she saw that the area Mr. Vlastic described had also been scraped, so that it now appears to be "about 95% bad weeds." It's so degraded, she added, that some fill and native grasses might actually improve its habitat value. In addition, Commissioner Von Feldt pointed out that the natural knoll on the downhill side of the property is so prominent that adding fill might help nestle it in somewhat. She said that she is comfortable having the fill go where Mr. Vlastic explained, but because of the beautiful oak grove on the front side of the property, she would not have supported the idea of adding fill there.

Mr. Vlastic said that the Town Geologist wanted the fill keyed in and modified to taper it into the site so that the slope is more gradual adjacent to the property line. That also would minimize any risk associated with slippage. Mr. Vlastic explained that cutting and filling has to be keyed in to the stable soil. After the soil is prepared, steps are put in, followed by a series of compactions. The keys allow the soil to be compacted and stabilized so that it's not basically a slip plane that water would seep beneath. It's done very carefully, he added, to ensure that the material will stay exactly where it's placed.

Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni said that she is interested in the Conservation Committee's observations because, as she explained, large areas of fill inevitably alter native terrain and vegetation. She expressed concern lest an earthquake, heavy rains or erosion wash away the fill. Mr. Vlastic said that this should not be an issue if the work is done per requirements of the Town Geologist, the Public Works Director, and all of the Town's standard erosion-control provisions.

In response to another question from Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni, Mr. Vlasic confirmed that an unnamed potential fault goes around the property's southerly side and no structures are sited there.

Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni opened the public hearing. With no one coming forward, she closed the public hearing and brought the matter back to the Commission for further discussion.

Commissioner Von Feldt reiterated that she wants the Conservation Committee to look at the site and the plant list, noting that *Carex divulsa* is invasive and should be avoided.

Commissioner McIntosh said it was a good project when it started, and an even better project now as a result of staff and ASCC discussions with a very cooperative applicant and architect.

Commissioner Von Feldt moved to find the site develop permit project categorically exempt pursuant to Section 15303(a) of the CEQA Guidelines. Commissioner McIntosh seconded, and the motion passed 3-0. Commissioner Von Feldt then moved to approve the site development permit application as shown on the plans, subject to conditions a. through h., with the correction mentioned previously. Again, Commissioner McIntosh seconded, and the motion passed 3-0.

(2) Follow-up to Special February 1, 2011 Site Meeting with the ASCC – Preliminary Review of Proposal for Multipurpose Field Artificial Turf Upgrades, 302 Portola Road, Woodside Priory CUP X7D-30 [*continued to February 16, 2011 meeting*]

(3) Study Session: Review of Proposed Amendments to the Conservation Element, Open Space Element and Recreation Element of the Portola Valley General Plan

By way of background, Mr. Mader explained that the State requires five of the seven mandated elements of communities' general plans to be updated at least every eight years, and Portola Valley already was planning to update both its Conservation and Open Space Elements. The Town (at its May 12, 2010 meeting) adopted a new definition of an Open Space Preserve to incorporate, he added, and noted that in the process of reviewing Conservation and Open Space Elements they saw that parts of the Recreation Element included portions that should be in the Open Space Element instead. He said that the particular Town committees have not yet seen the proposed revisions, and also pointed out that for the most part, the revisions involve placing material where it is more appropriate as opposed to incorporating any policy changes. Mr. Mader noted that the updates include an appendix addition that provides a history of Portola Valley's General Plan and zoning regulations.

Among questions that the Mr. Mader said the Planning Commission may want to consider:

1. Are the changes that shift material between the Open Space and Recreation Elements acceptable and are they consistent with the new definition of open space?
2. Do the three elements (Recreation, Open Space and Conservation) adequately reflect the goals of the community?
3. Are all provisions stated clearly or are some changes needed for clarification?
4. Are there other changes to the elements that should be considered at this time, keeping in mind the original purpose of the review?

Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni credited Mr. Mader for the tremendous effort, and generally agreed that moving material from the Recreation Element into the Open Space Element made sense. Her concerns, she said, involved organization rather than content. For instance, the Recreation Element has a definitional section but the Open Space Element does not. She suggested going through page by page, cross-referencing as appropriate.

Commissioner Von Feldt suggested covering a few topics at high level before delving into detailed language. She said there was a lot of material, and although she did a first pass at it, a lot of her thoughts are at a high level. In general, she agreed that the move of some material from the Recreation Element to the Open Space Element made sense. She suggested that rather than simply making reference to the Portola Valley Sensitive Biological Resources Assessment and Fuel Hazard Assessment study, the relevant elements should incorporate pertinent portions from those reports (dated 2008 and 2010). Commissioner Von Feldt explained that her rationale for this

suggestion is that she does not support some of the study recommendations, particularly in terms of fire management practices.

Mr. Mader explained that this habitat and fire management study is not Town Policy, but a document that needs to be implemented wisely, and that Planning Manager Leslie Lambert, Senior Planner Karen Kristiansson and Planning Technician Carol Borck have been working with him to develop an approach and decide how to use the report to make decisions. He said that he would not want to put a lot of material from the study in the General Plan, but some of it might be appropriate.

Considering the work in progress, Commissioner Von Feldt asked whether this General Plan update avoids references to the study. In response, Mr. Mader said he considered it background information about the environment and practices that bolsters the Conservation Element and gives it more depth. He said that he feels it needs to be referenced. Commissioner McIntosh said that figuring out how to implement it is essential, and he agrees with Mr. Mader's thinking that it should be referenced.

Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni indicated that she noticed two sections of the Conservation Element draft that refer to this study, which she has not read in detail. She quoted a proposed revision to the Element that adds, "A system for applying the information in the planning program and in particular when reviewing development proposals should be developed," and said that "applying the information" implies a blanket. She suggested a carefully worded qualification to the effect that the Town will determine which recommendations it will follow and develop guidelines based on the report that can be implemented in the General Plan.

Commissioner Von Feldt said that the first half of the report, in which biodiversity is discussed, was both fascinating and interesting. In terms of fire management recommendations, she estimated that 80% is consistent with what she has seen in other sources, but there are also concerns about being too aggressive when the clearing of chaparral results not only in lost habitat but in even more highly flammable weeds.

Mr. Mader pointed out that Thomas Reed Associates did the biologic evaluation for the study, and another consultant did the fire management portion of the study. In fact, he added, Thomas Reed Associates indicated precautions to take when following the fire management recommendations to avoid upsetting the biological environment.

As for specific comments, Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni said that the Town Council's Resolution 2489-2010, defining open space preserves, was very good and addressed the confusion between playing fields and open spaces.

#### Recreation Element

In regard to the Recreational Element, Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni expanded upon her earlier point about organization of the elements. She said that she reviewed Section 2302, Definitions, in the Recreation Element, and then went through the document to see where she found the terms that had been defined. She said that she found them in the Open Space Element, but there was no definitional section there. Since some of the terms come up before the Description section, she said she thought it might be clearer to include a Definitions section in the Open Space Element, but supposed that was not done because it would be so long.

Mr. Mader responded that a possible solution would be to include a Definitions section in the beginning that lists the terms and cross-references each term to the section where it is more fully described.

Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni said that she isn't sure why "other community designated areas" is included in Recreation Element Section 2302. Mr. Mader referred to the legend in the General Plan as the source of that language and the guide for organization of the Element. For example, he said, if you look under "neighborhood community" and "other community," you see that the former includes "neighborhood preserves" and "neighborhood parks." However, inasmuch as the term does not appear elsewhere in the Recreation Element, he will research it further.

Mr. Vlasic said that it might be helpful to look at Section 2303, which references the General Plan Diagram, and have that appear before the definitions.

In the Recreation Element's Principles [Section 2305.2], Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni referred to a clause that says, "separate neighborhood preserves for limited local use should be provided." She indicated that "neighborhood preserves" are now called "neighborhood open space preserves." She noted, too, that these neighborhood open space preserves are covered in the Open Space Element (Section 2204.2.b.).

Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni said that the Recreation Element's first Objective (Section 2304.1) makes "quite an interesting statement:" *To provide appropriate park, recreation and open space areas for community and neighborhood use in a manner designed to minimize the impact of excessive use upon the valley.* She said that "minimize the impact of excessive use" could be interpreted in a lot of different ways. Mr. Mader said that there has always been sensitivity to Portola Valley being a magnet for recreational use by residents of the surrounding areas, so the Town is careful to minimize that intrusion.

Under Standards in the Recreation Element, Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni said she initially thought that 2306.2 contained some redundancy in the language, ". . . a neighborhood park or open space preserve, a community park or open space preserve." She suggested that adding the adjectives "neighborhood" and "community" to the respective mentions of "open space preserve" might be better, because these two different types of open space preserves (neighborhood and community) differ.

In a related comment, Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni observed that Section 2306.3 contains a parenthetical phrase, "community parks, community open space preserves, neighborhood open space preserves and portions of scenic corridors or greenways" that omits "neighborhood parks."

In response to an observation from Commissioner Von Feldt, Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni noted that neighborhood parks, neighborhood open spaces and so on are described in the Open Space Element. Mr. Mader indicated that the added reference to the General Plan Diagram that Mr. Vlasic had suggested before the definitions will help address what is now confusing. Commissioner Von Feldt said that referring to the Recreation Element online would be good, with hyperlinks terms and definitions." In response to a question from Commissioner McIntosh, Mr. Mader said that when the Open Space Element refers to a term from the Recreation Element, the Open Space Element would also indicate where in the Recreation Element to find the relevant information. (Eventually, that would apply throughout the General Plan, Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni suggested, but noted that "is a different undertaking.")

Commissioner Von Feldt asked about an open space maintained by her homeowners association. Mr. Vlasic pointed out that on the General Plan Diagram the open area she described may be part of the Greenway, but the nearby park is Rossotti Field, a community park. At this time, the only neighborhood park mentioned in the Recreation Element (Section 2316) is Ladera. Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni said that if there are any neighborhood parks in addition to Ladera, Section 2316 ought to be more inclusive, or otherwise the language should be modified a bit because there may be other neighborhood parks still to be identified. Mr. Mader said that there is another neighborhood park off Sand Hill Road near the residential development that Stanford University built between Sand Hill and Alpine Roads.

In terms of Regional Parks and Private Regional Facilities (starting at Section 2320), Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni wondered whether it would be appropriate to include stables, inasmuch as The Alpine Tennis and Swim Club is included (Section 2332a). Mr. Mader said that was a good idea. Commissioner Von Feldt added that, if the Windy Hill Open Space Preserve is listed (Section 2323), the whole Coal Mine Ridge Trail System should be included as well. Mr. Mader explained that the purpose of this was to characterize the large piece of land that the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District has rather than provide a description of trails. In response to Commissioner McIntosh, who asked about the large piece on the Portola Valley Ranch, Mr. Mader said that it isn't public open space, and that he left trails and paths to the Trails and Paths Element. Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni suggested that some of the language in Section 2323, such as "extensive open space and trail system with opportunities for nature study as well as hiking and scenic enjoyment" may imply inclusion in the Recreation Element as well. Mr. Mader said that Foothill Park (Section 2321) has a lot of trails and paths. Reasoning that the Recreation Element proposed provides a bit of information in each category and there is a distinct element for trails and paths, Commissioner Von Feldt said that she is fine with the Regional Parks and Private Regional Facilities as Mr. Mader proposed.

Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni said that she was surprised to see Local Shopping and Service Centers (Section 2327) listed in the Recreation Element, but acknowledged that shopping is recreation for a lot of

Americans. Mr. Vlasic pointed out that some shopping centers also include teen centers and other places for recreational activities.

### Open Space Element

Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni questioned the use of the word “proposed” and “proposals.” Where Section 2200, for instance, states, “The open space land uses proposed herein . . . ,” she wondered if it should be “described” instead of “proposed.” In other cases, she said, the word “proposal” is used in discussions about something that already exists, such as in (Section 2201) “Appendix 5 which indicates the responsiveness of the Portola Valley open space proposals to state law requirements.” In the latter case, Mr. Mader agreed that “provisions” probably works better than “proposals,” but he also noted that not everything encompassed in “proposed herein” is in existence; the General Plan establishes policies for future development. As an example, he explained that the Open Space Element revision calls for open space easements where residential open space preserves encompass steep canyons, and not all of those easements are yet in place so they remain in a “proposal” state. Another example is a proposed greenway that would contain a continuous trail and path going behind the church, the Town Center and the field at the Neely/Myers property, past the pond by The Sequoias and on over to Alpine Road. This appears in the Trails and Paths Element.

To address Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni’s concerns about the “proposed/proposal” language, Mr. Vlasic suggested “planned/plan” instead. Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni agreed those are more inclusive terms. She also said that “plans” would work in the statement she cited earlier: “Appendix 5 indicates the responsiveness of the Portola Valley open space plans to state law requirements.”

In the case of Section 2202, though, Mr. Mader said that “provisions” works better than “plans” in lieu of the “proposals” in “. . . a number of open space proposals are given detailed consideration in other elements of the General Plan . . . .” However, he said that the term “provisions” would bother him in the next sentence, “The primary concern in this element is with open space proposals not described elsewhere . . . ,” because it doesn’t convey the sense that it could be a proposal that has not been completed. Mr. Vlasic suggested that in this instance, “open spaces” instead of “open space proposals” might work, and Commissioner McIntosh agreed – but as Mr. Mader added, they might be “easements” and not “spaces.” Commissioner McIntosh also concurred with Mr. Mader’s point about not getting hung up on the word “proposals,” saying, that initially they’re all proposals.

In Section 2203, Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni asked whether the term “open space land” is enclosed in quotations because it came from State law. Mr. Mader confirmed that it did, and that he could add, “as defined in State law” after the phrase, and Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni said that would be helpful. The same section goes on to say that such land “. . . is designated on a local, regional or state open space plan . . . ,” and Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni inquired about the intent of including this information. Mr. Mader explained that it sets up what the State says, and we want to answer these questions.

Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni also pointed out that Section 2203 does not include visual resources, which is included in Section 2203.a., which defines open space preserves, and is so central to Portola Valley’s General Plan. Even though Section 2203.3 includes a phrase about “areas of outstanding scenic . . . value,” she wondered if Section 2203.1 might also be modified to begin with, “Open space for the preservation of natural resources, including, but not limited to, areas required for the preservation of visual resources . . . .” if the existing language is not a direct quote. Mr. Mader said that the language of the State law is not a constraint.

Commissioner Von Feldt said that to her, “visual resources” aren’t necessarily “views.”

As Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni pointed out, the new Open Space Preserve language (Section 2203.a.) comes from the Town Council resolution referenced earlier.

Section 2204.1 was among those that prompted Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni to question an issue she raised earlier, about where definitions would appear in the elements. As she pointed out, this section lists “macro-scale” open space categories such as residential open space preserves and scenic corridors, but does not define them. Then Section 2204.2, “intermediate-scale” categories,” lists – and defines – community open space preserves and neighborhood open space preserves. Mr. Mader said he would add appropriate definitions to Section 2204.1. As an alternative, Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni said that, if the definitions came earlier, these sections could contain lists without definitions, but the presentation should be consistent.

When Commissioner Von Feldt questioned what constitutes "Open space-limited development areas," (in Section 2204.1), Mr. Mader, said that it is described as a portion of the Town's southern sphere of influence, land west of the Skyline Scenic corridor, and two areas in the Palo Alto hills. It appears on the General Plan Diagram as well as in the Open Space Element (Section 2212.4) under Description. Mr. Mader said that adding "as shown on the General Plan Diagram" in Section 2204.1 would be helpful.

Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni said that she very much liked the definition of "community open space preserve" in Section 2204.2.a., partly because it includes working stables (an area that she said is already preserved, because the Town has purchased part the front of the stable property) and a working orchard (the Jelich Ranch on the White property). There is also completely undeveloped land, as in the meadow, Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni noted. The Town intends to buy the entire area when the opportunity arises, Mr. Mader said. If the stables and orchard were to remain private operations, however, Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni said that she would rather they be excluded from the definition. Mr. Mader said that he would think about how to deal with the questions she raised. Both Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni and Commissioner Von Feldt said that a potential solution would be to add something about preexisting uses, such as a provision for historical use that is endorsed by the community.

Commissioner Von Feldt observed that connectivity for wildlife, which is referred to occasionally but is a significant habitat objective, merits inclusion with Objectives (Section 2209). She also referred to Section 2209.15, "to preserve lands with high agricultural capabilities for agricultural purpose," asking whether that refers specifically to Webb Ranch. Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni wondered whether it would be proper to have a goal of preserving vineyard uses, because many people consider that a monoculture. Mr. Mader said that the statement could be constrained by making reference to Webb Ranch. It could also help to add "where appropriate."

To clarify the framework, Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni asked about the purpose of the State law vis-à-vis what Portola Valley does. Mr. Mader replied that State law indicates the kinds of things that an Open Space Element should include; it doesn't say all must be included and it doesn't say that everything else is excluded. When Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni asked why Portola Valley needs to include an agricultural goal, Mr. Mader said that if anyone wanted to criticize the General Plan, they would not be able to do so on the basis of it being omitted, because it's at least addressed to an extent. Mr. Vlasic said that the Williamson Act is another tool. Although less attractive than it once was, it is linked to agricultural uses and is a way to implement some of these provisions relative to open space.

Mr. Mader asked about the Fogarty Vineyards; Commissioner McIntosh said that isn't much different from the orchards, in that they do not rotate crops. Commissioner Von Feldt pointed out that it's not so much a goal to convert land to agricultural use (such as vineyards) but to consider them as open spaces to preserve. Mr. Mader said that he would re-think Section 2209.15.

In terms of Section 2209.7, Commissioner Von Feldt asked to add the term "drainage" or something similar to the phrase, ". . . enhance and restore streams and streamsides, unique resources . . ." Portola Valley has only three creeks, she pointed out, but many drainages that get altered, which in turn affects the streams. Mr. Mader suggested that "lesser natural drainage courses" as being something less than a stream.

Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni questioned the wording of Section 2209.1, which reads, "To preserve open space in order to maintain the special residential qualities of Portola Valley." She expressed discomfort with preserving "residential qualities" as the leading objective, suggesting perhaps "special environment and visual qualities" instead. Commissioner McIntosh suggested "desirable residential environment." Commissioner Von Feldt suggested "unique qualities of living in Portola Valley." Mr. Mader said that he would work on that language.

In terms of Section 2210.7 in the Principles part of the Open Space Element, Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni asked if ownership and maintenance of small, common open spaces to serve small groups of residents is typically a homeowners association. Commissioner Von Feldt indicated that to be the case in her situation. Mr. Mader suggested removing the word "small" from the description and rewording the statement.

Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni asked whether Section 2210.10 emanated from the Portola Valley Sensitive Biological Resources Assessment and Fuel Hazard Assessment study, and whether Thomas Reed Associates has delineated areas rich in wildlife and/or ecologically fragile. Mr. Mader said yes.

Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni noted that in the Descriptions (or definitions) portion of the Open Space Element, Section 2212.1 describes Residential Open Space Preserves as “important recreational assets,” but she says she does not see a definition there. She said she still doesn’t know the difference between a Residential Open Space Preserve and a Neighborhood Open Space Preserve or Community Open Space Preserve. Mr. Mader replied that they appear on the General Plan Diagram. The Residential Open Space Preserves, he showed on the diagram, are marked by a tree pattern; the determination is based on such features as steepness, land stability and forestation. In Section 2204.2.b., part of a section that gives examples of macro-scale, intermediate-scale and micro-scale open space preserves, Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni pointed out that at least Neighborhood Open Space Preserves are described as “local sites kept in their natural state, generally 2 to 10 acres in size.” She said that the descriptions/definitions need additional distinguishing characteristics to help explain the rationale for the neighborhood and residential categories. She said that by virtue of the fact that there are only four Community Open Space Preserves that are specifically named, this category probably requires no further definition. Mr. Mader said that he would add wording to bolster definitions of neighborhood and residential open space preserves in this part of the document. (Land use planners, he explained, define “neighborhood” as a small residential area, while a “community” is made up of neighborhoods.)

Referring to Section 2212.2.b., which discusses the Portola Road Scenic Corridor, Commissioner Von Feldt said that it is important to acknowledge not only “critical views of the western hillsides” but also views through the meadow. Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni concurred, observing that attempts to use plantings to screen buildings also block views and have long been a concern of the Planning Commission.

Mr. Mader pointed out another element in the Portola Road Scenic Corridor section: “The Town should consider establishing a special setback along the road for vegetation in which provisions could be included that would help ensure that in the future the major views to the western hillsides will be preserved . . . .” Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni indicated that is another place to add something along the lines of “and through the meadow” after “western hillsides.”

Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni, referring Section 2212.7 regarding the Stables Preserve (one of the four named Community Open Space Preserves), asked whether the description should be updated to reflect the fact that the Town has acquired some of that land. Mr. Mader said that he would add that information, and also that, if the boarding stables (which are now part of the recreation facilities in the Town) ever cease to exist, the Town should work to be certain that the area is retained as open space.

Commissioner Von Feldt indicated that Section 2212.7 regarding the Meadow Preserve also needs updating, and Mr. Mader said that he would change it to say that “the parking lot serving the preserve should be maintained to cause minimum conflicts with the meadow and be compatible with the natural setting to the maximum extent possible.” Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni suggested eliminating the reference to “present agricultural uses” in that same paragraph; Mr. Mader said that he would do so.

Reviewing Section 2214, Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni asked whether the Portola Valley Sensitive Biological Resources Assessment and Fuel Hazard Assessment study actually identified the Town’s “wildlife, riparian, wetland, vegetative and biotic communities.” Mr. Mader said that some wetlands were identified (based on aerial photographs and areas that he and Mr. Vlasic specified) and mapped, but they primarily mapped vegetation – however, it’s the association between the vegetation and the animals that’s important. Mr. Vlasic pointed out that another important consideration in Section 2214 is that when plans were being developed for Blue Oaks, all of these factors were scrutinized as part of the environmental analysis. The decisions relative to Blue Oaks, he continued, reflected exactly what Section 2214 calls for.

#### Conservation Element

Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni wondered whether some of the language that the Planning Commission had discussed when creekside setbacks were being reviewed now appear in the Conservation Element.

Commissioner Von Feldt asked if it is usual to list certain agencies, such as the San Francisquito Watershed Council and the San Francisquito Creek JPA (Joint Powers Authority), in the General Plan. Mr. Mader said that he included those agencies because cooperation with them is part of addressing the issue of flooding. However, he said that he could generalize the sentiment by referencing federal, state and local agencies rather than naming any specific agencies.



Principles Section 4212.1 references creeks, ponds and groundwater. Commissioner Von Feldt asked about wells. Mr. Mader said he doesn't know if the Town has a policy on wells, nor does he know what control the Town has over groundwater. Commissioner McIntosh asked whether wells must be permitted by the State Water Resources Control Board. Mr. Vlasic said that the primary involvement in wells, to his recollection, is the county Health Department. Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni said that further research is appropriate because wells can have a huge impact during dry spells. Mr. Mader will look into it.

Commissioner Von Feldt suggested beginning Section 4213.2.g. with, "Maintenance of native vegetation for the purpose of fire safe management . . ." instead of "Removal and clearing of native vegetation . . ."

Section 4220 addresses public education and information programs, mentioning ". . . groups like the Sierra Club, the Audubon society or the Peninsula Open space Trust." Commissioner Von Feldt said that she likes the idea – and those agencies – but in her experience they don't do much in the way of education. Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni said that something general such as, "Established clubs or private conservation groups can also play an important role."

In response to a question from Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni about Section 4221b (under Regulation), Mr. Mader said that his research turned up no helpful guidance on the subject of septic tanks and drainfields. Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni suggested that while septic tanks may in fact have positive features in certain circumstances, they should be portrayed in neutral terms until the Town Council studies the issue and comes up with a policy. Commissioner McIntosh agreed with Commissioner Von Feldt that a caveat is needed to prevent septic installations close to creeks and other places where they would be inappropriate. Mr. Vlasic said that the statement can be neutralized by suggesting that there are options and places for septic tanks and drainfields to be considered. Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni added that the statement could also say that the Town recognizes those options and that studies should be undertaken to determine the best result given the particular circumstances.

#### Other

In reference to Appendix 6, Implementation of the Open Space Element, Commissioner Von Feldt asked what a "Scenic Corridor Combining District" is and why Mr. Mader proposed removing it. Mr. Mader said that the zoning ordinance uses "Special Building Setback Lines – S (Scenic)" instead, with part of the text from the former relocated to the latter. Commissioner Von Feldt said that the former term should also be deleted from the Open Space Element Action Program (Section 2216).

Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni invited public comments.

Marge DeStaebler, Santa Maria Avenue, said that while the Conservation Committee, of which she is a member, is certainly interested in the Conservation Element, the Committee spent more time looking at Town-owned open space. She said the Committee defined a preserve as land that was left in its natural state, such as the Spring Down land for flying kites, tossing frisbees, walking and hiking – and not any more developed than that. The Open Space Element's definition differs. Thus, she said, it would be very helpful to have specific, understandable definitions.

Mr. Mader explained that any use of the term "preserves" should be consistent with the definition in the Town Council's Resolution 2489-2010, which does states specifically what can be allowed in terms of structures (occasional benches, trail and path signs, boardwalks in marshy areas, etc.).

Alluding to the earlier discussion about the terms "proposal" and "provision," Ms. DeStaebler said that she considers provisions to be something that has been provided, and proposals are open. Accordingly, she said that "proposal" is a more expansive term. She said that she was pleased to see simultaneous updates of the three elements (Recreation, Open Space and Conservation), because, for example, she said that the Conservation Committee struggled over whether it is recreational or open space. She said that these documents will address some of the confusion about how some of this land can be used.

(4) Confirm Special Meeting Date for Preliminary Review of Site Development Permit X9H-624, 9 Redberry Ridge (Lot 10 Blue Oaks Subdivision), Srinivasan

Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni, Commissioner Von Feldt and Commissioner McIntosh all confirmed that 4 p.m. on Tuesday, February 15, 2011 with the ASCC is fine with them. Mr. Vlastic said that he would check with Commissioner Gilbert and Chair McKitterick.

(5) City of Palo Alto Referral, Temporary Use Permit Request, "Portola Vineyards" Winery Concert Series, 850 Los Trancos Road (Leonard Lehmann)

Mr. Vlastic said that he'd sent an email on January 4, 2011, to Scott McKay, Associate Planner for the City of Palo Alto, laying out some areas of concern about the temporary use permit requested, with a copy to Curtis Williams, Palo Alto's Director of Planning and Community Environment. He said that the situation is complicated, and he hopes to get something back from Palo Alto soon to better inform the Portola Valley Planning Commission.

Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni said that it is not a minor proposal, with the prospect of bringing in 100 or so cars at a time when the Alpine Hills Tennis & Swimming Club is having activities almost every weekend and there's already an issue with overflow parking and an already-dangerous area. Mr. Vlastic agreed, adding that ancillary activities often accompany such events.

Vice Chair (Acting Chair) Zaffaroni also said that she is concerned about amplified sound, which she did not see addressed in the communications with Mr. McKay.

#### COMMISSION, STAFF, COMMITTEE REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

None.

#### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner McIntosh moved to approve the January 19, 2011 minutes as amended; Commissioner Von Feldt seconded and the motion carried 3-0.

ADJOURNMENT: 10:23 p.m.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Leah Zaffaroni, Vice Chair (Acting Chair)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Leslie Lambert, Planning Manager