

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING, TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY, MAY 2, 2012, SCHOOLHOUSE, TOWN CENTER, 765 PORTOLA ROAD, PORTOLA VALLEY, CA 94028

Chair Von Feldt called the Planning Commission regular meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Ms. Borck called the roll:

Present: Commissioners Denise Gilbert and Nate McKitterick; Vice Chair Leah Zaffaroni; Chair Alexandra Von Feldt

Absent: Commissioner Arthur McIntosh

Staff Present: Tom Vlastic, Town Planner
Karen Kristiansson, Principal Planner
Carol Borck, Planning Technician
Councilmember Jeff Aalfs, Liaison

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Vice Chair Zaffaroni requested that Commissioners who are unable to attend a meeting give a heads-up to either Ms. Borck or Planning Technician CheyAnne Brown, because absences could make a meeting lack a quorum.

REGULAR AGENDA

(1) Continued Discussion: Portola Road Task Force and Draft Background Report

Ms. Kristiansson reported that the Town Council appointed most of the task force members at its April 25, 2012 meeting, and will complete the roster at the May 9, 2012 meeting. When the Planning Commission discussed the Portola Road Corridor Plan at its April 25, 2012 meeting, she continued, Commissioners requested:

- More information regarding how setbacks along Portola Road compare to those elsewhere in Town. Ms Kristiansson pointed out that the April 26, 2012 staff report includes tables that provide this information, which can be plugged into the Background Report for the task force.
- Several issues to be addressed in the planning process, including safety concerns (the trail crossing the road near The Sequoias and the dangers for bicyclists, especially the turn onto Westridge Drive), invasive weeds, parking for the Windy Hill Open Space Preserve and undergrounding utility lines.

In response to Commissioner Gilbert, she confirmed that the issues mentioned are in addition to those already included in the draft background report.

Ms. Kristiansson said the next step is to get the task force together to define the issues and identify options for addressing them. The task force findings should come back to the Planning Commission in July 2012, when the Commissioners will determine the best approaches and start drafting the plan. In the meantime, Ms. Kristiansson invited Commissioners to make any additional comments and suggestions for the background report.

Commissioner McKitterick agreed to represent the Planning Commission on the task force.

Vice Chair Zaffaroni said she feels strongly about bike safety, having personally witnessed three accidents involving bicyclists. She suggested that reduced speed limits warrant serious consideration. She also suggested that requiring bicyclists to ride single file would enhance safety.

Although Commissioner McKitterick believes reduced speed limits on either Alpine Road or Portola Road are “non-starters,” he said State rules apply to the creation of bike lanes. In addition, the State provides best-practice recommendations that are dependent upon the average speed of traffic on a particular thoroughfare. One of the tipping points in terms of bike lane width is a speed of 34 mph or more, and the average speed on Portola Road runs between 35 and 40 mph. In response to Chair Von Feldt, he said that the current white line only marks the shoulder of the road, and anyone – equestrians, bicyclists, pedestrians – can use it. A bike lane would have to be

wider than the shoulder to meet State-recommended minimums. Accordingly, Commissioner McKitterick said, the task force would look at the feasibility of adding bike lanes. He noted that Windy Hill and Valley Presbyterian Church parking as well as the location of fences, hedges and Town trails impose some limitations.

Commissioner McKitterick said the Sheriff's Department may ticket someone for unsafe bike riding, but he didn't know about restricting riders to a single lane. Commissioner Gilbert pointed out that to her understanding, it doesn't matter how many bicyclists ride side-by-side as long as they stay within the confines of the bike lane. He said that it's a shoulder rather than a bike lane anyway in the case of Portola Road. In response to Vice Chair Zaffaroni, he said the major difference between a shoulder and a bike lane is the amount of room separating bicyclists from traffic.

According to Commissioner McKitterick, the Sheriff's Department is attuned to safety considerations, and is particularly concerned during events such as pelotons, when sometimes riders simply ignore traffic coming from behind them. That said, he added, the Sheriff would step up enforcement of certain violations at the Town's request. Vice Chair Zaffaroni said it's important to ticket riders for not stopping at stop signs, not only because there should be parity between cars and bikes, but also because motorists should know what to expect when they see a bicyclist approach a stop sign.

Commissioner McKitterick said that the Sheriff's Department also is looking forward to an improved situation that may come about as a result of the plan for the Portola Road Corridor. Options include signage and education as well as physical changes in the road that would make it safer. In response to Vice Chair Zaffaroni, he said that State regulations about signage probably give local jurisdictions some leeway.

Because the white line designates a shoulder, Vice Chair Zaffaroni asked whether the overflow parking from Windy Hill is legal. Mr. Vlasic said that he's uncertain whether there are any "no parking" signs in that area. Commissioner McKitterick said it's permissible in some cases to even park in a bike line, but he's not sure about the specifics or signage requirements.

Ms. Kristiansson said that a survey of Portola Road, undertaken to determine whether it's wide enough to accommodate five-foot bike lanes, indicated in some places, particularly where there are culverts, it isn't wide enough. Mr. Vlasic said the Town wouldn't want to designate anything as a bike lane if it's less than the State-recommended five feet wide. In response to Vice Chair Zaffaroni, he said regulation and enforcement are probably easier where there's an appropriate standard, such as a bike lane.

Mr. Vlasic said that when groups of bicyclists ride past Westridge Drive, where they have no stop sign, it's especially hazardous because motorists' sight distance is limited as they pull onto Portola Road.

Commissioner McKitterick said that an option that the San Mateo County Planning and Building Department considered when making improvements at Ladera from Alpine Road to Alameda de las Pulgas was the width of the traffic lane. In that area, the County narrowed the traffic lane to accommodate a wider bike lane. Thus, he suggested, the task force might also explore whether there's any leeway in changing the width of traffic lanes.

Beyond changing the physical condition and addressing signage, Commissioner McKitterick said there's also an educational component that the Bicycle, Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Committee is working on. Vice Chair Zaffaroni asked whether the Committee has a working collaborative with other communities on bicyclists' safety issues. She said it would be a good idea for the task force to follow up with Woodside because its problems are similar to Portola Valley's.

Chair Von Feldt said the Planning Commission's guidance to the task force would be important to ensure that it focuses on the things of most concern to Commissioners. Mr. Vlasic also noted that if Commissioners think of anything after the meeting, they can send in comments, or communicate with Public Works Director Howard Young, who will be participating in the task force.

(2) Proposed Revisions: General Plan Formatting

Ms. Kristiansson pointed out that more consistent formatting was designed to make the General Plan more user-friendly, provide for easier updating and take advantage of the opportunity to give the same look and feel to both paper and online versions. The reformatting involves cosmetic changes such as standardized fonts, headers and footers, title pages and tables of contents for each element, land appendices placed immediately after the element to which they apply. The only textual changes are those necessitated by the reformatting. Because no substantive changes are involved, neither a General Plan amendment nor a CEQA analysis are required.

Ms. Kristiansson said that a comprehensive review of the General Plan to address content changes to improve consistency and add clarity is a possible project in future years.

In response to Vice Chair Zaffaroni, she said the reformatted version is not yet online, except for what's included in the agenda package for tonight's meeting.

COMMISSION, STAFF, COMMITTEE REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Vlasic provided updates on The Priory and Sprint applications.

He said that The Priory's first of two requests for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) amendment probably will come to the Planning Commission at its June 6, 2012 meeting. It will include incorporating the Gambetta property into the CUP boundary and expanding the soccer field and track to regulation-size facilities. He said The Priory intends to use artificial turf and develop a landscaping plan to help address some of the visual issues resulting from removal of the artificial berm. In terms of public noticing, Mr. Vlasic said the normal noticing for a use permit amendment process would include notifying neighbors within a 300-foot radius, running a notice in *The Almanac* as a newspaper of local circulation, and posting notices at three community locations. In response to Chair Von Feldt, he said that while notices appear occasionally in the PV Forum, it isn't an official part of the process.

Mr. Vlasic said he didn't know which type of artificial turf The Priory has in mind, although the Town has worked with The Priory's environmental consultants and design team and made suggestions about what would be most environmentally acceptable. When Chair Von Feldt asked whether the Planning Commission would receive any preliminary information about whether the turf would be considered pervious surface, Mr. Vlasic said we haven't received that yet.

Turning to Sprint, he said that it's submitted its application for an antenna at The Priory, located adjacent to but behind the Verizon and AT&T facilities. Mr. Vlasic said Crown Castle now apparently owns the Sprint pole, so there are details to work on in terms of who's responsible for what. The application is likely to come to the Planning Commission for preliminary review at either the May 16 or June 6, 2012 meeting.

Mr. Vlasic also reported that Verizon and AT&T are putting their monopine plans together to take to the ASCC, probably at its June 11, 2012 meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Gilbert moved to approve the April 18, 2012 minutes of the Planning Commission meeting, as amended. Seconded by Vice Chair Zaffaroni, the motion carried 3-0-1 (McKitterick abstained).

ADJOURNMENT [8:06 p.m.]

Alexandra Von Feldt, Chair

Leslie Lambert, Planning Manager