

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING, TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY, DECEMBER 5, 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. Mr. Padovan called the roll:

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

Absent: None

Staff Present: Tom Vlastic, Town Planner
Ted Sayre, Town Geologist
Karen Kristiansson, Principal Planner
Sandy Sloan, Town Attorney
Steve Padovan, Interim Planning Manager
Ann Wengert, Town Council Liaison

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Virginia Bacon, Golden Oak Drive, thanked the Town for providing microphones at the meetings, because it had been so difficult for many in the audience to hear what the Commissioners are saying.

Chair Von Feldt indicated that there's also a microphone that can be passed around when members of the audience want to make comments. In addition, she said speaker cards are available.

REGULAR AGENDA

- (1) Public Hearing: Request for Deviation from Town Council Resolution 2506-2010 and Variance Request X7E-134, 169 Wayside Road, Matt and Donna Rollefson

Commissioner McKitterick recused himself.

Mr. Vlastic referred to the staff report dated November 29, 2012, which covers considerations of the Planning Commission at its preliminary review and project adjustments that reflect ASCC suggestions. He explained that the ASCC recommended modifications in the height issues in terms of the variance and the manner of the construction process relative to the deviation. The ASCC observed that the stitch piers that allow for the engineered solution could be moved upslope and minimize disturbance in terms of access and potential tree impacts. The Town Geologist reviewed the modified location and found it acceptable. Mr. Vlastic also stated that, as for construction staging, although the stitch piers would now be further upslope, further adjustment for drilling may be possible when the garage is removed. That would be under the direction of the project geotechnical consultants and the Town Geologist to further ensure protection of the trees and less disturbance in terms of access.

In discussions during its preliminary review, Mr. Vlastic said the Planning Commission also had recognized that the Town Council Resolution was not clear about allowing an engineered solution in PD areas. In follow-up discussions with the Town Geologist, it was determined that the original intent in limiting deviations or engineered solutions within a PD area was due to concerns that the only possible solution might be mass grading, with significantly more disturbance to the site. In this case, because it's clear that the engineered solution can be accomplished without that, staff and the Town Geologist agree that it's fully within the intent of the resolution and ultimately the policy provisions should be modified to recognize that.

Vice Chair Zaffaroni said that she believes Resolution 2506-2010, as written, does allow for the proposal. Section IV of the Resolution indicates that deviations are relevant only to categories in Table 1 that would have "N" designations. She said that if there's an asterisk next to the "N" (N*), the issue is then referred to the Planning Commission – because there might be relevant geological information to consider.

Commissioner Gilbert, who made the observation on this issue during the Planning Commission's preliminary review on October 3, 2012, concurred with Vice Chair Zaffaroni.

Mr. Vlasic said that at the preliminary review, the Planning Commission also requested as much neighbor input as possible. He stated that the uphill neighbors had already commented at that point, but since that time, the neighbor closest to the property on the downhill side – where the height issue is more significant – has also weighed in. That neighbor is the Valley Presbyterian Church, which sent a December 3, 2012 email in support of the proposal.

Mr. Vlasic said staff recommends the findings and actions set forth in the staff report (page 4) relative to the environmental impact, the deviation request and the variance request.

Vice Chair Zaffaroni said that during the preliminary review, it was too early in the process to get answers to her questions about drainage and overall impact on the natural setting, and asked whether that information is available now. Mr. Vlasic said the final detailed drainage plans associated with the repair will be developed with the building permit, but he's confident in the feasibility of that being done appropriately, particularly with the new location of the stitch piers and the process of removing the garage, carefully working the equipment downslope and developing drainage plans that ensure none of the water coming off the property would jeopardize the slopes below the stitch piers.

Mr. Vlasic said there is now additional information on the location of grading equipment for the modified plans, and said the detailed construction staging plan would be completed very carefully, but much of it will have to be site-controlled oversight. He said he's comfortable with the process, as is the ASCC, considering the relocation of the stitch piers. The applicant and design team will have to put additional time and money into developing further detailed plans once the conditional approvals are in place.

0:11:37.5 Vice Chair Zaffaroni asked what Mr. Vlasic would suggest in terms of making findings. Mr. Vlasic said the findings could be made on the basis of the approvals being subject to the conditions, particularly of the Town Geologist, and the construction staging plan conditions that came out of the ASCC. The burden with any condition, ensuring implementation, falls primarily on staff.

Vice Chair Zaffaroni said that her main questions during the preliminary review related to geologic issues, and to affirm that the Town Geologist is satisfied that the project satisfies the definition of an engineered design, with the 1.5 stability factor. Town Geologist Ted Sayre said he was satisfied.

Commissioner Gilbert asked whether the project meets the 1.5 factor with respect to the entire residence, or just the garage and living unit that have been engineered. Mr. Sayre said they're looking at the improvement in slope stability only where the changes would take place, not the entire house.

As she understands it, Commissioner Gilbert said, the request for variance is for two feet above the 28-foot height maximum, but she said she's not clear about the front and side yard setbacks. Mr. Vlasic said that the garage location is currently within the front setback area; the intent is to replace that with the engineered solution to allow for an actual garage and space above it. Thus, the change in encroachment and the actual distance is about 25 feet – about halfway into the 50-foot setback – which is pretty much where it sits now. The added encroachment is the mass above the garage and the connection between the garage and the house, he explained, which doesn't change the encroachment closer to the street. It does, however, add mass and height above the existing garage. The side yard setback is approximately 10 feet, which again is about halfway into the required setback.

0:15:51.3 Commissioner Gilbert acknowledged that moving the stitch piers further up reduces potential impacts, but asked whether there was any way to know about the effects of construction on the creek. Mr. Sayre said the Commissioners' packets include the latest correspondence from the project geotechnical consultant, which states that access to the stitch pier construction area will be available from above. There will be no access through the creek corridor. He said there was some concern about sediment and dirt going into the creek, but there should be a siltation and erosion-control plan to prevent that material from getting into the creek. The erosion-control would be further clarified and include additional detail for the final construction permits. Mr. Vlasic added that those would be standard requirements of the building permit.

Chair Von Feldt asked how far the installed piers would be from the centerline of the creek, and whether they've increased the number of piers. Mr. Vlasic said that the piers are at least 30 to 40 feet away. Mr. Sayre added that there previously were five piers and there will be no increase in the number of piers only their alignment, which is now staggered.

0:18:06.7 In response to a further question from Chair Von Feldt, Mr. Vlasic said the staging areas are identified on the Plan A-1A. He said there are feasible areas that make sense, but in terms of the final construction plan, that will include details related to the drill rig placement, how they will move downslope, etc. Mr. Vlasic also said that under the direction of the Public Works Director, the Town would have a grading inspector at the site. The Town Geologist will also be involved, especially when the drill rigs are onsite.

Chair Von Feldt invited questions and comments from the audience. With no speakers coming forward, she brought the matter back to the Planning Commission.

The Planning Commission then addressed criteria for consideration in granting the deviation (staff report dated September 27, 2012, page 4).

Vice Chair Zaffaroni recited findings the resolution requires:

1. Use of state-of-the art structural/geotechnical standards taking into account the underlying geology.

Vice Chair Zaffaroni said the Town Geologist as well as the applicant's consulting geologist have provided detailed standards and reports in this regard.

2. Limitation and control of the final project and construction process, including grading and the use of excavation equipment, drilling equipment and trucks, so as to minimize impacts on the natural characteristics of the site.
3. Control of drainage to minimize onsite and offsite adverse impacts.

Vice Chair Zaffaroni said a condition of approval should require the applicant to provide the necessary plans and reports, but it may be too early to prepare those reports.

4. Demonstration that the improvements do not interfere with existing, or proposed, septic tanks and drainfields and that the septic system complies with acceptable public health standards.

Vice Chair Zaffaroni said she believes we have that report from San Mateo County.

5. Relocation of a structure to a more stable area on the property if feasible when undertaking reconstruction of a building and associated infrastructure.

Vice Chair Zaffaroni said that although the Town Planner report indicated there was no really stable areas on the property, this particular application seems to satisfy that requirement because it would be make the site more stable by virtue of the stitch piers that would be installed.

6. Stabilization of actively moving ground when deemed necessary and feasible.

Vice Chair Zaffaroni said this would be done with the installation of the stitch piers.

7. Improvement of the overall safety of a structure and site over the safety of the structure and site that existed prior to making improvements. Improvements shall address problems related to the geologic stability of the site, but can address other factors, for example, improvements in fire safety.

Vice Chair Zaffaroni said the stitch piers and stabilization satisfies this criterion. As well, the Town Planner's report indicated that the improvements would meet current standards in terms of fire safety and building codes.

8. Avoidance of imposing a risk to adjoining properties.

Vice Chair Zaffaroni said she believes every effort would be made to do this, including the creek.

9. Reasonable demonstration that the structure is a legally existing structure.

Vice Chair Zaffaroni said the Town Planner's report addressed this in detail. While encroaching on current Zoning Code setback requirements, the improvements pre-date the Town's incorporation.

Mr. Vlasic said that additional conditions could be added, but the building permit and ASCC both would require detailed construction and construction staging plans. Vice Chair Zaffaroni asked about drainage and the Town Geologist stated that grading and drainage plans are included in the building permit plan set.

Chair Von Feldt asked for comments related to the variance request.

Vice Chair Zaffaroni said that Section 18.68.070 of the Zoning Ordinance requires:

1. Special circumstances with respect to the given property. She said the fact that this property is pre-existing and has pre-existing structures in itself creates special circumstances, because to try to work within current setbacks would only exacerbate the amount of the encroachment. She said there's really no good way to work with the existing building. She said she believes the applicant is trying to bring the building up to a safe standard while dealing with an area that is encumbered by the extremity of the landslide and the fee characterization.
2. Practical difficulty or unnecessary hardship such that a variance is necessary. Again, Vice Chair Zaffaroni said to make the existing improvements safer, the applicants have selected the one area of the site that can be stabilized sufficiently to reduce risk.
3. Preservation of a property right. Under the deviation, standards with respect to an engineered design are allowed to build out a property to the full extent allowed.
4. Injurious effect. Vice Chair Zaffaroni said many comments from neighbors indicate that they feel the project would be a positive improvement and an overall benefit despite the setback and height variances requested.
5. The grant of a special privilege. She said nothing would be granted to the applicant that's out of the ordinary with respect to the property and its encumbrances; she said the circumstances are more like a special hardship than privilege.
6. Use conformity. The floor area being requested is consistent with R-1 zoning constraints.
7. Conformance with the purposes of the General Plan and Zoning Ordinances. Again, Vice Chair Zaffaroni said, this is a typical residential use and would be in conformance with those purposes.

With no further comments, Chair Von Feldt requested a motion.

Commissioner Gilbert moved to find the project categorically exempt pursuant to Section 15305(a) of the Town's CEQA Guidelines. Seconded by Commissioner McIntosh, the motion carried 4-0.

Commissioner Gilbert moved to recommend that the Planning Commission find the project consistent with the criteria to allow for deviations set forth in Resolution 2506-2010, as evaluated in the staff reports, and approve the deviation subject to the final construction plans being provided to the satisfaction of the Town Geologist and the final construction staging plans being to the satisfaction of the Town Geologist, Town Planner and ASCC. Seconded by Commissioner McIntosh, the motion carried 4-0.

Commissioner Gilbert moved to recommend that the Board of Zoning Adjustment move to make the required findings to grant the variance application for variances to height and setback standards as evaluated in the staff report of November 29, 2012, and subject to conditions (a) through (c) therein. Seconded by Commissioner McIntosh, the motion carried 4-0.

- (2) Public Hearing: Application for amendment to Conditional Use Permit (CUP) X7D-30 for parcel merger and expansion of athletic fields with new track and artificial turf infill at 302 Portola Road, Woodside Priory School, and draft Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration

Vice Chair Zaffaroni recused herself and Commissioner McKitterick returned to the dais. Vice Chair Zaffaroni received a round of applause when Chair Von Feldt announced that this was her (Zaffaroni's) last meeting as a member of the Planning Commission.

Considering the large audience present, Chair Von Feldt explained the hearing procedure: Following the staff report, the Priory (applicant) will make a presentation, then the Planning Commissioners will pose questions to staff and the applicant, after which members of the public will be invited to comment. When the public comment period ends, the matter will come back to the Planning Commission for further questions and comments. Chair Von Feldt noted that this is only the first meeting and that there will be a second public hearing.

Ms. Kristiansson explained that tonight's public hearing is the first formal opportunity for the public and the Planning Commission to comment on the Draft Initial Study for the Priory track and turf project, and the comment period on the Initial Study extends to January 4, 2013 due to the holidays. After tonight's discussion, the Planning Commission will continue the public hearing. The continuation originally was expected at the Planning Commission's meeting on January 16, 2013, but the proposed date has been pushed to the February 6, 2013 Planning Commission meeting to allow time to respond to input received so far and give the ASCC the opportunity to consider the documents at its January 14, 2013 meeting.

As Ms. Kristiansson noted, the project has been discussed at a number of previous meetings. Because the applicant planned to describe the project in detail, she summarized the proposal as follows:

- Merge the Rutherford-Gambetta property with the rest of The Priory land and remove the berm in between, which would necessitate relocating a sewer line and undergrounding existing overhead utility lines.
- Build a 2,000-square-foot athletic equipment building and install a regulation-size running track with an infield of artificial turf – FieldTurf's Revolution fiber, with a thermoplastic elastomer (TPE) and sand infill. Ms. Kristiansson said there would be no crumb rubber from used tires.

Ms. Kristiansson asked the Commission to consider specifically the parcel merger at tonight's meeting, because The Priory is anxious to move ahead with preparing the associated surveys and the documents, so that it would be ready for recording once the Planning Commission takes action on the proposal for the track, field and athletic equipment shed. She said that staff does not identify any issues related to the merger and minimal risk.

The Initial Study describes the project and takes into account all the topics required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The purpose of the Initial Study is to determine whether the proposed project could have a significant impact on the environment. She said that there has been a lot of discussion over a long period of time about some of the issues covered in the Initial Study.

Referring to the staff report of December 5, 2012, Ms. Kristiansson brought the Commission's attention to pages 3 and 4, which lists some of the issues that have been raised and provides corresponding page numbers in the Initial Study where it addresses those issues:

- Source and amount of sand (Project Description, page 18)
- Air quality impacts from off-gassing from the artificial turf (Air Quality Section, pages 57-59)

- Surface temperature problems (Air Quality Section, pages 59-63)
- Impacts on greenhouse gas emissions (Greenhouse Gas Emissions Section; pages 101-105)
- Hazardous materials impact from the artificial turf (Hazardous Materials Section; pages 109-125)
- Drainage (Hydrology and Water Quality Section, pages 132-134)

When the time comes to take action (after the next public hearing), Ms. Kristiansson said the Planning Commission would have to determine whether the Initial Study adequately and reasonably discloses the project's potential environmental impacts. If so, the Commission would adopt the Initial Study; if not, the Commission would provide guidance as to what else might be needed. State law requires adoption of a CEQA document before any action can be taken whether to approve or deny the project.

Ms. Kristiansson indicated that Tad Stern of Pacific Municipal Consultants (PMC), one of the consultants who prepared the Initial Study, would answer questions unless they require additional analysis or consideration, in which case they'd be addressed at the February 6, 2013 meeting.

In addition to the CEQA-related element, the Planning Commission will ultimately take action on the proposed project itself. To approve, the Commission would be required to make seven findings as set forth in the Town's Municipal Code, listed on pages 4 and 5 in the December 5, 2012 staff report. As the staff report discusses, the finding that has been most discussed is:

6. The proposed use will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Ordinance and the General Plan.

Excerpts from both the Zoning Ordinance and the General Plan were attached to the staff report, she continued, summarizing three goals that had been brought up during previous meetings, with discussion focused on whether the proposed project would be compatible and consistent with those goals:

- Preserve the rural quality of the Town, which relates to development remaining subordinate to natural features
- Preserve the natural beauty of the Town, which relates to the aesthetics of the project
- Minimize use of non-renewable energy resources and water, which relates to watering and fertilizing needed to maintain natural turf as well as energy and water needed to manufacture artificial turf

While listening to comments at tonight's public hearing, Ms. Kristiansson said that Commissioners would want to keep in mind the need for two decisions – one relating to the Initial Study's adequacy, reasonableness and disclosure of potential environmental impacts, and the other relating to whether the proposed project is consistent with the intents and purposes of the Zoning Ordinance and General Plan.

Head of School Tim Molak, who said the Priory's amended plans have been about two years in the making, delivered a PowerPoint presentation. He began with a full-campus photo, explaining that the campus encompasses about 50 acres, most of which is very green with significant buffer space between the campus interior and the Priory's surrounding neighbors. Looking to enhance its facilities, he said the Priory wanted to address ongoing problems with athletic fields, especially during the winter season. He said that in the last two years, boys' soccer has shifted to a winter schedule as well, so now both high school soccer teams and middle school teams are playing at the same time. Due to weather related issues, numerous games have had to be cancelled.

He said the school purchased the 1.3-acre former Rutherford-Gambetta property two years ago, which made it possible to consider expanding, installing a new regulation-size track that would accommodate not only The Priory's needs but also those of other users. The current track is a rectangular configuration with a DG (decomposed granite) surface, which is not good for cross-country running or track meets.

Mr. Molak pointed out where the berm would be removed, noting that the Priory installed it decades ago when an area was flattened to create the playing fields. The sewer line beneath the berm would be redirected toward the middle of the campus, allowing the new 400-meter track to expand a little bit into the Rutherford-Gambetta parcel.

He also pointed out the locations of the three playing fields, indicating which are used for the school's baseball, soccer and football teams, as well as the American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO), which uses a field at the Priory for training. The Priory has found that the fields don't currently meet the needs of the athletic teams in the winter months. The proposed shed is needed to avoid having equipment all over the place – some in the gymnasium, some in the Founder's House, and some in the small existing shed.

Turning to some of the issues, Mr. Molak said that field drainage planned for the artificial turf surface would tie in with master drainage plan created when the Priory built its Performing Arts Center in 2007. Removing the berm and landscaping that area around it would require some grading, but all the dirt will be relocated to other areas of the property, raising the level of the new track by about 10 inches. Extensive landscaping that incorporates more native plantings, plus improvements to existing landscaping, would front Portola Road to help create a better visual experience. Undergrounding of the electrical lines also will improve the aesthetics.

In terms of the turf, Mr. Molak said that rain such as we've experienced over the past few weeks makes the existing fields very difficult to use, which is why the Priory has explored different options. After examining a number of alternatives, he said the option identified is very suitable. Speaking to Portola Valley's rural character, he said there is great harmony that can occur with this particular field, and except for 2.39 acres, the rest of the campus – nearly 48 acres – will continue to provide natural habitat and provide as much natural beauty as possible.

Mr. Molak said that some of The Priory's cross-country runners, football players and soccer players in the audience could address the issues from their perspective. He also explained the proposed landscaping and screening.

SallyAnn Reiss, a parent and Portola Valley resident, came forward to continue the Priory's presentation. Ms. Reiss – a parent, a coach, a player and a Town resident – said she's done a lot of research related to the Priory proposal on both perspectives. She said the Priory chose to look at the issue compassionately. She said that it doesn't matter whether it's raining or summer sunshine, the fields in Portola Valley get destroyed. Whether it's at the Priory or at the Town fields, once the turf gets beat up, it results in sprained ankles, twisted knees and other injuries. If one asks compassionately what can be done for utility and safety that is not harmful to the environment, artificial turf would make fields usable year-round and provide a faster and livelier surface for competition. She restated the importance of being environmentally compassionate and as such, looked at the amount of water, fertilizer and pesticides a natural turf surface requires and found that it is not environmentally friendly anymore. And in terms of costs, she added, the Priory currently spends \$42,000 annually on watering, pesticides, fertilizer and maintenance.

Mr. Molak thanked Ms. Reiss and stated that he understands that people have many different opinions on artificial turf. However, in terms of the school's athletic program needs, safety concerns, the availability and consistency of playable fields, costs and aesthetics, he believes the Priory is doing the responsible thing in proposing artificial turf for the infield. In addition to screening options for Portola Road, he added, even sometimes very close-up it's hard to differentiate between natural and artificial turf. He discussed the artificial turf field in Woodside and the new grass field that the Priory installed. He said having a turf field (as well as grass fields) would create a win-win situation for Portola Valley – including places to play for children from the community at large as well as the Priory student body. He said the limited number of nearby options to unusable fields already requires parents to drive to Menlo Park, Palo Alto and Redwood City for games they expected to be played in Portola Valley.

In closing, Mr. Molak said that he knows this will be a difficult decision to make and that the Priory School, established 55 years ago, is very respectful of the Town's rural character and tries to be environmentally friendly. He said the school has done many things over those five decades to maintain the dignity of the community, because it is a real privilege to be in this wonderful place.

Chair Von Feldt established order and asked if there were any questions from the Planning Commissioners.

Commissioner McKitterick said the Town's guiding documents use terms such as "natural beauty," "natural features," "natural trees," "manmade features," "works of people" and "natural surroundings." He asked if there is any guidance in the General Plan, ordinances or regulations about whether grass fields qualify as natural features.

Ms. Kristiansson said she'd reviewed the General Plan in preparation for this meeting and indicated that even the Recreation Element does not specifically mention "grass fields." It focuses more generally about parks and public school recreation facilities. She said she did not see anything that specifically indicated that grass fields such as the one at Town Center are natural features, at least with respect to playing fields.

Commissioner Gilbert said that if one searched for "lawn," there are places that suggest trying to find natural alternatives to lawns. She said she believes she saw that in the residential values section.

Commissioner Gilbert said she had several questions that she's divided into project-specific and Initial Study categories. Addressing the project-specific questions, she asked about:

- The distance between the edge of the track and the trail. She noted that revised plans have shifted the field slightly and added a wooden post fence to separate the edge of the track from the trail in the corner near Portola Road, but she couldn't tell from the diagram how far has the edge of the trail would be from the edge of the track. Ms. Kristiansson said it appeared to be 30 to 40 feet.
- Underground utilities. She said this was discussed on the field visit to The Priory and is in the plans, but it's not mentioned in either the Initial Study or the Mitigated Negative Declaration. She asked whether it's been determined that undergrounding is feasible, or if there are any other issues of possible concern. She also wondered whether it would be a condition of the CUP to have the utilities undergrounded. Ms. Kristiansson said the utility undergrounding is now being proposed as part of the project, she understands that the applicant has determined it is feasible, and to her knowledge there are no barriers to prevent it. Mr. Vlastic pointed out that undergrounding utilities is a standard condition for new residences.
- Sprinkler system. Commissioner Gilbert asked whether this would be an automatic system that turns on when the field gets too hot. Mr. Molak said that as part of the FieldTurf package, it's probably one of the "water guns" used to take down the temperature.
- What precisely would have to be done with regard to maintenance of the artificial turf. She said there had been discussion in the past about artificial turf requiring disinfectant, but she saw nothing about that in the documents. She saw a comment that the artificial turf on the Woodside playing field looked like worn carpet, which was explained as the result of heavy use and limited maintenance – suggesting that more maintenance is required. She noticed the Mitigated Negative Declaration at one point indicated that the artificial turf would need watering every two weeks. The combination of all those things, she said, prompts her to want a better understanding of the maintenance requirements.

Mr. Molak said he wasn't sure about the watering every two weeks, but on some fields, a machine is used to fluff up the turf and make sure the pellets remain in place and the blades stand as erect as possible. He said that currently, the field is mowed at least once a week, and sometimes twice. He said that he understands maintenance on artificial turf to be much less than that – but he's uncertain about whether it's dependent on wear and tear.

Ms. Kristiansson said she talked to Woodside Elementary School's maintenance supervisor, who told her that they're supposed to go over the field every couple of weeks with some type of machinery that picks up the leaves and bits of debris on the field, but for staffing reasons, they do it only once a month or every two months – more on an "as needed" basis. Through its contract with FieldTurf, once a year the Woodside turf has a more extensive fluffing, sorting and cleaning. She said that Woodside doesn't use disinfectant on the turf. According to Mr. Molak, disinfectant is not used on the Woodside field.

Commissioner Gilbert restated that she wants clarification on the disinfectant because that would have implications on run-off. Generally speaking, she feels that it is important to get more specific information about maintenance requirements, to be able to ensure there are no maintenance consequences that warrant discussion with respect to CEQA requirements.

- Replacement and disposal of artificial turf field. Commissioner Gilbert said she's heard a range of responses with everything from artificial turf is 100% recyclable, to it being partial reused, to the manufacturer simply disposing of it. The question is what actually happens when the artificial turf comes to the end of its lifespan. Mr. Molak said he will ask the FieldTurf representatives on the disposal options.
- Existing turf on the field. Although she understands the dirt from grading would be relocated onsite, Commissioner Gilbert asked what would happen to the existing sod. Mr. Molak said he wasn't sure but when the school had the other field refurbished a few years ago, the grass turf was dug up and blended with the dirt that was dug up.
- Drainage. The current natural turf field has standing water on it from the recent rains, Commissioner Gilbert noted, but she said she'd expect water to also pool on a synthetic field. Mr. Molak said one of FieldTurf's claims is that it could rain 10 to 15 inches an hour and you can still play on it quickly thereafter. He also said that part of the engineering of the artificial turf is that water drains faster through a trickle-down system into holding areas beneath the artificial turf than it does through natural turf.

Commissioner McIntosh asked whether because the artificial turf in the proposal represents the latest technology and if it has a longer lifespan as a result of the new technology. Mr. Molak said he has heard that the field could last up to 15 years, but noted that the estimate is probably based on public fields subject to heavier use than at the Priory.

Commissioner McIntosh also asked about the softball field adjoining the track being at a different elevation than the track. Mr. Molak said they've decided to redo the whole area and move the softball backstop further back to provide a useable right field. At this time, only the middle school plays on that field so they don't need a large outfield. When Mr. Molak said there would be curbing around both sides of the track, Commissioner McIntosh asked whether that would present a hazard to children running out to catch fly balls. Mr. Molak said there would likely be a fence separating the softball field from the track to determine a home run.

Chair Von Feldt inquired about the drainage channel. She asked for clarification on the drain rock and perforated pipe and is that similar to a bioswale or something more engineered. Mr. Molak deferred to Kevin Schwarkopf who said the plastic perforated pipe is part of the drainage system beneath the field that takes the water through a drain route and channels it to a retention pipe at one end of the field. Chair Von Feldt asked why a retention pipe is used rather than an earthen swale. Mr. Schwarkopf stated that a retention pipe was used to ensure that the storm water runoff from the field is retained on site so that the drain water does not run out into the creek faster than it currently does.

Chair Von Feldt asked who selects the firm that conducts the Environmental Impact Report. Ms. Kristiansson said the Town selects the consultant and PMC was chosen after substantial research on environmental documents prepared for other turf fields. There is not a lot of environmental analysis that has been done on artificial fields, but PMC did an Initial Study for a field in San Carlos that addressed many of the same issues involved with the Priory proposal. She said that led to the conclusion that PMC would be able to take on this assignment with a deeper knowledge base than the other consultants considered.

When Chair Von Feldt asked whether most other cities do environmental reports for artificial turf fields and Ms. Kristiansson said it depends on the city and the field, but a number of cities do not.

Chair Von Feldt asked whether the artificial turf is considered pervious, semi-pervious or impervious, and how the Town would classify it in terms of its surface allocation requirements. Ms. Kristiansson said the field is being treated the same way as the existing field – as a pervious surface. This is largely because according to the drainage report, the proposed surface would drain better than the existing field and the existing field is tramped down and compressed and thus doesn't drain the way a natural area would.

Chair Von Feldt asked whether the infill material would or would not be used tires. Ms. Kristiansson confirmed that the infill would not be used tires but would be TPE, which is produced specifically for this purpose – brand new, not recycled anything.

Chair Von Feldt asked whether there is any Town policy that addresses residential use of artificial turf. Ms. Kristiansson said she doesn't believe there's a policy to that effect.

Commissioner Gilbert asked if the Town has approved artificial turf for residences.

Mr. Vlastic said the Town has typically not had a site plan showing anything significant relative to artificial turf. The primary alternative surfaces residential applicants have used have been for access, such as a geo-cell type product, but for the most part, when a property owner installs a small area of artificial turf it probably has not gone through any permit process.

Chair Von Feldt said that the Initial Study indicates the artificial turf will need to be replaced in eight to 10 years, so this would not be a one-time occurrence but an impact for life. She asked whether "replacement" meant the entire field. Ms. Kristiansson said she would get more information on that, but her understanding is that the drainage system would remain intact, but the infill would be replaced.

Commissioner McKitterick, referring to the field's lifespan, because the Priory has periodic CUP reviews, if approved, would the Town be able to revisit, in eight to 10 years when it's time to replace the field, whether the Town would allow it or require replacement with a grass playing field. Ms. Kristiansson said that normally, the replacement of a grass field would be considered maintenance, but the issue of reapproving the artificial turf field could also be included as a condition of approval.

When Commissioner McKitterick pursued the issue of replacement being considered maintenance, Ms. Kristiansson explained that when a grass field is re-seeded or re-sodded, the Priory normally wouldn't need a permit or an amendment to the CUP.

Mr. Vlastic added that when the Priory refurbished the natural turf field, staff issued a permit but it related only to minor grading and improvements involving field drainage,

Chair Von Feldt opened the public hearing. She began with Tom Kelley, Franciscan Ridge, who had submitted a speaker card.

Mr. Kelley said that when he applied for a seat on the Planning Commission, he received a copy of the General Plan from Vice Chair Zaffaroni. Some of it, he said, made it clear that the General Plan calls for protecting and preserving the Town's natural environment, but he found no references to plastic grass. He also couldn't find a chapter on developing athletic fields in attracting athletes to our schools. He said it's a values question. The Alpine Little League tried to get plastic grass at Ford Field, and if it gets approved here then they will try to get it again. He said that by doing this, the Town is putting pressure on everyone who has athletic fields in Portola Valley to conform. He said the Planning Commission's job is to figure out what the majority of Portola Valley would like. The decision must be based on values. Mr. Kelley noted that the Town has received numerous awards for being green, and there's no way you can call plastic grass green except its color. He said you can push all the technical information, and use words like compassionate and claim that artificial turf is beautiful. Everything in nature is not necessarily beautiful, he said. It's natural. "Some oak trees are ugly," he said, "but they're better than artificial trees." The Town should think about artificial turf in terms of who we are.

Andy Browne, Santa Maria Avenue, read over a letter that he sent to the Planning Commission about his concerns with artificial turf at Woodside Priory. Oil is an important component of artificial turf and regardless of how long it lasts, it must be replaced because it has a finite life. Any oil based turf will be an economic burden because it is an environmental burden. Saving water has been cited as a reason for using artificial turf, but both water and oil – which is needed to manufacture artificial turf – are in short supply. Water can be recycled by natural means, but oil can be replaced only on a geological timescale, which is hardly comparable. While a natural field takes fossil fuel for maintenance and fertilizers, he stated that he suspects it takes less than manufacturing and installing artificial turf. Philosophically speaking, it should be considered by an academic institution that the basic purposes of an education might be to prepare us to live in and prosper by having the

smallest possible impact on our fellow man now and into the future. The presence of artificial turf is a message for players and to observers that the world must bend to them rather than they might be a little flexible and bend some to give. There is also a lesson to be learned in the postponement of soccer matches due to a wet field. The Priory should have a living field, with water and perhaps some mud.

Bob Feldman, Grove Drive, said he's a neighbor of the Priory, living in Portola Valley for 24 years, and this issue is very important to him. He said he served on the Portola Valley School Board for four years, and his wife, Kathy, is a current member of the Town's Parks and Recreation Committee. Their middle son attended The Priory from Grade 6 through high school. While academics are most important, Mr. Feldman said, sports are "incredibly important" for kids. He said he can't overstate the importance of high-class athletic facilities for an academic institution, and if he had any criticism of the Priory it would be that it didn't emphasize athletics enough.

On the other hand, Mr. Feldman said, with seven years as a parent with a child attending the Priory, he got a good look at the way Mr. Molak and his staff operate, and with 100% confidence, he said they are a very responsive, responsible, professional group. When they say they will do something, they absolutely will do it. He said the Priory's proposal would improve the quality of the institution and make it all that much better for the students. He said that when his son played basketball with the Priory, four of the five team's starters came from Portola Valley families, but students from other schools also use the Priory's athletic facilities. He said if there's an acceptable way for the Priory to proceed to make the field better and more usable for these kids, there's nothing better to do. He also said that he walks the hills and fields in the area nearly every week, and whether it's artificial turf or grass won't make a bit of difference to his experience. Thus, he said, he favors the proposal, both as a neighbor and a user-consumer. He said that he runs on the track, too, and would be very happy to have a better track. The Priory staff is a very professional, responsive and responsible team and they will do what they say. He said he urges the Planning Commission to make sure it's done correctly and in a way that makes sense, but to move ahead.

Chair Von Feldt asked that speakers try to keep their comments to about three minutes so that everyone has an opportunity to give input.

Annaloy Nickum, Grove Court, said that as a landscape professional in the sustainable landscaping industry, she has a lot of interest in the subject. She said she spent the afternoon looking at the FieldTurf Revolution option, and noted that the artificial turf industry has been trying to up their game. She said that Revolution doesn't use recycled tires, which is good, but the idea that this a maintenance free project is erroneous. She said she downloaded FieldTurf's maintenance guidelines and found some interesting things to share. Doing this research, Ms. Nickum said, she felt a certain irony, because so many municipalities are banning the use of plastic bags, and they're also beginning to take out Styrofoam containers. And now Portola Valley, one of the plastic ban leaders is now proposing to roll out two acres of plastic at the Priory. If you think about how the fields heat up, they have to be cooled down, and they're being replicated throughout the community, how many artificial turf installations would it take before they start raising the local temperature. She looked at their prohibitions. It says, *"Your FieldTurf field should be kept free from food, gum, sunflower seeds, glass, cigarettes, fireworks, driving stakes and any sharp objects that will risk damage to the field and injury to players. Your field should also be kept free from debris, leaves, paper and windblown material. It is imperative that your FieldTurf field be a designated non-smoking area."* Ms. Nickum asked whether this implies that artificial turf is flammable.

Ms. Nickum also said that the FieldTurf website shows at least six different kinds of machines that need to be used to maintain artificial turf: FieldTurf GroomRight, FieldTurf Sweepright, Hydraulic Sweeper, FieldTurf RT Groomer, FieldTurf Drag Brush, FieldTurf GroomAll. In addition, she indicated that the turf needs cleaning, pointing out products such as FieldTurf Scrub to get debris off the field, FieldTurf Static Conditioner to eliminate static on the field (with advice to use a mask when applying it), FieldTurf Gum Remover, a cleaning solvent.

Alluding to some of the points raised by Planning Commissioners, she said this information might be a partial answer to the question about how much maintenance artificial turf requires – it appears to be a lot more than has been indicated. Also, regarding Commissioner McKitterick's comment about what happens when the turf reaches the end of its lifespan; Ms. Nickum said that one of the articles she read indicated that once artificial turf is used, you're stuck with it, because it kills any living organisms in the subsoil and it would take years of bioremediation to correct.

Ms. Nickum said observations have been made about the fertilizers, pesticides and water that grass turf requires. She said there has been significant research in the grass turf industry, producing more drought-tolerant grasses, plus there are state-of-the-art irrigation controllers than can measure and determine exactly how much watering is needed, and there's also the use of organic methods to maintain the fields. She said she knows Portola Valley has used that, because she has a report from several years ago that indicated that the use of compost tea was helping the fields. She also said that natural turf doesn't require use of pesticides or chemical fertilizers. She said the one big issue she hasn't been talked about is the use of recycled water. Nearby communities are already using it for irrigation projects and playing fields. The California State Legislature has adopted goals for water recycling that include providing for at least 1.5 million acre feet of recycled water use by 2020. There are already more than 200 water agencies throughout the state that are actually doing this, some of which are local. A number of studies have deemed it appropriate and safe for use on playing fields and even some communities are treating it so that it can be used as potable water.

She said those are the alternatives she hasn't heard enough about and she would like them investigated before any decision is made to use artificial turf.

SallyAnn Reiss, Golden Oak Drive, said she also wrote a letter to the Planning Commission, and wanted to talk about being green. She recently remodeled a house and was told that she had to use asphalt composite roof shingles instead of the wood ones she wanted. Part of the look and feel of her house was the wood shingles. But she was told about all the great things that would come about if she used composite shingles; one being that they would have a much longer life span – she believes the lifespan is 20 years. They also wanted to install a wooden deck around the outside of their house, and were strongly advised to use a composite material called Trex, which is plastic. Among its benefits, she said, she wouldn't have to blow it off and have it re-sanded or re-sealed every year, there are no splinters in her kid's feet, and it looks nice. Even though the material has changed, the look and the feel is the same, and she said she's very glad they decided to go with the wood alternative, including good financial reasons.

Ms. Reiss asked, "What does it mean to be green?" and "Who are we as a Town?" She said we have to say we are still a rural Town. But we're also a Town that has our eyes wide open, adopting things that balance what is useable and what is green and what just makes sense. This isn't a residential lawn, and this is not a Town field – it's a private school's field. We're not asking taxpayers to pay for it and it gets a lot of use.

David Maahs, Grove Drive, said he's been in his home, located behind Georgia Lane, very close to the Priory, for 12 years, having previously lived in Woodside. He said he works in Half Moon Bay, which faced the same issue – grass or artificial turf – and is home to a lot of environmentalists. He said it was big decision, but Half Moon Bay decided to go with the artificial turf at the high school football and baseball fields. This year, Cuhna Intermediate School converted entirely from grass to artificial turf, he said. Mr. Maahs said that Portola Valley should look at Half Moon Bay's experience as well.

During cross-country season, Mr. Maahs said he sees lots of kids from the Priory running up and down the street, and it would be much safer for the runners to have a nice artificial field track to run on instead – as well as for residents of the Town. It would be safer for the drivers on the residential streets, too. Another thing to think about, Mr. Maahs said, is whether Portola Valley will stay in the 20th century or move toward the 21st century in terms of the availability of new fields for the kids to play on.

Lindsay Bowen, Portola Road, said he lives across from the Priory, and they've always been great neighbors who've shared facilities, from reading rooms for his son and the Cub Scouts, to the baseball and softball fields, basketball court and track. He said the prospect of new facilities is exciting. He said everyone seems to be talking about the environmental impact, but he considers it quite minimal in light of other things that are in the Town – such as roads. Every year we do miles of asphalt, and oil that cars leave on the roads gets washed off, but no one seems concerned about these things. With about 70 people at tonight's meeting, he said, and if it's two miles to drive home, that's 140 miles. At 20 miles per gallon, that's seven gallons of gas we've all used in our green community. I like being green, too, but I'm driving a car. So the facility's going to be approximately 127,000 square feet in area, less than the equivalent of one mile of asphalt road 30 feet wide. Thus, The Priory's proposal is a drop in the bucket of oil use in Portola Valley and in the nation. People get to play more and share exciting times in the community.

George Comstock, Alamosa Road, said he's lived in Portola Valley for more than 30 years. What attracted them to Portola Valley in the first place was the natural environment. Both he and his wife are appalled at the idea of initiating a turn toward fake grass in our community. Someone mentioned the impact on life – it may be favorable on the emotional impacts of kids but results in the killing of all the microbial life under the field. If you look at life in a broader sense, killing all the microbial life beneath this plastic is surely a crime against all life, not just primates. Scientific American wrote recently about the importance of that microbial life in the topsoil to our various systems, and to slaughter it for momentary enjoyment of the kids, I think is teaching them a wrong message.

Mr. Comstock also questioned the \$42,000 cost mentioned earlier, and he said he wonders what The Priory's annual budget is. Ms. Reiss said that she believes that \$42,000 is what the Town spends on the Town fields.

Chair Von Feldt said that during the comment period, audience members should not be speaking unless they have the floor.

Mr. Comstock said it would also be very interesting to know the estimated cost of maintaining the artificial turf versus natural turf and to compare that with the annual budget of the school. If the cost of natural grass maintenance is a substantial percent of the school's budget then it should be given consideration about the relative strength of the net savings from artificial turf versus the natural turf. If it turns out to be a savings of 10% of their budget, then that he has great sympathy for changing to artificial turf, but if it's one-tenth of a percent, then he wouldn't be sympathetic. Mr. Comstock took his final point back to animal life: "Do the squirrels enjoy running across fake grass?"

Virginia Bacon, Golden Oak Drive, acknowledged that grass has some problems as a playing surface, but at the same time it absorbs carbon dioxide and produces oxygen, which is a positive green effect in the community. "Even if it's only two acres," she said, "every little bit helps." As a member of the Sustainability Committee, Ms. Bacon said she couldn't think of anywhere in the General Plan that talks about anything artificial. The focus is always on natural and native conditions. She cited a few sections from the General Plan:

- Section 4206 (Conservation Element): *Public and private efforts cannot be carried out in isolation of each other.* She said a decision such as this one affects everyone in Town and has long-term consequences.
- Section 2300 (Recreation Element): *In the most comprehensive sense, recreation starts within the home and extends through community facilities and on to wider areas.* She said it's important not to think of the Priory's proposal in isolation, but to think of the wholeness of the Town.
- *Recreation areas include parks, athletic fields and the Town Center. Scenic corridors, greenways and open space preserves provide for limited recreation and are addressed in the Open Space Element. Schools and the Town Library are referenced here because of their importance as recreational facilities.* But, Ms. Bacon said, it's important to remember that this is something we're all experiencing, not just a few.
- 2212.10: *To provide for the retention of vegetative forms that contribute to the public safety and help maintain the natural processes and aesthetic qualities of the Town.*
- 2213.3: *Structures and land uses should be subordinate to the dominant natural land forms and vegetation of the planning area.*

Ms. Bacon said we have to think about some of these aspects that are already in the General Plan. We're talking about breathing and they are worried about kids playing on these fields – but what about their children and their children's children, she asked, adding, "This is really is a planetary concern. It's not just here in our backyard but we have to pay attention to it here."

Mark Lockareff, Cervantes Road, said he's a 20-year resident and a long-time member of the Parks and Recreation Committee during the 2000s, where we studied artificial turf quite extensively in terms of baseball fields, soccer fields, etc. They also studied different experiences in neighboring communities. He encouraged talking to members of the city councils in Palo Alto, Menlo Park and Atherton – all extremely green communities,

progressive, high-tech, similar to Portola Valley. Their experience with artificial turf fields over the last 10-plus years has been terrific. Not just from the players' point of view, but from the lack of chemicals leaching into the groundwater and the water savings. Mr. Lockareff said maintenance overall is probably about equal between natural and artificial turf, but the overall usability of the fields has been terrific.

Mr. Lockareff said he's a Sacred Heart parent, but within the last 10 years all three of its main fields – football, soccer and baseball – have all been converted to artificial turf. They've been fantastic experiences, he said, recommending conversations with the director of the athletic program, Frank Rodriguez, about his experience with artificial turf. He said a lot of people are speculating about what artificial turf would do to the community, but the reality is that a lot of experience has been built up over the past 10-plus years locally and 25-plus years overall. The technology continues to advance and the overall negative impact of artificial turf is negligible compared to its benefits. The great technologies can simultaneously preserve what people want here in terms of a green rural community and achieve some of the other benefits that have been discussed. In closing, he again advised reaching out and talking to people with experience, because there is plenty of precedent.

Jim Sansbury, Tagus Court, said he's been a Portola Valley resident for 35 years. He said his son went to Menlo School that very easily switched from natural to artificial turf to make its soccer program viable. He said what struck him the most during his son's time at that school was not necessarily on that field, but all the other high schools they visited and attending all the meetings. Virtually everywhere they went when they weren't playing home games was on artificial turf. These were all educational institutions, so the comment about artificial turf being incompatible with educational institutions doesn't follow.

He said people must ask themselves why all these schools turn to artificial turf. The fundamental reason, he said, is the utility. He said he would love to see a good analysis from step one – petrochemicals and how much they cost and what goes into the manufacturing of turf. He said it's unfortunate, but apparently there's no good fundamental analysis that shows that information. He said it can't be contested that from the utility perspective, the artificial turf field is far better than any grass field. There have been comments about there are better grasses now, and better fertilizers – which is true – but that is to keep the grass field barely working. Don't be deluded into thinking that there's any kind of equality in terms of maintenance, which is another reason all these institutions install artificial turf fields.

Mr. Sansbury said athletic fields should be considered in a category of its own in some ways, for reasons that other have brought up. Mr. Bowen brought up roads and some related calculations. Portola Valley could have roads of natural grass, but has chosen pavement for safety and utility reasons. He said there must be many square miles of impervious surface in Town, including driveways. He said he doesn't understand the apparent fear in some people's minds that approving one artificial field will lead to the whole Town eventually being covered in artificial turf. This is unrealistic.

Craig Hughes, Wayside Road, said he had some specific questions about the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration. While staff and the consultants did well in addressing a lot of the issues, he said, the report may not go far enough in terms of investigating the manufacturing of the artificial turf and the infill materials, disposal and the cost of fertilizers, etc. He said he wasn't concerned in terms of the financial cost and the impacts on Portola Valley because the report covers those well, but information on the "externalities" of those items is missing.

Mr. Hughes said he doesn't think it's fair to compare the water usage on a grass field with an assumption that no water is involved in manufacturing two acres of foot-deep of plastic. TPE is a fairly broad umbrella that covers a lot of different materials, he said, but most of them are styrene copolymers, and to manufacture a styrene involves steam. The greenhouse gas and water usage issues aren't really adequately addressed in the documents at this point, he said. Without more on such externality issues before the report is finalized, he said it would be hard to make a decision about whether the report is adequate under CEQA standards. It would be hard for the ASCC to assess some of the things necessary, he said, but equally, he thinks it would be difficult for the Planning Commission to make that assessment without a more complete review.

Mr. Hughes said that as Ms. Kristiansson pointed out, that work will be difficult for the consultants, too, if there isn't a lot of data available. Still, he said that Portola Valley is different from neighboring communities in that the Town's General Plan has numerous provisions that address environmental requirements and maintaining natural settings that other communities don't. Portola Valley is also more affluent, he said, so perhaps money needs to

be spent to do reviews that haven't been done before. That information is critical to evaluating whether artificial turf is a green solution.

Eric Patzer, Cervantes Road, said he's a 15-year Town resident, and his son in his first year at The Priory. He was struck by the beauty of the campus – a “gorgeous, idyllic” site, he said. Described The Priory as very good stewards of the area, he stated that he their decision to go with artificial turf is functionally reasonable, and he believes the Planning Commission's main decision is what functionally makes the most sense. According to Mr. Patzer, the “natural versus artificial” is a misnomer, because neither is natural, particularly in California. He said that some years ago, a friend pointed out that if one left California and returned in 20 years, all the lawns would be dried up. It's different on the East Coast. Mr. Patzer said he had his yard redone recently, and he does not consider the one area that has grass to be natural. In fact, he said that he and his wife, Janet, have discussed getting rid of the lawn entirely. He said it doesn't contribute to the natural beauty of Portola Valley in any way. So, he said, the question isn't what's natural but what's serviceable.

Jennifer Hammer, Westridge Drive, a 25-year resident, said she'd not been to a meeting before, and thinks the Planning Commission is wonderful. She said both she and her husband are passionate about conservation and environmental consciousness. They use no form of fertilizer. They are active in efforts to restore the San Francisco quail population. She co-chairs the Portola Valley Women's Club, which nearly 300 members, and her husband serves on the board of the San Francisco Zoo, which does a lot on the conservation front throughout California. They struggle with a lot of the same issues, she explained, wanting everything to be natural but sometimes safety considerations led to choosing oil-based products for play equipment, for example. Sometimes, she said, technology is the best answer. Having said all that, Ms. Hammer added that she really hopes the Planning Commission approves the Priory's proposal provided there's no “smoking gun” somewhere. At the end of the day, Ms. Hammer said, these kids are playing on that field. There are some real safety issues with grass fields. This is what we want for our children, and we want them to know that we care about them. In this case, she said, we can say we can have an artificial turf as long as we keep asking those questions.

Jane Wilson, Cresta Vista Lane, said her daughter, an avid soccer player, graduated from the Priory in 2011. She said she supports the Priory in its proposal, and considers the people there responsible.

Father Mark, said he's been at The Priory, about 37 years, watching it grow from a very small all-boys' school to what it is today – a remarkable institution. The sports program is very important to the students. Part of his responsibilities at The Priory has been driving the bus to take them to various games, and he said he's seen many water-logged, muddy fields, which are dangerous and cause injuries. That's why he supports artificial turf.

Andy Dolezalek, Hillbrook Drive, a senior at the Priory who's lived in Portola Valley his entire 18 years. Looking at this issue from a kids' point of view, he said the Priory's fields are supposed to be used, but the current fields scare him because he's afraid of getting hurt. He's been on the football team for two years, he said, and played basketball for four years, hopes to do track, and is always looking for a place to train. He added that the fields are not that great. Going full speed as a wide receiver and cornerback is scary because the surface isn't very solid, with lots of divots that make it really easy to twist an ankle. He said it's is very important to the Priory's students to have a safe field.

Mr. Kelley said that comparing Portola Valley with Menlo Park is ridiculous. One of the things that always amazes him is how little Portola Valley has changed. He's lived here 40 years, he said – since 1972. At that time, there were fewer than 5,000 people, and it's still pretty close to that. This is a unique Town, he said, and a lot of it is attributable to people such as those on the Planning Commission. In terms of safety, he said that his children and grandchildren play on these fields. Stanford plays on dirt, and the San Francisco Giants play on dirt and grass. He said he thinks it's a good thing for the Priory to be able to attract athletes, but they're in Portola Valley, and a large percentage of the student population doesn't come from Town. He said it's a values issue.

Jon Silver, Portola Road, said the notable lack of study that drills down to the environmental costs of artificial turf versus living grass concerns him. It's imperative that the environmental documents provide that kind of information to the extent they have it. He asked staff about the comment period on the environmental documentation. Mr. Vlasic said the decision on whether to extend that date to coincide with the Planning Commission's meeting of February 6, 2013 hasn't been made yet. That original date was established to allow time for receiving comments in the comment period as it exists now, and to be able to prepare responses to

those comments and assembling them into a document that can be considered at that meeting. The reason the matter will go to the ASCC (on January 14, 2013) relates primarily to aesthetics. Mr. Vlasic said that his preference would be to keep the comment period on the Initial Draft/Mitigated Negative Declaration as it is, or at least no later than two weeks before the next Planning Commission meeting on February 6, 2013 meeting so additional comments can be made. If the Planning Commission isn't comfortable approving the documents at the February 6, 2013 meeting, it can ask for further revisions, but the comment period already has been extended and he would like it to stay there so the comments could be considered as a package. He said that the Planning Commission would not approve the documents unless Commissioners are satisfied with them.

While acknowledging that the comment period for the IS/MND was extended past the required 30 days to 45 days, Mr. Silver still took exception to the timing. The comment period opened the day before Thanksgiving (November 21, 2012), he said, and it's quite a voluminous document to try to evaluate over the holidays and then have the comment period close right after New Year's Day. That doesn't make it a public service, he said. It does make sense to close the comment period before the February 6, 2013 Planning Commission meeting, he agreed, but suggested the deadline for comments be moved to a date later in January.

In terms of specific comments regarding the proposed project, Mr. Silver said a playing field is not natural in the sense that it is a field that's been relatively untouched by man. However, grass turf field is more natural than artificial turf. He said he doesn't believe anyone would say the Priory's fields should revert to a natural state; athletics is important to the Priory, and its fields have been a great resource for Portola Valley and surrounding communities. They've been great neighbors, he said, and it's important to have them do what's necessary to support their educational mission. However, it can be done in a more natural way than what they've proposed. He said that one could argue, in certain instances, a multi-story parking garage is a greener choice than paving over a lot of prime agricultural land to create a parking lot – but it would be completely inappropriate in Portola Valley, and antithetical to the Town ethos.

Some people have suggested that Portola Valley follow the example of other communities that have installed artificial turf. Groundwater can be monitored, but the great majority of the materials used in artificial fields haven't been adequately studied. Despite the fact that the Priory is installing a quality field and they are not using recycled tires, to say that it should install artificial turf just because these other communities have "doesn't really cut it." Mr. Silver said he's also concerned that there's been no analysis of the TPE that will be used as infill because the component information is proprietary, as with the blades of plastic grass. How can you study the impact of chemicals that may leach out of those materials into the environment, and into the San Francisquito Creek watershed without knowing the chemical composition of the infill. Also, on page 2 of the draft IS/MND, he said, one of the reasons cited says that it has been reviewed by the Portola Valley Town Council and staff, and found to be correct. He said that he's concerned that even though it may be "normal" in a document such as this, to print something as being true when it is not yet true, for the average person to read that isn't familiar with the government, it can be high deceptive. On page 17, he said, there's reference to some studies and certain types of injuries that are reduced with artificial turf. He asked why the document doesn't cite other studies that don't show the same outcomes. In fact, Mr. Silver said, many studies show worse injuries occurring on artificial turf, as well as incidences of antibiotic-resistant staph infections. On page 64, he said, there's discussion of temperature hazards and the need for mitigation measures. He said that in any case, we can support The Priory's mission, but we should be able to do so in a way that's more natural. He said that Ms. Nickum pointed out that we shouldn't compare "worst-case" grass fields, which do need a lot of fertilizer, to artificial turf – but compare it instead to natural state-of-the-art grasses that conserve water.

Mr. Silver also said that since The Priory's field is highly visible from the Portola Road Corridor, it's worth looking at General Plan Section 1010.1 (Major Community Goals): *To preserve and enhance the natural features and open space of the planning area because they are unusual and valuable assets for the planning area, the Peninsula and the entire Bay Area.* Mr. Silver said, "It doesn't say, 'to preserve enough so that if you don't look too closely, the angle of the sun is just right, you won't notice the difference.'" He said there's a night-and-day difference between the grass field at Woodside Elementary and the artificial field, which looks like a worn-out carpet. In some places, it glares and in others it's dull and doesn't look real. It would be a shame to see that kind of vista along one of Portola Valley's scenic highways.

Matthew Lai, Dean of Residential Life at the Priory and Head Cross-Country Track & Field Coach, said he's been there for eight years, and has coached for over 10 seasons there. He said the desire to have the appearance of

the field as natural as possible to coincide with the Town ethos makes sense to him. He grew up in Kansas, surrounded by lots of nature, and he said he definitely appreciates it. At the same time, he said he understands that on the spectrum of what is more natural than what is not, he said no one is proposing a two-story parking garage, but he also pointed out that the Town Center parking lots are paved with asphalt instead of a decomposed granite (DG) surface. He said we make decisions every day based on the intention of keeping it natural but also looking at what is utilitarian and what is safe. He said that his overriding concern is the kids' safety. The Priory is trying to provide them with an excellent and well-rounded education that includes opportunities for athletic competition and training, and they learn a lot on the fields and the track. The track at this time is dangerous, he said, and athletes warm up very slowly. They won't run fast because it is very uneven, it gets wet and muddy. He said two years ago his best thrower tore some tendons in his ankle warming up, because the surface was uneven after a rain and it hardened up. He was running slowly, but rolled an ankle and missed the rest of the season. He had another student hurt on that surface earlier as well. He said they can't run on the grass, either, because it's waterlogged and potentially even more dangerous than the track itself. Although Mr. Lai said he would like to take as natural a route as possible, he wants to balance that with safety.

Lisa Wan, a member of The Priory's Board of Trustees, said she lives in Woodside and both of her sons attend the Priory. She said as a trustee she sees the Priory's budget, knows what the school has spent on watering, maintenance and replacing grass fields every couple of years. There is not a more affordable solution than artificial turf, she said, and there's nothing more feasible. The Priory has taken care of this land for 55 years, and it could not have been a better steward, and continues to be. She said they may not care more about the land than the people now in Council Chambers, but they do care more than many of the other people in the area. Tom Ford, one of the Town founders, donated the land for Ford Field, she said, so that the kids could get outside and play, and always have fields to play on. He always supported the Priory, she said, and he would have supported this proposal. She said, too, that Stanford, the San Francisco Giants and the Forty-Niners all play on turf.

Judith Murphy, Portola Green Circle, said she's lived there 22 years. She raised two issues. She said the proposed storage shed, about the size of a small house, is located right up against the path we all use. She said it could be moved to the other side and greatly improve the view and make the whole project much less intrusive. She said that the area is one of the remaining open vistas in Town – not a true meadow, but a meadow-like open space – and whatever goes on there will be visible from the street. The vegetation plan needs to be made so that there are openings so there's no sense of a wall of trees along the road. Retain the open vista.

Chair Von Feldt closed the public hearing and brought the matter back to the Planning Commission for discussion. She said that early on, Ms. Kristiansson had requested feedback on the parcel merger, and invited Commissioners to discuss that before delving into the draft IS/MND.

Commissioner McIntosh said he favors the parcel merger.

In terms of process, Commissioner Gilbert asked whether the Planning Commission is supposed to approve the merger separately. Ms. Kristiansson said that approval would be a condition of the use permit amendment, but there would be no vote tonight. Commissioner Gilbert said that since the Priory owns both properties, it's not up to the Planning Commission whether they merge or not. Mr. Vlasic explained. The Priory will prepare its documents and merge the Rutherford/Gambetta parcel with the rest of its property, he said, but the Planning Commission must act to incorporate the merged parcel into the Priory's use permit.

Chair Von Feldt that she supports the parcel merger, as well as the removal of the berm.

Ms. Kristiansson affirmed that she now has sufficient feedback.

Commissioner McKitterick said he's comfortable with making a decision in January based on what we have, and that the IS/MND is complete enough at this point.

Commissioner McIntosh said the matters that particularly interested him – drainage and the potential for chemicals and so on - have been addressed. He said he considered the IS/MND quite thorough.

Commissioner Gilbert agreed that it was thorough, but she has several comments, some related to wording issues, changes in some of the tables, etc., and other bits of information to add.

Mr. Vlasic suggested that the Commission identify the bigger issues or questions tonight, but it might facilitate the discussion if other comments would be appropriate to transmit to staff to forward to the consultants.

In terms of some of the bigger issues, Commissioner Gilbert said there is one that goes throughout the entire IS/MND. In the tables, where determinations are checked off – e.g., less than significant impact, less than significant impact with mitigation – in cases where mitigations are explained, she said the check should be in “less than significant impact with mitigation.” She said that she can send an email indicating where she noted those cases, but it happens in multiple places.

Commissioner Gilbert stated that the Commission needs a better understanding of maintenance. Her concern is that when we learn about the maintenance procedures, particularly the use of disinfectants, issues may arise that need to be addressed in the document. Disposal of the worn turf also needs to be considered and raised in the document, just because of the overall concept of sustainability and some of the other principles in the General Plan.

Expanding on an analogy raised during the public hearing, she added, to say that using artificial turf because you don’t use water and chemicals makes it good gives an incomplete picture. She said that a concrete pad could be installed – which is greener because it wouldn’t need watering and chemicals – but the whole process going into the production of the concrete would have to be taken into account. In the case of the artificial turf, that means taking into account the manufacturing and disposal of the product. Need to balance the pros and cons.

Three areas of safety that Commissioner Gilbert said she’s not certain that the IS/MND addresses are as follows:

Heat: she said people with experience with artificial turf often talk about it being 10 to 20 degrees warmer than natural turf. She asked knowing whether the field would be used in the summer would help ensure having a full understanding of that.

Bacteria: this gets back to the disinfectant. Referring to a memo from the City of Costa Mesa, she noted that it is perhaps outdated (2007), but read a paragraph about sanitation, which drives home the need to make sure there’s not a concern in that regard: *The sanitation of the surface is very important and is a source of concern for field users and those responsible for maintenance. The removal of human bodily fluids such as blood, sweat, spittle, vomit and urine are critical to ensuring a safe surface with a minimal pathogen level. Feces from birds or other animal is also a health concern . . . Gum or other sticky substances . . . Feedback from various agencies also report difficulty in removing sunflower seeds, a popular snack at sporting events.* So clearly, when looking at the overall picture, many issues emerge. You would not leave a carpet in your house for 10 years without cleaning it, she said, so presumably something with the maintenance is necessary to make sure that the field stays safe.

The creek: This site is particularly important, she said, because any runoff does go into the creek. She said she read the documents carefully, and understands the arguments of where during the testing there may not be significant levels of contaminants leaching, or the hope that the retention drainage facility would stop some of the pellets from getting through. But still, she said, she hasn’t seen at what levels fish or other aquatic life would be affected, and whether there would be any cumulative effects. She said the documents cover the creek quite a bit, but she’s not certain that it was covered adequately.

She further added that the reference to Page 2 on the MND makes a comment about the Town Council and staff independently reviewing the documents and in the best independent judgment of the Town of Portola Valley . . . Commissioner Gilbert asked what the Town Council actually did with respect to the document. Ms. Kristiansson explained that the Mitigated Negative Declaration is a draft and contains the language that would be included if the project were approved. The Town Council has not discussed or reviewed the initial study at this time. Staff will clarify the purpose of this document.

Mr. Vlasic said that if Commissioner Gilbert sends an email to staff, staff will ensure that it will eventually go out to the rest of the Commission.

Commissioner McKitterick said good questions have been asked about things we can learn more about, but at the end of the day, the responses aren’t likely to affect his decision-making. He said he’s read a lot about many of

the issues over the years, since the Priory's proposal first surfaced. He said he doesn't expect learning more about injury rates on turf versus dirt, water usage for manufacturing this particular kind of artificial turf versus water use for a particular kind of grass, etc., would ultimately change his decision on this when he votes.

Commissioner McIntosh said Commissioner Gilbert's comments were well thought-out and some more information would be appropriate, but he also agrees with Commissioner McKitterick, that additional information is not likely to change his thoughts on the issue.

Chair Von Feldt said that she may duplicate some of Commissioner Gilbert's points for emphasis. In general, she thanked the Priory for being such a good neighbor. She said she hasn't heard many questions about the track, and the discussion does seem to have narrowed down to the artificial turf concept. Posing her comments/questions, she said her concerns involve:

The concept of sensitive receptors and with heat-related issues. Her experience with her own children as well as numerous letters arriving in the past 48 hours on both sides, and also from other people who have similar issues. She said she's concerned that the recommended mitigations that were on there, such as educating people if it's too hot we don't play - she doesn't see those conditions as ever being followed when playing on other schools' artificial turf fields. She said she knows the Priory has all good intentions. For example with parking issues, every time we practiced there are e-mails sent out about restricting parking to certain areas, but a lot of it's out of their control when it's someone else's team. So she's concerned that it is a bit optimistic to say that people will opt to not play if it's over a certain temperature.

She also knows that a mitigation measure requires that if it's over 85 degrees, they'll water the field. Chair Von Feldt said she's never seen that happen either, and somewhere else in the MND said that actually watering brings the temperature down for only about 20 minutes before it's back up to its normal heat. Both of those mitigations are not adequately addressing that issue.

There's also discussion about no increased car trips or usage, because the use would basically stay the same. But tonight she heard that the field will get more use if it's artificial turf because there's high demand for it.

Also wants to discuss the greenhouse gas calculation, and to emphasize what Commissioner Gilbert said, before talking about the environmental benefits of an artificial turf field we need to have the whole picture.

Right now we're seeing environmental benefits of artificial turf but not the costs in terms of manufacturing. To that effect, a big question concerns FieldTurf's "Take Back" program, which was included as a good mitigation measure. Considering the Sustainability Element in Portola Valley's General Plan, Chair Von Feldt said she'd like more confidence that the Take Back program actually exists; How long has it been in place? Who has used this program? Are the materials just dumped in Georgia, where the factory is, rather than in California?

Chair Von Feldt also wanted to emphasize the importance of more information about maintenance. She said we've seen the wear on the artificial turf at Woodside Elementary School. Noting that the Planning Commission typically does not involve itself in what applicants spend on their projects, but in this case it would be a concern if the Priory was unable to pay for the maintenance artificial turf would need to keep it in the state that the Town expects. Similarly, she said, the Town would want some assurance that the Priory can bear the financial burden of replacing the artificial turf in eight to 10 years.

On the drainage channel, Chair Von Feldt said she'd like to see no plastic, but a more natural swale to allow for more infiltration, because we're trying to minimize the use of plastic and prevent as much runoff as possible out of the creek.

On the screening, Chair Von Feldt said she saw quite a number of references in the Initial Study about the screening along the Portola Road Scenic Corridor as a mitigation measure. She stressed that the Town wants a minimal screen and hedge effect to preserve open views. Want to encourage more open views.

Chair Von Feldt also said she thought it would be in the Priory's best interest to address the percentage of students from Portola Valley.

Summarizing, Chair Von Feldt said that two Commissioners seem satisfied with the IS/MND as it is, and two want more information.

Commissioner McKitterick said he had no objection to asking for more information.

Mr. Vlasic said that staff would want to respond to comments raised tonight, whether or not directly addressed in the documents, to remain consistent with the way most projects are handled.

Chair Von Feldt asked about extending the comment period on the IS/MND. Ms. Kristiansson said it could be pushed back somewhat from January 4, 2013, but at least two weeks would be necessary to be able to consolidate comments and provide responses. It is not necessary to have that consolidation completed by the time the ASCC meets on January 14, 2013, however.

Commissioner McIntosh said he thought the January 4, 2013 date is reasonable. Commissioner Gilbert said that when it comes back on February 6, 2013, if anyone raises anything critical at that point, the Planning Commission wouldn't approve it. Mr. Vlasic said that in any case, no comments that are relevant and have not been raised before will be ignored.

Mr. Vlasic said that based on the comments, by the February 6, 2013 meeting, staff intends to make specific recommendations for Planning Commission action. The public hearing that is continued until that meeting, however, may result in additional input.

Commissioner McKitterick asked how tall the shed is. Mr. Molak said it's an eight foot plate height. Commissioner Gilbert said that if the shed is moved to the other side of the field, it may be more visible. Commissioner McKitterick said he didn't have any direction for staff on the turf question in particular, because he has enough information to satisfy him for decision-making purposes. However, he said he's thought a lot about the question of what Portola Valley stands for. The first place one looks is the General Plan and the ordinances – which contain nothing about turf specifically, but in terms of general issues such as environmental factors, you could argue what's natural both ways. Even the issue about what's environmental and what's natural, 20 years ago there was no question that a grass playing field would have been considered both environmental and natural. In fact, a lawn would have been natural in Portola Valley 20 years ago. But things change, he said, and today even a playing field such as the one at Town Center would necessarily be considered natural or environmental for purposes of our General Plan. If staff has any thoughts about whether the Town's playing fields even meet our General Plan's idea of "natural" as it's used there, would be useful. If there's some planning guidance there, he said that he'd be interested in hearing it.

Mr. Vlasic said that he wanted everyone to take a good look at the General Plan from a broad perspective. It does specifically identify the services and needs to serve the community, including schools, Town Center, a limited amount of commercial uses. All those have elements that won't fall within a natural condition, he said, but they do meet the needs of the community. There's a balance between the fundamental tenets of the General Plan for a community bound by its goals and objectives to protect its native character and residents' needs. It would be very difficult to come up with measure that says grass is natural; in January 2013 there will be debate about what a meadow is. As Ms. Reiss had suggested, Mr. Vlasic said, Portola Valley has gone to synthetic roofs for various reasons; you make the best decisions you can within the context of what you believe the community's needs are. There are good points and value judgments on both sides, he said, and he doesn't think there will be an answer to the question of whether a grass playing field is more natural than artificial turf.

Commissioner Gilbert moved to continue the public hearing to the regular Planning Commission meeting of February 6, 2013. Seconded by Commissioner McKitterick, the motion carried 4-0-0-1.

COMMISSION, STAFF, COMMITTEE REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Commissioner McKitterick attended the Bicycle, Traffic and Pedestrian Committee presentation regarding dedicated bike lanes.

Chair Von Feldt briefly discussed the Blue Oaks project and Mr. Vlasic clarified that the Town Council will review the project at its December 12th hearing.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner McIntosh moved to approve the minutes of the November 7, 2012 Planning Commission meeting, as amended. Seconded by Commissioner McKittrick. The motion carried 3-0-1-1.

ADJOURNMENT [10:35 p.m.]

Alexandra Von Feldt, Chair

Tom Vlasic, Town Planner