

PORTOLA VALLEY SPECIAL JOINT TOWN COUNCIL ~ PLANNING COMMISSION ~ ARCHITECTURAL AND
SITE CONTROL COMMISSION STUDY SESSION/RETREAT, TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY, MAY 18, 2014,
COMMUNITY HALL, TOWN CENTER, 765 PORTOLA ROAD, PORTOLA VALLEY, CA 94028

Present

Town Council	Maryann Moise Derwin Craig Hughes John Richards Jeff Aalfs; Vice Mayor Ann Wengert, Mayor
Planning Commission	Judith Hasko Nate McKitterick Alexandra Von Feldt Nicholas Targ, Vice Chair Denise Gilbert, Chair
ASCC	Danna Breen Jeff Clark David Ross, Vice Chair
Staff	Nick Pegueros, Town Manager Karen Kristiansson, Interim Town Planner
Others	Steve Toben, Former Mayor and Councilmember Tom Vlastic, Town Planning Consultant, Spangle Associates George Mader, Town Planning Consultant, Spangle Associates Ted Sayre, Town Geologist, Cotton Shires and Associates Leigh Prince, Town Attorney, Jorgenson, Siegel, McClure & Flegel, LLP
Absent	Iris Harrell, ASCC Megan Koch, Chair, ASCC

Call to Order and Roll Call [9:00 a.m.]

Mayor Wengert welcomed everyone, led the Pledge of Allegiance and asked Mr. Pegueros to call the roll. She thanked Portola Valley baker Phil Reilly for providing food.

Oral Communications

Karen Tate, Joaquin Road, shared information about a project she considers very important to the community. A member of the Windmill School Board, she said that Windmill School's roots date back to the 1950s, and the school operated on Georgia Lane for many years before moving to the Alpine Hills Tennis and Swimming Club in 1974. Ms. Tate also co-chairs the school's capital campaign to relocate to the property of the former Al's Nursery at 900 Portola Road and advised that the school has reached an agreement to acquire the property from current owners Jeff and Colleen Tate (no relation). The school is awaiting word on the cleanup from San Mateo County before taking title, she said, thanking the Tates for their diligent efforts in ensuring a clean and safe environment on that site.

Ms. Tate said that Karen Wu, daughter of longtime Al's Nursery owner Al Bertschinger, wrote recently to express her delight that Windmill School was finally realizing her dream of turning the nursery of plants into a nursery for children. Ms. Tate said Windmill School also looks forward to open dialogue with all parties who are interested in, affected by and/or are responsible for helping make this happen.

In the context of General Plan goals, she said the location seems ideal for Windmill School, right in the heart of Town, with Village Square and churches nearby and just a short walk to Town Center with all its amenities – the library, the creek and the Redwood Grove. In terms of the General Plan, she said one of the school's goals also is to help young families move into town. General Principles in the Land Use Element (Section 2103) discuss grouping “public and private facilities, such as schools, parks, churches, public buildings, stores and offices which serve all or major portions of the planning area ... in readily accessible centers to the greatest extent permitted by site and location requirements of the individual facilities.”

- (1) Study Session/Retreat: Review Portola Valley land-use planning and discuss the framework for planning decision-making in light of changing community conditions

Welcome, introduction and perspective on planning and land use values as a basis for looking ahead

Steve Toben

Mr. Toben said he entitled his remarks, “The 1964 Consensus: Relic of the Past or Blueprint for the Future?” He said he thinks of the 1964 consensus as the building blocks of the land-use planning put in place by the Town's founders that made their way into the General Plan. He quoted portions with a “bit of a poetic quality” from the Community Goals section that struck him as particularly inspiring:

... to preserve and enhance natural features and open space, because they are unusual and valuable assets for the Peninsula and the entire Bay Area.... to create an overall impression of open space, natural terrain and vegetation, interrupted minimally by the works of people.... to permit minimal lighting so that the presence of development at night is difficult to determine, so that the subtle changes between day and night are easily discernible and so that the stars may be readily seen at night.... to minimize man-made noise so that the prevailing sense tends to be one of quiet except for the sounds of nature.

Other features of the Town that Mr. Toben extracted from the General Plan: Unobtrusive entrances to properties, minimal use of fencing, paths and trails that allow for easy access throughout the Town – and the overarching principle, that the built environment should be subordinated to the natural surroundings.

Mr. Toben said he doubts that many communities anywhere in the U.S. enshrine these values with this level of eloquence and inspiration.

Over the past 50 years, he continued, there has been no fundamental challenge to the 1964 consensus, which also is rarely the case in other communities, even in Woodside, where property owners complained that they weren't being given their due, and property maximum utilization should be performance valued. Despite the fact that Portola Valley property owners find the Town's process more rigorous than they might like, he said that more often than not, people emerge feeling they came out with better projects as a result. Among actions taken during his time on the Council, Mr. Toben included adopting rigorous ordinances to control noise, govern rebuilding and protect riparian corridors – all controversial but with barely any opposition when the time came to vote on them.

How has it been possible for the 1964 consensus to endure? Mr. Toben identified four factors:

1. *The quality of Town leadership.* From the beginning, there's been fundamental support for the principles behind the 1964 consensus among the Town Council, Planning Commission and ASCC, despite the very different personalities, temperaments and points of view. He said that as longtime resident Linda Yates puts it, “At the end of the day, the environment always wins in Portola Valley.”
2. *Town staff.* Mr. Toben said he was pleased to see staff members on hand to be recognized and honored publicly for their contributions for putting the Town's cornerstone principles in place. This includes everyone in Town Hall who's made it their business to show applicants ways to solve problems that help enable their projects to be approved; Mr. Toben called it a critical feature of customer-oriented service.
3. *Zoning and building regulations,* from principles that are non-negotiable to those that have been revised, all leading to the built environment we see today.

4. *High-octane citizen engagement*; exhaustive opportunities for public involvement and community input to engage residents in conversation about what makes our community best.

As a result of all of this, Portola Valley isn't just a collection of beautiful homes but a place where the natural world is an extension of the Town's identity – Windy Hill, the Alpine Scenic Corridor, Corte Madera Creek, the playing fields at Town Center, the trails on Coal Mine ridge. This deep, shared connection to our common assets is an extraordinary accomplishment, Mr. Toben said.

How strong is the 1964 consensus today? He said he's optimistic because citizens recognize Portola Valley's preciousness ever more clearly as the urbanization and globalization exert ever-increasing pressures. Our surroundings serve as a counterbalance to the virtual world that preoccupies so much of our time and attention. He also sees growing sensitivity to the threats to the natural world, both from development and the possibility of natural disaster.

To maintain the 1964 consensus going forward, Mr. Toben believes leadership remains key, and year after year, he said he's humbled at the number of people who are prepared to fill leadership roles. He expects to continue seeing serial entrepreneurs who are between ventures come forward, young retirees. Despite his optimism, Mr. Toben cautioned that factors beneath the surface might tip the 1964 consensus in a different direction. Among these factors, he said, is the perception among some residents that the bodies governing land use in Portola Valley are fracturing, with some taking a strict constructionist view of the General Plan and others who believe the General Plan must flex to maintain community support for its basic building blocks.

He said we can't overlook the fact that the lifestyles of newer residents differ vastly from those of the 1964 generation, or even the 1991 generation, when he moved to Town. We have more absentee property owners, more dual-career households, more nannies, more cultural diversity and far less economic diversity. Portola Valley used to be full of Stanford faculty and U.S. Geological Survey employees; not so any longer, he said.

Noting that solidarity comes from a community of volunteerism, he suggested that those who keep to themselves may doubt the value of the 1964 consensus. What would happen if those who dread the permit approval process join forces with those who want turf fields? Would the complexion of Town Council change over time as more residents question elements of the 1964 consensus?

Mr. Toben stated that land-use decisions profoundly shape the lives of individuals and the character of communities. He recalled his son, disappearing on his mountain bike on the Town trails every Saturday, growing up with extraordinarily refined environmental sensibility due to his connection to the soil, the creek and the trails. Mr. Toben said it's an example he's deeply grateful for when he thinks about his place as a Portola Valley citizen.

He said he misses his every-other-Wednesday meetings with Council colleagues, but said it's hard work and it's troubling to hear residents take sometimes ill-informed and sometimes mean-spirited positions in criticizing them.

Background on planning, review of recent planning issues and how regulations apply to decision making

George Mader

Introducing George Mader, his predecessor as Town Planner, Mr. Vlasic said that Mr. Mader served the community prior to incorporation and continues to influence planners' thinking. Mr. Vlasic also thanked Mr. Toben for his introduction and noted that he sets an example of the kind of leadership, where the expectation from staff, consultants and the community are at a super-high level, demanding that those serving the town, bring their "A game" every time. "He does that," Mr. Vlasic said. "It's hard. It's tough. But it makes everything better."

Mr. Mader, who served as Town Planner from 1965 until 2010 said he owes much to the Town and all the wonderful people he worked with; the quality of the people on the Council, Planning Commission and ASCC have been unparalleled. Providing some background on the underpinnings of Town plans and regulations, he said Portola Valley residents have the good fortune to live in one of the most desirable places in the world, including the climate, the physical setting and convenience of a major metropolitan area nearby are almost without parallel, he said.

The framework that's helped residents take advantage of these qualities has guided the Town since the 1950s, Mr. Mader said, some years prior to incorporation. He said that combined, he, Mr. Vlasic and Ms. Kristiansson have spent about a century working with the Town.

The San Mateo County Master Plan, the first that existed, was created in 1954. Bill Spangle, who later formed Spangle & Associates, was named to head the project. He hired Mr. Mader, who'd just completed requirements for his graduate degree in planning from UC-Berkeley. Mr. Mader explained that the original San Mateo County Master Plan, which covered the 15 cities in the County at the time as well as the unincorporated areas, fundamentally showed high-density development along the margins of San Francisco Bay, along Bayshore Boulevard and El Camino Real, with the western hill area, including Woodside and Portola Valley in the lowest density possible.

Among the "big mistakes" made in devising this plan, Mr. Mader said, was a proposal for an Outer Bayshore Freeway and a demographic projection of coast-side development coming down past Half Moon Bay. (The California Coastal Commission wasn't established until 1972 and didn't become permanent until the California Coastal Act of 1976 was enacted.)

Mr. Mader said the push for Portola Valley incorporation stemmed from objections to developments the County permitted. The County had approved The Sequoias, which was hotly contested at the time, and other projects were awaiting approval. John Francis Neylan, a University of California regent for 28 years, owned 1,500 acres on the western hillsides that he intended to develop.

The Board of Supervisors responded to residents' urging to prepare a detailed plan for Portola Valley based on the San Mateo County Master Plan. Again, Mr. Mader said, Bill Spangle was engaged to head that project. A resident advisory committee, which included Bill Lane and Sam Halstead – who also served on Portola Valley's first Town Council. Mr. Mader said Mr. Halstead was a planner and engineer who urged (according to a statement Mr. Mader attributed to Mr. Lane) "that the specific land uses be open space and single-family residential, with no other developed uses except those that can be shown to serve local residents or serve the open space of the valley." A lot of that is reflected in the goals of the Portola Valley General Plan from which Mr. Toben quoted earlier – preserving the natural environment and seeing it as an asset not just for residents but for the Peninsula and the entire Bay Area. The fact that it's a regional asset is very important, Mr. Mader said; being able to enjoy this open space comes with a responsibility to share it.

Mr. Mader said that on September 21, 2014, the last day of the Town's 50th Anniversary celebration, a panel including Mr. Halstead, Bob Katz, who chaired the Town's first Planning Commission and helped lead the campaign to incorporate, Bill Cotton, Principal at Cotton Shires and Associates, which he founded in 1974, longtime volunteer, current VP of the Friends of the Portola Valley Library and former Mayor and Councilmember Sue Crane, and current Planning Commissioner Von Feldt.

Since the beginning, Mr. Mader said, an important feature of the General Plan has been the relationship between the amount of development and steepness of slope. Limited development on steep slopes not only mitigates against erosion and landslides and enables tree preservation, he pointed out, but minimizes the amount of development people see when they view the hillsides. Ground stability, risk of flooding and proximity to earthquake faults and also serve to restrict density.

Other significant features of the Portola Valley General Plan are the extensive trail system and open-space areas. The only major change to the Plan since its inception, he said, was the addition of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD).

Among significant zoning changes over time have been establishment of exceptions to the standard on one acre as the minimum lot size and creek setbacks. Mr. Mader said the former change came about when Joe Whelan wanted to develop Portola Valley Ranch, but was advised that geology conditions and steep slopes precluded developing the whole property with one-acre sites. Mr. Whelan proposed clustering homes on lots as small as 20,000 square feet. There were objections – "a lot that can't accommodate a horse isn't Portola Valley" – but Mr. Whelan's proposal prevailed.

Since the introduction of design guidelines, Mr. Mader said the Town has been reviewing new developments more intensely than in earlier days.

Neither the San Mateo County Master Plan nor the Portola Valley General Plan had much to say about geology, Mr. Mader said. In the 1960s, he said, Dwight Crowder rode his bicycle from his Portola Valley home to his job at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in Menlo Park. Whenever he mentioned the San Andreas Fault up at a Town Council meeting, eyes would roll back, but he kept bringing it up; he also stopped by Spangle Associates' offices wanting to talk about the Town's geologic problems. Ultimately, people heard what Mr. Crowder had to say, which led to the geological program the Town now has; it was Bill Cotton's firm that developed much of it.

Ted Sayre

Addressing himself to the role geology plays in the Town, Mr. Sayre, which is important with the San Andreas Fault coming right through Town and weak bedrock materials that are prone to deep landslides. Portola Valley has been fortunate to have unusually close collaboration among planners, geologists and decision-makers, resulting in both innovative and effective land-use approaches and planning for land use. He mentioned Resolution 500 and the Land-Use Matrix.

Mr. Sayre said Cotton Shires conducts peer reviews of project geotechnical reports for 15 Bay Area communities, several of which continue to struggle with how to approach landslide constraints, and it's refreshing to work with a community that has tackled those issues and cracked the nut – back in the 1970s. Among the most notable decisions, he said, is to prohibit new housing construction in areas of deep landslides (Pd and Md on the Town's Ground Movement Potential Map). He said this reflects a value decision, that it's preferable to avoid new development in hazardous areas than enter into massive grading repair projects with their associated environmental impacts and reconfiguring the landscape.

Due to the support of the Town Council, Planning Commission and ASCC, Mr. Sayre said if an existing landslide needs repair or a proposed development potentially encroaches on a potentially unstable slope, the local contractors know they will be required to characterize the site's geology, fully identify that potential hazard, and come up with mitigation that addresses the problem completely.

Mr. Sayre said he doubts Portola Valley would have a situation such as the deadly and destructive 300-acre landslide in Oso, Washington, on March 22, 2014, due to the Town's efforts to map dangerous areas and keep development out of their path.

Tom Vlastic

Mr. Vlastic said he wanted to lay out his experiences with the Town from a day-to-day planning perspective – what goes on in the trenches – and his observations looking forward. He said he's a relative youngster, with only 42 years working with the Town. He said he started with Bill Spangle and George Mader, approaching his work with the Town from a technical, idealistic standpoint and finding a community that "wants to do it right." That has manifested itself in planning ethics that are fundamental – and fundamental to the values of the community. The Town's pioneering work in incorporation of geology in planning, as recorded in his firm's 1988 NSF study, has worked its way across the country and beyond, he said.

Pointing out important transitions decade by decade, Mr. Vlastic also indicated how they've played into and reinforced the community's values:

1960s: After incorporation and development of its first General Plan, the Town began to look hard at the geology and adopted its first zoning subdivision and site development ordinances, basically setting the framework for how decision-makers would deal with all land-use decisions. As we reached the end of the 1960s, discussion of the Portola Valley Ranch began.

1970s. Work on The Ranch continued, feeding into the development of Resolution 500 and Land Movement Potential Map, carefully crafted to produce regulations and information. California's adoption of CEQA laws added a layer of formality to the Town's review process, but even before CEQA, the Town had mandated a hard look at the physical constraints and opportunities in every proposed development. Other issues emerging during the 1970s included the Nathhorst Triangle and the question of a restaurant at the Village Square.

1980s: Open-space efforts continued to be fostered as the Town dealt with other projects on the western hillsides, with various proposals for development of portions that are now part of the MROSD Open Space Preserve. The Town elevated the ASCC from an informal organization to one with structure and solid staff support that's now critical to carrying out its mission. Later, the ASCC developed design guidelines and picked up more work on site development permit reviews; it has become "ground zero" not only for project review but for sharing of values. With every project, provisions associated with various zoning regulations are all set forth during ASCC deliberations; heights, setbacks, conformity, etc, but the ASCC also comes to grips with the subjective elements associated with applying the regulations to reflect the values behind them. Staff sets the framework, but the ASCC takes the policy documents and helps mold a project to meet community values. The ASCC has done an incredible job of being really good neighbors and sharing the Town's vision in a constructive way. People often leave the ASCC experience believing they emerged with better projects as a result.

1990s: Blue Oaks came online, with complicated environmental review. Sandy Sloan came on as special counsel and stayed on as Town Attorney until her retirement. The Town continued reviewing design standards, a process begun in the late 1980s, dealing with density of site use, including contentious issues such as ratcheting down permitted floor area, height, impervious surfaces, etc. The 1990s also saw the battle over Nathhorst Triangle. Looking forward, Mr. Vlasic said intense issues will crop up again, but probably not many because there isn't much land left for developments such as Blue Oaks, Portola Valley Ranch and the Hayfields.

2000s: The key planning tasks have been the Town Center (also controversial), master planning for the Priory, Roberts Market's arrival, changes at Alpine Hills, cell towers, sustainability – all in a way involving refinements to the fundamental community values. Good information, solidly prepared and presented clearly to decision-makers, results in good decisions.

Mr. Vlasic said that residents in Portola Valley know what to expect; they don't have to debate geology or sustainability. Most of the architects, designers and engineers who come in know what to expect as well, because staff and decision-makers have been clear and consistent. He said it's important, too, that staff and consultants not only identify issues for consistency with plans and regulations, but they offer possible solutions, giving resident's opportunities to fix problems and to move their projects forward. As the Planning Department goes through its transition – with his retirement, Ms. Kristiansson's new role and a position for Planning Director – Mr. Vlasic said there would be growing pains, a need for continuing mutual support and patience.

He noted that volunteering isn't what it used to be. It isn't just a matter of "What can we do as volunteers to the community?" but also "What can the community do for us?" As Mr. Vlasic sees it, this is a community-values challenge that we must all work on.

He said the ASCC is a critical body in the day-to-day trenches. The Planning Commission and Town Council carry burdens with broader pictures in terms of setting the tone, but day-in, day-out work and education to the community, he said he can't say enough about the good work the people who serve on the ASCC do. Mr. Vlasic said the Planning Department staff hears a lot of criticism of the Planning Commission; when he tries to discern why, he thinks it's because the Planning Commission must make decisions in a very structured way. Every decision regarding conditional use permits (CUPs) and variances requires the Commission to make specific findings, and people tend to feel more "judged" in that process.

Looking ahead in terms of technical requirements, Mr. Vlasic said one of the biggest things the Town needs to come to grips with is reorganization and clarification of the zoning ordinance. It's an incredible document, detailed, but almost unusable in terms of people being able to understand it. The residents' difficulty also adds to the staff's burden.

In summary, Mr. Vlasic said he couldn't be happier with Mr. Toben's presentation, because Portola Valley as a major open space of great natural beauty within a larger urban area really sets the tone that's fundamental to the Town's planning documents. He said he's grateful to have been a part of it.

Mayor Wengert said the people at Spangle Associates and Cotton Shires have been enormous assets to Portola Valley. The transition is proceeding as smoothly as it can, she said, and we're grateful for that as well.

Legal responsibilities, roles in land-use decision-making processes, and the importance of "findings"

Leigh Prince

Ms. Prince said Town officials have many responsibilities, among the most important of which is determining how to develop and maintain the physical configuration in ways that meet present and future needs of Town residents. Considering a range of issues from big-picture visions to fine details of particular structures, planning uses various tools that comprise a framework that Town officials draw upon to manage development and realize the collective vision of the Town's future.

Among those tools, Ms. Prince said, are the General Plan and the Zoning Ordinance:

- The General Plan is a state-required document that must be comprehensive, long-term and up-to-date, and all local land-use decisions must be consistent with it. The General Plan also must contain at least seven mandatory elements, including the Land Use Element, which sets forth guidelines for land occupancy and designates the proposed general distribution and location of land uses. (The General Plan also contains Elements on Open Space, Recreation, Housing, Historic Resources and Circulation.)
- The Zoning Ordinance, which contains the finer details in the framework, generally advises permitted uses within various land use designations, provides for conditional and accessory uses, establishes development standards, building height and setbacks, landscaping and parking. It provides administrative procedures for issuing variances, CUPs, design review, etc.

Within the framework provided by the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, Ms. Prince said decision-making on planning and land use are a shared responsibility among members of the Town Council, which has the ultimate authority, members of the Planning Commission, members of the ASCC and Town staff. Important stakeholders in the process include property owners, project applicants, neighbors and other members of the public. Local officials play a number of roles, Ms. Prince explained, typically:

- Legislative, e.g., adopting broad policies that govern development, such as the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance amendments
- Quasi-judicial, applying policies to specific projects via CUPs
- Enforcement, ensuring that once approved, projects comply with all applicable laws and conditions of approval

As the elected, final decision-making body in the Town, the Town Council considers community input, evaluates staff analyses, reviews recommendations and decisions by advisory bodies, hears appeals, adopts the General Plan and Zoning Ordinances, and makes final decisions on land-use planning and proposals. The Planning Commission, too, considers community input, evaluates staff analyses and takes Town goals and policies into account as it makes decisions and recommendations to the Town Council. Planning Commissions decisions are based on finding of fact, an example of which is making findings for a CUP.

Ms. Prince said Planning Commissioners, appointed by the Mayor, makes decisions on policy matters as well as projects. Quoting Municipal Code Section 2.20.020, which defines the Planning Commission's powers and duties, Ms. Prince read:

The Planning Commission shall have the powers and duties set forth in the Government Code and the general laws of the state, and as set forth in the ordinances of the Council, which shall include the following:

- A. Prepare a master plan for the development of the Town, for recommendation to the Council*
- B. Recommend such ordinances and resolutions to the Council as are necessary to implement the master plan*
- C. Supervise the land use in the Town by conducting necessary public hearings and acting upon applications for zoning amendments, CUPs, variances from the existing ordinances, subdivisions, re-subdivisions, and building permits*
- D. Reappraise, redefine and submit changes, where necessary, in the master plan at regular intervals, not to exceed two years, to the Council*

Also appointed by the Mayor, members of the ASCC also consider staff analyses and public input as well as information in Town bulletins and policies in making their recommendations and decisions. Their conclusions are based on findings of fact that require evaluation of pertinent information and documents such as architectural drawings and landscaping plans. They review applications, site development permits, grading proposals and various matters referred by staff, the Planning Commission and the Town Council, and supervise rulings at the direction of the Planning Commission. Municipal Code Section 2.16.030 sets forth the ASCC's powers and duties, from which Ms. Prince quoted:

... to assist and advise the Planning Commission of the Town, established by the ordinances of the Town, which ordinances and powers and duties may be modified from time to time, and which shall include the following:

- D. Study and make recommendations on architectural design and landscaping of all nonresidential structures and areas in the Town and along all Town roads*
- E. Study and make recommendations on ordinances for grading, signs, private roads, and such other items as the Planning Commission shall direct*

Turning to Town staff and committees roles in the process, Ms. Prince said various committees make recommendations relative to their areas of expertise, while staff members:

- Act as technical staff, identifying relevant local regulations and preparing recommendations
- As authorized by Town officials, organize meetings and hearing on plans and project proposals
- Work with applicants to ensure compliance with community policies and standards as well as state and federal law
- Monitor implementation of compliance with planning policies

The public also plays a key role in the planning process, with their input important to the officials' making findings of fact and reaching ultimate decisions.

Findings are relevant sub-conclusions which expose the analysis of facts, regulations, and policies, and which bridge the analytical gap between raw data and the ultimate decision. In other words, findings are the legal footprints local officials leave to explain how they progressed from the facts through established policies to the decision.

To indicate what a finding might "sound like," Ms. Prince explained that a CUP may be issued if it meets a set of eight findings. For instance, the Planning Commission would have to find that that:

- The proposed use will not adversely affect the abutting property or the permitted use thereof
- The proposed use will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of this title and the General Plan

As members of the Planning Commission evaluate and discuss the application, they would identify reasons that support their judgment that they can or cannot make a particular finding.

The overall role of planning, Ms. Prince said, involves providing a framework for principled decision-making, safeguarding and enhancing the integrity of the administrative process, helping ensure that analysis is orderly and evidence-based, and communicating clearly with parties regarding reviews, options for remedy, and rationale for decisions. Whether it's accomplished in the minutes or in a resolution, she emphasized, the basis for determining findings made and decisions reached must be clear.

Ms. Prince concluded her remarks by quoting Harvard Business School's definition of leadership from Sheryl Sandberg's book, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*:

Leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence.

New challenges facing the Town and where to go in the future

Ann Wengert

At the recent 50th Anniversary tribute to long-time Portola Valley residents held at The Sequoias, Mayor Wengert said they were asked, what's the same in Town now versus what's different? What remains at the core of our community and what is changing that we need to address?

Clearly, the demographics have changed. It's a function of rising property values. We're not yet feeling the most direct impact of this change except in the schools. As Mr. Toben had indicated, we have increased diversity in terms of having people from all over the world living here and recognizing its value; she's heard languages in the last 10 years of the 15 years she's been here. However, we have less diversity at the economic level.

Another significant change involves the complexity of issues, including the water shortage, the fire danger and all of the related emergency-preparedness activities, housing, transportation and even the use of our beloved public spaces and trails.

Portola Valley is becoming much more of a regional recreation center, which presents a big challenge to the community as well.

Change in communication also is occurring at an increasingly fast pace, both in terms of volume and demand for rapid response time.

We also face the challenge of rising to the need to enforce regulations in this environment.

She said there's a ton of good news to focus on – such as the enthusiastic community participation in events related to the Town's 50th Anniversary celebration – but we also have to recognize the macro changes in our environment as well as the specific issues we face.

Jeff Aalfs

Hearing the presentations today reminded him of the reasons for the General Plan, Vice Mayor Aalfs said. It strikes a balance and addresses a tension between use and nature, and a lot of what we do is sighting where the line between the two priorities should lie. It might be considered in the context of property rights versus community values as well, he said.

As Vice Mayor Aalfs sees it, some expectations for land use have risen over the years. As well, new issues and different expectations come up from time to time; examples include the natural-versus-artificial turf case. The line between property rights and core values remains hard to define. He said we may not always agree, but we must understand what's important in making land-use decisions. It's not just a matter, for example, of whether a homeowner can install yard lights, but why they might be necessary.

How do we establish the value of enforcement or an anti-development ruling in the context of the General Plan? How do we explain how rulings enhance our community as well as our property rights and property values? And how do we handle situations in which property owners cross the line? Vice Mayor Aalfs mentioned having recent high-profile violations of our General Plan and some of our ordinances that required action. Another question, he said, regards the goal of enforcement. Correct the infraction? Make sure it doesn't happen again? He said it's useful to extract some value for the community along with the remediation of the violation. Where is the balance between individual or institutional property rights and the potential impact exercising those rights would have on the community as a whole?

Beyond making decisions, Vice Mayor Aalfs continued, we have to think about how to inform the community, so residents understand the appropriateness of a decision that strikes them as either too restrictive or too permissive. That, he said, is where he'd like to start the conversation.

Mayor Wengert suggested beginning with the Planning Commission and the issues and the areas it addresses.

Planning Commission

Chair Gilbert said in preparation for this meeting, she spent time considering Planning Commission decisions over the past couple of years and looking for common factors. Two such factors emerged, she said, the first being the amount of judgment required to interpret the General Plan. Is it at an appropriate level? Too much? Too little? Is discussing and debating words and phrases in the General Plan a healthy process, or does it need more/less definition? The first factor relates to whether the Planning Commission as a body strikes the right balance, Chair Gilbert said.

She said the second factor relates to where each Commissioner stands on the continuum between protecting provisions of the General Plan and protecting private-property rights. With term limits, Commissioners will come and go, the second may tip the scales in one direction or the other. Chair Gilbert said she can think of examples where the facts in two cases were very similar, but the mix of Commissioners had changed from the first decision to the second, and the outcomes were not the same.

Commissioner McKitterick enumerated three "proactive areas" that warrant the Town's attention:

1. Revisiting whether the requirement that we impose on businesses that 50% of their customer base must be from the Town should be more flexible

Commissioner McKitterick said when he moved to Portola Valley 15 years ago, the Town had a pharmacy, video rentals, florists, a coffee shop and other businesses we just don't have anymore.

2. Exploring the feasibility of annexation in our sphere of influence, which relates to
3. Preserving, protecting and enhancing open space

The biggest issue that will face Portola Valley sooner or later, in Commissioner McKitterick's view, is open space. The western hillsides motivated founding this Town, he said, but with much of that land still in private hands, he asked, "Who knows what could happen with that next year, in 10 years? Would we be ready if someone came in with a development plan?"

We need three things: vision, money and planning. Commissioner McKitterick said the Town has had the vision since its founding; keeping the hillsides open and opening up space for public use and preservation. But it will take money to secure the land, the trail easements, the conservation easements, etc. We have the Open Space Acquisition Fund, he said, but we also could turn to entities such as the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST), which has hundreds of millions of dollars, and a large and well-financed land donor – the largest around, in Stanford. Commissioner McKitterick asked, “Do we have the relationship with Stanford that we need?” “Do we have the planning in place if something were proposed for the land along I-280?”

Finally, we need to reach consensus to meet our important goals and get community buy-in, he said. He warned against thinking of people in pigeonholes – “turf,” “Wyndham,” “horse,” “bike,” “young tech” or “green” people – because those people are us and we are those people, he said. Even if people don’t get their way, if they feel the process was fair and transparent, they won’t rise up together to tackle the 1964 Consensus and change the Town’s basic core values. Bottom line? Commissioner McKitterick said he’s very optimistic.

Commissioner Hasko said she’s only been on the Planning Commission for a matter of months, but other experiences lead her to believe that whatever direction we decide to take on important issues, it behooves us perhaps more than ever before to make a concerted effort to communicate, reach out and ensure input. We have to consider demographic changes and the fact that there are a lot of new people in Town.

Vice Chair Targ said he thinks there’s a lot of consensus among Planning Commissioners. Commenting on the shout-out to Ms. Breen for community engagement, he said the most important asset the Town has is its community, sense of volunteerism and the shared values that come with community participation. He pointed out, too, that consistency in decision-making hearkens back to those shared values.

Vice Chair Targ said there are internal inconsistencies among the beautiful words of our General Plan. We have differences of opinion about whether Portola Valley is a regional amenity. Large lots. Affordability. Sustainability. Workarounds such as clustering to minimize spread-out development. Small government, entrenched in the General Plan, with a strong sense of maintaining order. He said sometimes we want all of those things all at the same time, and sometimes we end up with projects that seem to tear them apart.

Back to the point about community engagement, to keep ourselves as a whole community with a shared understanding, we need resilience within the community. It’s not only the beautiful environment, but ultimately it’s more about people with common values, which manifests itself in sharing thoughts, ideas, positions and perspectives as we work together. It also comes out in issues of enforcement, he said, noting that violations may stem from people not understanding community expectations and Town requirements, and the resolution must enable those people to engage in and integrate with the community.

Vice Chair Targ said furthering public engagement will be critical in resolving fractious issues as well.

ASCC

As the ASCC member with the shortest tenure here today, Mr. Ross said he’d defer to his colleagues to speak first, but he started off by referring to the ASCC as “ground zero” for implementing Town planning policies, or an “infantry” – the first line. Past and present, he said he’s been impressed by fellow Commissioners’ non-defensive mindset, he said, noting that they tend to embrace applicants, help them find ways to make their projects part of Portola Valley, and look forward to being excited by their projects.

In terms of recruiting volunteers, including himself, he said he doesn’t know of anyone who’s done a better job than Ms. Breen.

Ms. Breen explained her recruitment process, because she said she’s trying to find great people to serve. To Planning Commissioner McKitterick’s point, she said looks not so much for people who share her values but who seeks thoughtful, deliberate people. She scans committee lists, sits down and talks with people, and asks them if they’ll serve.

As for the 50th Anniversary celebration, the idea is to bring out the Town values through an experiential process for residents, helping them find common ground – such as taking part in a scavenger hunt that takes them to Windy Hill or into the library's Heritage Room to look up some information. She said a lot of difficult things have happened over the past couple of years that left a sense of a fracture, and the hope was to help build community through some shared experiences that tie in to the Town's history.

Turning to ASCC's work, she said the ASCC does a great job looking at each project individually, but the past couple of months have been the toughest in her 12 years of service. She's happy to hear of Planning Commissioners' optimism, she said, but some of the shifts she sees trouble her. She said she feels enguaged, with the ASCC reviewing more applications for gates than ever. From her perspective as a landscape person, landscaping has changed the Town much more than any particular piece of architecture. At this point, she feels the landscape has become almost more important than individual structures. Noting that the streetscape also has changed, she worries about the propensity to hedge and screen, so you can't see the land anymore. In the interests of sustainability, she'd hoped to see people building smaller homes, but with the real estate market getting stronger again, Ms. Breen said the pendulum seems to be swinging back to larger houses.

Mr. Clark shared some good news on the issue of enforcement to help safeguard the Town's values. When he came to the ASCC seven-plus years ago, he said there was no strategy for dealing with the problem of nonconforming lighting on existing properties. What he called a "delightful evolution" has resulted in building a review of existing outdoor lighting into all applications that come to the ASCC, and a standard condition now specifies that nonconforming lighting be removed.

Amazed by the exponential increase in the number of cars on the road, Mr. Ross remembered riding his bike all over Town in the early 1970s and encountering maybe half a dozen cars in a couple of hours. It was very quiet, he said. Now, there are traffic jams. He also sees a shift in the intensity of land use vis-à-vis lot size. When the Town was incorporated, he said, the important landowners, who had the most resources, also were the most important decision-makers. Nowadays, people with considerable personal resources focus on smaller and smaller parcels of land, developing them to the greatest extent zoning allows, seeking more exceptions and variances, and looking for privacy with opaque fences, gates and hedges that, in effect, create a "walled compound within the greater context of this paradise." As a result of this trend, Mr. Ross expects future members of the ASCC to be called upon more and more to pay a lot of attention to relatively smaller projects, and anyone who's involved in reviewing these projects, staff included, will have to apply the more subjective elements of the 1964 Consensus that Mr. Toben spoke about.

However, Mr. Ross added, specific ordinances don't give the staff a lot of regulatory authority. He used night sky and illumination issues as an example. More and more, design emphasis is shifting to homes that are well-lighted from within, but interior lighting can create a jack-o-lantern effect that illuminates the area around the house as well. And staff has no ordinance language to deal with light spill, clerestories and big picture windows. He said that staff needs tools to help ensure carrying out the Town's founding principles, to the extent they're still desired, on smaller projects.

Town Council

Councilmember Richards said the question keeps coming back to how we perpetuate the Town's core values. What we started with in 1964 makes the Town what it is today, he said, but community engagement, participation and volunteerism are challenged by the fact that people are involved with so many different activities.

Still, Councilmember Hughes said a lot of people are engaging with the Town, and we need to continue providing opportunities for engagement. Our very small government is largely volunteer-based, he observed, but we also must be careful not to over-tax that resource. In terms of planning issues, he said the emphasis on the natural environment is a core part of the General Plan as well as our understanding of what the Town wants to be. This takes on even greater importance now that, as Mr. Vlasic mentioned, the supply of land that remains available for development is limited. Accordingly, Councilmember Hughes said, it makes sense to focus on reasonable use of the remaining land – not only the intensity issue, but also the character of the use. Meanwhile, notions of the meanings of "natural," "open space" and "undeveloped" vary; he asked whether the context is 1964, 1864 or today?

Councilmember Derwin said when she was elected to the Council, there was no Town Center – which was a tough one to get through. But in the eight and a half years that have elapsed, she said, a lot of things besides the construction of the Town Center have changed. Sustainability issues came to the fore, including development of a Sustainability Element in the General Plan and passage of a sustainability ordinance. She said the Town has certainly been a leader on this front, not only on the Peninsula but also in California and the nation. She spoke of significant transitions – the retirements of George Mader, Sandy Sloan, the arrival of a new Town Manager. Councilmember Derwin also commented about the foundational work done to instill the values of volunteerism and carry them forward.

But not everything has been positive. Councilmember Derwin admitted being quite scarred by the battles of the past few years, particularly in terms of affordable housing. Smaller battles have involved clear-cutting and the increasing number of gates; she said she can't forget Bill Lane always saying, "We are not a gated community." She said we always have the responsibility to find the fine line between private property rights and community core values to which Vice Mayor Aalfs referred when we apply the General Plan to decisions. And then, she added, explaining those decisions is vital.

Public Comments

Bud Eisberg, Wyndham Drive, said one of the things Portola Valley has been blessed with is consistency in planning. He alluded to something Vice Chair Targ and Commissioner Hasko touched on, relating to how to reach out to residents, not only recent arrivals but people who have lived here for years. He said it took years before he got around to reading the General Plan, noting that when he and his wife proposed a project, she left an ASCC meeting in tears. He said he finally became a "member of the first line of defense," serving on the ASCC, and learned more what the Town is all about. When the bodies, particularly ASCC, do their jobs in the beginning, Mr. Eisberg said it alleviates a lot of the need for enforcement. He also said the design guidelines document is one of the best tools available for contentious projects, particularly for those whose eyes glaze over when they read the General Plan.

Speaking to the important topic of volunteerism, Mr. Eisberg said we've all seen a change and know about difficulties experienced in putting on Blues & Barbecue and the fact that bartenders had to be hired for last year's Volunteer Party. We have to distinguish between the sheer number of volunteers and the number of committees, and the number of volunteers who do the "heavy lifting." He said it's the latter who enable Portola Valley to run with a small government. The one point in Mr. Toben's presentation he differs with, Mr. Eisberg said, concerns recruiting young retirees as volunteers; he's always found the busiest people do most of the work. Mr. Eisberg also said that Mr. Toben's presentation should be required reading for the whole Town.

Virginia Bacon, Golden Oak Drive, a 42-year resident, said she's seen quite a few changes as well. For instance, she finds the Town more bureaucratic, with more requirements. In the past, people volunteered just did things; now they have to jump through hoops to help the Town. She said that unfortunately discourages volunteerism. Even though we're trying all different types of communication, we need to do more. She said she's heard that the Town relies on the PV Forum and feels even a little possessive about it, and at the same time, the Forum was set up as something outside of the Town purview. She suggested something, perhaps on the Town website, that enables interaction within the Town sphere but outside the PV Forum. She said she doesn't know how to accomplish that, but online dialogue might be useful.

As a real estate broker, Ms. Bacon said she's often pointed out that the Town doesn't use its Residential Data Report (RDR) effectively. It's an ordinance with no teeth, with no enforcement, she stated. When someone sells a piece of property in Town, she said, the seller is supposed to give the buyer a document that spells out Town values, what is expected, what kind of community this is – but there's no follow-up. Sellers aren't penalized if they don't give that document to buyers, nor are buyers required to do anything with the document if they receive it. She suggested that any property owner who wants to make a particular improvement that's contrary to design guidelines should be required to demonstrate having read and understood the RDR and the rationale behind the guidelines.

Ms. Bacon said she's also concerned about the horrendous traffic coming into the Portola Valley, largely due to service people being hired to come in related to property redevelopment. She said we have to deal with the traffic issue and the noise and pollution that come with it.

Carter Warr, Willowbrook Drive, said that serving as an ASCC volunteer for 21 years, he's seen the changes and adjustments and demographic shifts. He participated in the last major design standards review in the 1990s, when there was considerable discussion about enforcement. He said he agreed with what Mr. Eisberg said about enforcement, noting that most compliance is voluntary. He said the ASCC has worked hard to develop relationships, comments and guidance in a way that is educational; among his proudest moments as a member of the ASCC, he said, is when someone would approach him in the grocery store after the ASCC reviewed a contentious project to say thanks, because the design turned out better. Every issue that isn't seen that way is divisive, Mr. Warr stated, and isn't consistent with what the Town's founding was about. He puts Portola Valley high on the list of communities that are better due to design guidelines – not because they stop development but because they guide development.

Mr. Warr said he hadn't heard any significant issues brought up today that are real problems, but communications is a challenge. The increasing speed and volume of communication make it worse rather than better; from a planning standpoint, he said that's important not only to acknowledge but to use as a tool. He said he liked Ms. Bacon's idea of people being able to take part in interactive online dialogue without having to come to Town Hall. Mr. Warr also mentioned the challenge the Town will face with a new Planning Director who lacks the cumulative 100 years of Portola Valley planning experience that Mr. Mader, Mr. Vlasic and Ms. Kristiansson have amassed and bring to applicant.

Susan Gold, Pineridge Way, a member of the Trails and Paths Committee who also served on the Planning Commission, said that for her, three things stand out from today's discussion – the importance of:

- Defining what's natural, which is the question behind many of the very contentious issues
- Landscape; she said Ms. Breen hit the nail on the head when she talked about the importance of the landscape, because the views, from the mountainsides to the valley floor, are the landscape
- Consistency – the same rules and regulations for everyone – to facilitate building community in the broadest sense

Wrapup

In conclusion, Mayor Wengert thanked everyone for the tremendous amount of input and commentary, all of which will help officials base their decisions on priorities, facts as they appear, and the evolution of the processes as the change to address changing circumstances. She said some of the discussion is likely to move into direct actions – in communication, in strategy, in planning – and a multi-pronged process.

She said she doesn't foresee major problems, but she does anticipate some subsurface potential issues that we should address. The good news is the apparent consensus among everyone here today that if these things matter, we put in the time and effort to develop the best solutions possible for the community as it exists today and as it will likely change going forward.

Adjournment

Mayor

Town Clerk