

PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING, TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY, JUNE 4, 2014,
SCHOOLHOUSE, TOWN CENTER, 765 PORTOLA ROAD, PORTOLA VALLEY, CA 94028

Chair Gilbert called the Planning Commission regular meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Ms. Kristiansson called the roll.

Present: Commissioners Judith Hasko, Nate McKitterick and Alexandra Von Feldt; Vice Chair Nicholas Targ; Chair Denise Gilbert

Absent: None

Staff Present: Carol Borck, Assistant Planner
Karen Kristiansson, Interim Town Planner
Craig Hughes, Town Council Liaison

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

None.

REGULAR AGENDA

- (1) Public Hearing: Application for Site Development Permit X9H-669 for 128 Escobar Road (Ravi and Anu Khatod)

Ms. Borck noted that a joint preliminary site meeting with the ASCC on the proposed project at 128 Escobar Road was held on April 28, 2014. Planning Commissioners present offered no specific comments, she said, but concerns were raised about the potential impact of the proposed fill adjacent to 18- and 24-inch oak trees on the eastern downhill side of the proposed new residence. It was directed that an arborist evaluate the situation.

In response to the arborist's report, which was included with Ms. Borck's staff report of June 4, 2014, Ms. Borck reported that the grading plan has been modified to pull any fill at least 15 feet away from the trunks of the trees, and tree protection fencing that same distance from the trunks will be required during construction. The grading modification would reduce fill by a total of 170 cubic yards, and total off-haul of dirt would be 675 cubic yards. Overall, Ms. Borck said, there would be 1,230 cubic yards of cut and 1,135 cubic yards of fill. As discussed at the preliminary review, much of the proposed cut would be involved in creating the new driveway and auto court at the garage. Cut in this area would be as deep as six feet. Ms. Borck explained that cut also would be needed for the building pad from the main entry to the garage.

Much of the fill would go around the home's perimeter, smoothing contours and serving as backfill that would allow the home to meet the 34-foot height limit. Ms. Borck said some fill also is needed at the building pad on the downhill side.

All members of the Site Development Committee have reviewed the Site Development Permit plans, she continued, and none raised significant issues. She noted that the property, a 2.5-acre Westridge subdivision parcel, is on septic, and she has been advised that the project team has submitted applications to the County for review. If the Planning Commission moves to approve the project, staff recommends the conditions of approval as noted in the staff report.

In response to Commissioner Von Feldt, Ms. Borck confirmed that the Westridge Architectural Supervising Committee (WASC) had conditionally approved the project. She also said no natural drainages would be altered by the grading plan, explaining that the main natural drainage is further into the property, where the oak woodland slopes downward.

Commissioner Von Feldt also asked:

- Whether similar grading volumes have been approved in Westridge; Ms. Borck said she believes the ones at 25 Larquita Lane and 117 Pinon Drive may have been similar
- Whether there's any historical information as to the amount of grading done there when the existing house was built; there is not.
- That the Conservation Committee be consulted on the sycamore trees in the landscape plan, because even though they are native, in this area they are susceptible to anthracnose; Greg Klein, project architect, said they offered to switch to oak trees instead of sycamores

Commissioner Hasko, noting that the Public Works Director wants to remove existing plantings within the right-of-way (ROW) to ensure proper sight visibility, asked what would be removed. Ms. Borck said smaller, shrubby oaks hang over the curb, and the applicant also intends to work on removing all non-native plantings in the front yard. Mr. Klein said the oleanders would be phased out and replaced with other screening vegetation. Ms. Kristiansson said the sight visibility area is usually adjacent to the driveway, to ensure being able to see in both directions when pulling out.

Commissioner Hasko also asked about the Town Geologist's request for a condition about a supplemental geotechnical evaluation regarding the expansion potential of site soils. Mr. Klein said that the geotechnical engineer had prepared an evaluation, and he believes the Town Geologist's reply indicates wanting to review the plans prior to a building permit being issued.

Following up on the expansive soils, Vice Chair Targ asked what the supplemental report determined. Mr. Klein said that although there was no change regarding the expansive soils from the original report, the report recommended that the structural engineer consider uplift in the design of the foundation for the project. Mr. Klein confirmed Vice Chair Targ's understanding that it's more of a foundational issue than a soils engineering issue.

Chair Gilbert opened the public hearing. With no speakers coming forward, she closed the public hearing.

Vice Chair Targ said the applicants seem to have been responsive to issues raised by neighbors, ASCC and staff, and he sees no reason not to support their application. Commissioner McKitterick said that he, too, is ready to approve it.

For the record, Commissioner Von Feldt said that the proposed amount of grading makes sense for this parcel, because not only are the slopes challenging but the geology makes it such that the applicants have selected one of the few places on the lot that can support development.

Vice Chair Targ moved to approve Site Development Permit X9H-669 with the recommended associated Conditions of Approval 1-6 as noted on page 3 of the staff report. Seconded by Commissioner McKitterick, the motion carried 5-0.

- (2) Public Hearing: Application for Variance X7E-136 for a house addition, 20 Russell Avenue (Ramesh Subramonian)

Vice Chair Targ recused himself, as he owns property within 500 feet of the subject property.

Ms. Kristiansson said this application is for a variance that would allow a 427-square-foot addition to the existing 928-square-foot house at 20 Russell Avenue, a Woodside Highlands parcel encompassing 0.4 acre. Because it was built in 1935, predating Town incorporation and development of zoning standards, much of the existing house and a portion of the addition lie within the required 20-foot front setback, even though the addition is on the rear of the house.

Ms. Kristiansson said the proposed addition complies with all Town standards except for the front setback, and even with the addition, the home would use only 37% of the floor area allowed on that site.

Since the Planning Commission's preliminary review of the project on May 21, 2014:

- Four trees have been added to the plans for the bottom of the property, near Leroy Avenue, to accommodate a neighbor's request for screening; at its May 27, 2014 meeting, the ASCC also recommended that the applicant continue working with the neighbors to develop a mutually agreeable screening plan.
- A gravel parking area has been added north of the house to facilitate turnarounds; the northerly portion of the site accommodates parking for two cars, but is not covered. Because the parking is tied to the number of bedrooms and the bedroom count isn't increasing, the parking need not be covered.

The ASCC recommended approval of the variance request, and, contingent on Planning Commission approval, approved the project with two conditions:

- Approval of adjustments to the landscaping plan by designated ASCC member
- Submission of vegetation protection and construction staging plans; the latter require providing all construction parking and staging onsite or at an approved offsite location to keep it off the Woodside Highlands roads

During its preliminary review, the Planning Commission had requested additional information on the gate, which was provided to the ASCC in the May 22, 2014 staff report. Ms. Kristiansson explained that the ASCC had the authority to require conformity of the gate on the property as part of its architectural review, but instead decided to only recommend that the property owners bring the gate more into conformity with Town standards. Several neighbors, some who favored removing it and others who favored retaining it, weighed in on the issue.

Upon further review and discussions with the Town Attorney, Ms. Kristiansson said the Planning Commission would need to make a finding that any conditions imposed are necessary to ensure that the adjustment authorized by the variance would not constitute a special privilege. In other words, she said, a condition requiring conformity of the gate could only be required if needed to ensure that granting the variance for the addition (in the front setback) would not constitute a special privilege. Put another way, Chair Gilbert said we could only address the gate if we can't make a finding because of the gate. Ms. Kristiansson said, yes, in effect.

In terms of CEQA, Ms. Kristiansson pointed out an error in the staff report; the project is categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 15301(e) of the CEQA Guidelines (not Section 15303(a)).

Commissioner Von Feldt asked whether the gravel parking expansion change in the proposal responds to neighbor concerns. According to architect John Richards, the change was intended to respond to concerns about parking above the gate by making it easier to use the parking area. Property owner Ramesh Subramonian added that the intent is to park down below once this project is complete. The extension will make it easier to turn around and will also be helpful for the owners who would then be able to park closer to their back door.

Commissioner McKitterick said he always thought the standard was nexus, whereas the Town Attorney basically seems to be saying that the gate and parking are off-limits. He asked if his understanding now is correct that it's actually necessary to make a finding of no special privilege. In this case, Ms. Kristiansson said, the difference is that this is not a use permit, but a variance, which is more restrictive. The ordinance says the Planning Commission shall grant a variance if it can make all of a number of findings, one of which relates to conditions. It says, "a variance is subject to such conditions as are necessary to assure that the adjustment authorized will not constitute a grant of special privilege inconsistent with limitations on other properties in the vicinity."

Commissioner McKitterick said if the Town Attorney doesn't think there's a nexus, we don't even have to discuss it. Ms. Kristiansson said that basically the conditions that can be placed on a variance are limited to conditions that are needed to make sure the variance being granted is not a special privilege. Commissioner McKitterick asked whether the Town Attorney feels we can make that finding with regard to anything other than screening and construction itself, because she seemed to conclude the parking and gate weren't even issues. Ms. Kristiansson said the Town Attorney hasn't seen all of the details, but she felt if the Planning Commission can

make a finding like this, that it's necessary to remove the gate in order to ensure that approving the addition isn't giving any special privilege, then the Commission can go ahead and do that.

When Commissioner McKitterick asked whether Ms. Kristiansson thinks there's a nexus here, she said there doesn't appear to be a clear nexus. Having the addition on the back of the house and the gate in the front of the house makes it difficult to see one.

Before opening the public hearing, Chair Gilbert said a lot of letters have been submitted with respect to the gate and parking, but that does not sound like an issue to be considered at this point. She said she's sure the applicant is well aware of the mixed comments from neighbors and will take that into consideration.

Jean Isaacson, Santa Maria Avenue, said the gate has always been there. In terms of encroachments, she said Woodside Highlands was created about 90 years ago, and encroachments are more the rule than the exception. Of the 85 households in that area, she said she'd bet that only 10 don't have some sort of encroachment into the road. The terrain is such that many of the roads planned were never even built, she said, and some of the roads from that time that are no longer on the maps were 30 to 40 feet wide, even a couple at 20 feet. Also, huge oak trees have grown in the ROW, and that's where most of the rock walls are as well – plus fences, retaining walls and garages.

Ms. Isaacson addressed other issues that have been discussed. She said it would be impossible to keep construction vehicles on the property, and she's not aware of anyone else being asked to do that. She said she thinks it's an unfair request. As far as the dangerous curve, where the Subramonians' cars supposedly protrude into the road, she said it's no more an obstruction than other houses on Russell Avenue.

Ralph Townsend, Tynan Way, said he's very familiar with the curve on Russell Way where the Subramonian property is located; it's fairly sharp and loops around on Tynan. He said the Subramonian family has been extremely responsible and done wonders for that piece of property, including creation of a garden off Leroy Avenue, which he considers a strong enhancement to the property. If you consider the overall configuration, Mr. Townsend said it's a joke to consider the gate a problem. He said it wouldn't make an iota of difference on this particular segment in the total network of roads in Woodside Highlands, and he can't see any reason for concern about the gate.

With no other speakers coming forward, Chair Gilbert closed the public hearing and brought the matter back to the Commission for discussion.

Commissioner McKitterick asked what other Commissioners think about the applicants being able to park a single vehicle onsite at the time of construction. Chair Gilbert said the ASCC seems to be taking care of construction parking, and the Commission need address only the variance request. Ms. Kristiansson concurred. The Planning Commission must be careful to avoid making decisions that would make a bad situation worse, and improve parking situations where reasonably possible, including in places such as Wayside Road and the Highlands, Commissioner McKitterick said, but this is not one of those situations. Accordingly, given what's been presented, he said he's ready to approve the variance request.

Commissioner Von Feldt pointed out that the applicants' addition to the parking area improves the situation.

Commissioner Von Feldt moved to find the project categorically exempt from CEQA, pursuant to Section 15301(e) of the CEQA Guidelines. Seconded by Commissioner McKitterick, the motion carried 4-0.

Commissioner Von Feldt moved to approve the variance request, making findings 1-6 as stated in the May 8, 2014 staff report. Seconded by Commissioner McKitterick, the motion carried 4-0.

Vice Chair Targ returned to the dais.

- (3) Public Hearing: Application for Amendment to CUP X7D-167, Professional/Personal Office Uses and Zoning Permits for William Crown and Dr. Sara Gandy, 828 Portola Road (William Crown)

Ms. Kristiansson described this application for an amendment to an existing use permit to allow a wider range of office uses on the property. In addition to the medical/dental and psychiatric care offices which are already permitted, this CUP amendment would allow other business and professional offices and also personal offices.

At the same time, she said the Commission was also considering two specific zoning permits, one for a psychiatric office and one for a personal office. The uses represented by the zoning permit applications would occupy two of the five office spaces in the building at 828 Portola Road, leaving three spaces comprising 150 to 185 square feet each. In addition to the one personal office for which the Planning Commission has an application, she said, one other space could be occupied by a personal office.

Amending a CUP requires making seven findings, and as set forth in the May 29, 2014 staff report, Ms. Kristiansson said it appears these findings can be met. The intensity of the use will likely be less under the current proposal than it was during the previous dental and psychiatric office uses, she added, and the project is categorically exempt from CEQA.

To approve this request, the Planning Commission would need to take the four actions listed in the staff report (page 6). Resolution 2014-2 includes some modifications to the conditions that were approved for the site in 2007, primarily to make reporting requirements less burdensome and to return the zoning permit approval to the Town Planner rather than going through the Planning Commission. In the event of concerns about a particular application, she said the Town Planner would have the option of referring such applications to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Von Feldt asked what initially prompted the Planning Commission to request being apprised of any zoning permits in this district. Ms. Kristiansson said from what she has gathered, there were concerns with uses not meeting the 50% service to the Town requirement, and the Planning Commission wanted to ensure that any new uses coming in would comply. There also was a requirement for reporting every three years on the 50% requirement.

That being said, Commissioner Von Feldt asked whether staff now would have to ascertain that the 50% qualification was being met. Ms. Kristiansson said yes.

Chair Gilbert asked whether there are 26 parking spaces or only 17. The staff report indicates the CUP site plan identifies 26 parking spaces, she noted, but a letter from applicant representative Michael Bialas says there are 11 striped parking spaces and six additional spaces on gravel. Ms. Kristiansson said in either case, given the proposed uses the parking would be sufficient.

Chair Gilbert asked about the personal office intended for use by Mr. Crown in the context of the finding that the uses would service primarily Town residents. Ms. Kristiansson explained that personal offices are exempt from that finding.

Chair Gilbert opened the public hearing.

Louis Ebner, Wyndham Drive, asked how the Town monitors whether 50% or more of Town residents comprise a business's clients or customers. Ms. Kristiansson said when the application is submitted, the applicant is asked for specific information about the percentage of clients who live in Town or its spheres of influence, and after that, applicants are asked to update that information periodically as needed. She said the issue tends to come up only if someone complains. Chair Gilbert said many CUPs are reviewed periodically, and if a business is trending to serve more people from out of Town than within Town, a discussion would go on to try to change the trend. They seek other resolutions first, she added, but ultimately, a CUP could be revoked.

Chair Gilbert closed the public hearing.

Commissioner McKitterick said he hoped the ASCC asked the applicant to change the orange street number, but other Commissioners noted that they liked the sign.

Commissioner Hasko asked about the rationale behind changing the reporting timeframe from three years to five. Commissioner McKitterick said he thought that's part of a general trend that dates back several years. Ms.

Kristiansson said things tend to be fairly stable and don't change quickly, so they started shifting from annual reporting, to three year reporting, and now to five years. As to the burden, she said the permit holder comes in and presents its report. Whether it is reviewed by staff or the Planning Commission depends on the application. Commissioner Von Feldt noted that the sites with the most use, such as the Priory, have more frequent reporting.

Commissioner McKitterick moved to find the project categorically exempt from CEQA, pursuant to Sections 15301 and 15305 of the CEQA Guidelines. Seconded by Commissioner Von Feldt, the motion carried 5-0.

Commissioner McKitterick moved to approve Resolution 2014-2, making the required CUP findings and conditionally granting the requested CUP amendment as attached to the staff report dated May 29, 2014. Seconded by Vice Chair Targ, the motion carried 5-0.

Commissioner McKitterick moved to approve the zoning permit for Dr. Gandy for the uses described in the April 12, 2014 zoning permit application, as clarified in the April 18, 2014 letter to Town Planner Karen Kristiansson. Seconded by Commissioner Von Feldt, the motion carried 5-0.

Commissioner McKitterick moved to approve the zoning permit for Mr. Crown for personal office use as described in the April 14, 2014 zoning permit application. Seconded by Commissioner Von Feldt, the motion carried 5-0.

(4) Continued Study Session: Full Draft of 2014 Housing Element

Chair Gilbert proposed going through the full draft section by section, beginning with the last two sections.

Goals and Policies

Chair Gilbert said that after the Planning Commission initially reviewed this section at its May 7, 2014 meeting, she and Commissioner Hasko worked on trying to incorporate some of the language from the Ad Hoc Affordable Housing Committee Report. Going over their additions, she pointed out Policies 2F, 2G and 3E which were added in particular. Much of the focus was on Policy 2G, which arose from extensive Ad Hoc Affordable Housing Committee discussion centered on process, particularly if the Town were to acquire land or spend a considerable amount on construction. She described the language in Policy 2G as a high-level policy statement, noting that in addition to reviewing the Housing Element, the Town Council also will review a proposed new policy that goes through a process detailing how the Town would go about spending anything above \$500,000 to acquire capital assets (which includes land that might be for affordable housing or buildings) at its special meeting on June 18, 2014. That process would highlight what becomes public at what stage, Chair Gilbert said. Ms. Kristiansson said a postcard will be mailed this week advising residents of the special Town Council meeting and its agenda.

Chair Gilbert invited Commissioner comments on Housing Element goals and policies.

Policy 2F: In response to Commissioner McKitterick, Commissioner Hasko said Policy 2F is meant to reflect input that the community prefers affordable housing to be distributed throughout the community and not clustered in one area. People wanted to see it better integrated into the community. Commissioner McKitterick suggested perhaps using "affordable" rather than "diverse" housing options. Commissioner Von Feldt pointed out that the rationale is unclear, because in some places, we talk about clustering being preferable. Commissioner McKitterick mentioned arterial locations, in some cases, for affiliated housing. Chair Gilbert said that this policy would not eliminate clustering, but distribute affordable housing within a cluster.

Noting that the Town has been unsuccessful in at least two major efforts to concentrate affordable housing, Commissioner Von Feldt asked whether this policy is intended to reflect those learnings, or is it more that culturally we like the idea of having affordable housing integrated. Commissioner Hasko said it's a mix.

As a planner, Commissioner McKitterick said some locations – e.g., the Stanford Wedge – are more amenable than others to multi-family housing, which might include some affordable units. He said he wouldn't think of that as clustering, but it makes planning sense to him. He asked what might constitute concentration – four units? eight units? In an appropriate location, he said he doesn't think of that as concentration. He said he doesn't want

to say “yes” to Policy 2F if it would tie his hands to approve an otherwise appropriate planning decision that includes affordable housing.

Ms. Hasko said it's not intended to say on a project-by-project basis that you must have one here and there, but just not to locate all the projects in one place. More generally, over time you don't want to create one area for a high density of affordable housing and not have it anywhere else. Chair Gilbert suggested altering the wording to avoid getting trapped by the words presented.

Commissioner Von Feldt said the vast majority of our numbers are distributed because the second units are distributed; it's already happening. Vice Chair Targ said he'd prefer striking the last clause, “rather than concentrate it.” He agreed with Commissioner McKitterick's preference for “affordable” rather than “diverse” housing.

Policy 2E: Vice Chair Targ said this policy (“Continue to encourage the provision and availability of affordable housing that can be produced in association with market-rate housing”) was meant to consolidate two previous policies (2C and 2F) that were redundant, but he questioned the last part. He said he doesn't know that we want to limit continuing to encourage the provision of affordable housing to market-rate housing projects, but perhaps encourage it generally, as we do with respect to the creation of second units. It's important to ensure understanding by the people who will evaluate this document that we're not trying to create affordable housing only in association with market-rate housing, because the vast majority of our affordable housing is associated with second units and units at The Sequoias and the Priory. Accordingly, he suggested changing Policy 2E to read either

- “Continue to encourage the provision ~~and availability~~ of affordable housing ~~that can be produced in association with market-rate housing~~” or
- “Continue to encourage the provision ~~and availability~~ of affordable housing that can be produced in association with market-rate housing, and otherwise.”

Commissioner Hasko said she prefers the second option.

Policy 1C: Vice Chair Targ suggested that “Require all housing units in the Town to conform to the principles and standards set forth in the General Plan and Town regulations, particularly that all housing be subservient to the natural environment” should be modified to include the actual verbiage from the General Plan that makes the point about housing being subservient to the natural environment. Subsequent discussion about the use of “subservient” and “subordinate” and “natural surroundings” versus “environment” led him to suggest instead simply changing “particularly” to “including” and striking “natural.” After further discussion about use of “environment” versus “natural environment”, Commissioner McKitterick said he has no objection to the inherent ambiguity of “natural environment” in goals and policies.

Policy 3E: Commissioner Von Feldt noted a similar “subservient to the environment” reference in Policy 3E. Commissioner Hasko said subservience to the environment struck a chord with the Ad Hoc Committee.

Policy 2F: Bud Eisberg, Wyndham Drive, said that when he considers the “clustering” concept, he thinks of it in an environmental context. In other words, clustering homes in The Ranch and Blue Oaks enables preservation of more open space. In the Ad Hoc Affordable Housing Committee, of which he was a member, he said they talked about distributing the responsibility for affordable housing throughout the Town, to different neighborhoods, different subdivisions, etc. He agreed that second units have done that in many cases. He also agreed with using the word “affordable” instead of “diverse” to modify “housing.”

Onnolee Trapp, the Sequoias, said she preferred “diverse” over “affordable” because another thing the Ad Hoc Affordable Housing Committee discussed is the possibility of having residential space on the second floors of commercial buildings. She said “diverse” allows for more possibilities. Commissioner agrees that using both words makes the most sense – “diverse and affordable.”

Policy 2G: Vice Chair Targ said he sees this as a “get more information” type of policy. Chair Gilbert agreed. When Commissioner Von Feldt asked how this policy might be implemented, Ms. Kristiansson said she expects it would be more than public noticing of meetings that pertain to the Housing Element. She said implementation would involve incorporating the policy into implementation of housing programs such as Inclusionary Housing. For instance, developers could be consulted in updating the inclusionary housing program, as well as residents who might have a specific interest, information or expertise. Mr. Eisberg said he likes having a provision that people can point to as encouragement to get engaged.

Programs, Quantified Objectives and Action Plan

Ms. Kristiansson advised that the Quantified Objectives and Action Plan (80, 81) are two portions of the document that the Planning Commission has not yet reviewed. Nor has the Commission reviewed the Introduction, she said, which includes more information about public participation and consistency with other elements of the General Plan.

Section 2481.3: Chair Gilbert drew attention to Affiliated Housing Program 2, second paragraph on Floor Area and Density (page 75). The next to last sentence in that paragraph, which discusses the Stanford Wedge, says, “The Town allows densities to increase up to three times when affordable multi-family housing is to be built.” When Chair Gilbert asked for the source of that information, Ms. Kristiansson said it came from the previous Housing Element, and has always been part of the Affiliated Housing Program. The multiple of three is something the Town determined, she added, explaining that it had not been imposed from the outside. Although the allowance would theoretically apply to the Priory and The Sequoias as well, Ms. Kristiansson pointed out that they differ because they have other uses already in place. Also, she added that the developer would have to demonstrate that there would be no environmental impacts.

Section 2481.5 Occupancy (page 76): Chair Gilbert read, “The Town considers this program (Affiliated Housing) particularly suited to provide housing for senior citizens and rental housing for households with incomes in the very low to low categories.” She said she can understand the specified occupancy for The Sequoias, but not the Priory. Ms. Kristiansson agreed that the wording should be modified appropriately.

Louis Ebner, Wyndham Drive asked whether the Stanford Wedge is irrelevant because Stanford won’t do anything with it. He asked whether anyone has leverage over that property that could assert that it should be have certain kinds of buildings. Chair Gilbert said the Town wouldn’t have any leverage until a proposal is made. Commissioner McKitterick said he doesn’t foresee that in the imminent future, but if and when that time comes, he said the property would be subject to all the other requirements the Town would put on any developer.

Councilmember Hughes said one reason the Stanford Wedge comes up so often is that it’s one of the largest divisible lots in the area.

Mr. Ebner asked whether the state would fault the Town for repeated inclusion of the Stanford Wedge. Ms. Kristiansson said the Housing Element specifically states that we don’t expect any development there during this planning period, and that the timing would be determined by the property owner.

In response to a question from Onnolee Trapp asking what would happen should Stanford opt to build a single mansion on that property, Chair Gilbert said they would have to make to the proposal to the Town, and be subject to normal restrictions. Nothing specifies that it must be multi-family housing.

Introduction

2404: Chair Gilbert quoted from the second sentence, “...the main constraint ... is the extremely high cost of land,” but it doesn’t mention anything about the topography and geographical constraints, such as steep slopes and faults, that are covered elsewhere in the Housing Element. Commissioner McKitterick said she made a good point. The wording could be changed, Ms. Kristiansson said, to “...the main constraints ... are the extremely high cost of land and ...”

Commissioner Hasko commented that the introduction to that sentence, “While there a number of relatively minor constraints,” could be removed. Chair Gilbert suggested changing it to, “While there a number of constraints,” deleting only the “relatively minor.” Commissioners agreed.

Evaluation of the 2009 Element

2413b: Commissioner Von Feldt noted that this section breaks out the projected and permits-issued numbers for second units but not for other housing programs. Ms. Kristiansson said she wanted to put the figures in for the second units because we’re so close. She said she could include the specific numbers for each program in the general summary at the end of that section (2420), but that is not required and she did not think it would be helpful because the 11 units from the Priory and the eight units from Blue Oaks had not been developed, for example.

In terms of total numbers, Chair Gilbert figured we’re down 21 from projected numbers. Ms. Kristiansson double-checked numbers, and said we were supposed to have 58 per the 2009 Housing Element. For moderate-income and below, she said we were short eight (Blue Oaks) in Inclusionary Housing, and 11 (the Priory) for Affiliated Housing, for a total of 39. She said our above-moderate number also is slightly below because the rate of construction slowed during that period, but she does not have that number at hand.

Population, Employment and Housing: Conditions and Trends

2427: Noting that the text indicates the counts in the table probably omit residents of The Sequoias, Chair Gilbert asked if the decline in population in group quarters shown (from 70 people in 2000 to 44 people in 2010) is attributable to inconsistencies in the way people reported being in group quarters rather than a drop in the numbers of people living at the Priory. Ms. Kristiansson said this was likely.

2429b: Chair Gilbert noted that the housing data in this paragraph came from the California Department of Finance, but the next-to-last sentence reads, “Portola Valley does not have a significant number of multi-family units other than the housing at The Sequoias and the Priory.” Because we know those actual numbers for both The Sequoias and the Priory, she suggested including them here. Ms. Kristiansson said the difficulty with that is with definitions – what counts as “group quarters” as opposed to “multi-family housing,” especially with the Priory. Still, she could add something about the numbers of residents at The Sequoias and the Priory. Because that would introduce yet another difference – people versus units – Chair Gilbert decided that it would be best to leave it as it is.

2430a: Chair Gilbert pointed out that the high average asking price for homes in the November 11, 2013 *Almanac*, which was due to the top-of-the-range asking price (\$13.9 million), led to the conclusion, in the last sentence, that “... the average asking prices have gone up ...” And then 2430b indicates that “home prices ... more than quadrupled between 1986 and 2012.” Chair Gilbert said she didn’t know whether it would be more appropriate to use the median rather than the average. Commissioner McKitterick said he’d bet half the houses listed on Trulia are at \$2.5 or more, with the median probably around \$3 million.

Ms. Kristiansson said she’d revise 2430 through 2430b to reflect median than mean prices, assuming she has that data. Chair Gilbert said 2430b is okay as is, because that comes from the table.

Constraints on Housing

2442b: Onnolee Trapp asked whether the Town has ever considered using schools for emergency shelters. Ms. Kristiansson clarified that the Housing Element discussed emergency shelters for homeless people, not for accommodations in natural disasters. Chair Gilbert said it wouldn’t be appropriate for schools, because you can’t have school in session with people living in the gym. Ms. Trapp said the short-term nature of the shelters wasn’t clear in the context.

2464: Commissioner McKitterick wanted to make sure that the construction cost data is updated. He said he’d been under the impression that building a house in Portola Valley was generally higher than elsewhere in the County. He also said 2464a seems to contradict 2464 re the cost to construct a house. He said, too, that \$300 per square foot seems a bit low.

2465: Commissioner McKitterick suggested striking the third sentence: "Given the current economic uncertainties, people may also be less willing to take on a significant new financial commitment."

Sites Suitable for Housing

Exhibit 5 (referenced in 2470g, appears on page 59): Chair Gilbert pointed out that this exhibit shows parcels colored to indicate whether they have or do not have sewer service, but there are numerous areas that aren't colored in. Ms. Kristiansson said that the colored parcels are those that have been annexed to the West Bay Sanitary Sewer District, but not every annexed parcel has a sewer attachment. All of those that appear in white have septic systems and have not been annexed. Ms. Kristiansson said the legend on the exhibit could be clarified.

2473b: Chair Gilbert asked the location of the "...vacant site that could be developed with affiliated multi-family affordable housing under the Town's regulations." Ms. Kristiansson said it's the Stanford Wedge.

Commissioner Von Feldt asked whether there was a point at which the Town really wanted to encourage development to the extent that it would allow densities to increase up to three times when affordable multi-family housing is to be built. Ms. Kristiansson said current policies would allow that. Commissioner Von Feldt said she's concerned thinking about the implications of including such a statement in the Housing Element. Commissioner McKitterick agreed, saying that language should be highlighted for the Town Council when it considers the Housing Element. In response to Vice Chair Targ, Ms. Kristiansson said the main place that language, drawn from when the Affiliated Housing Program was originally designed, occurs is in the Programs, Quantified Objectives and Action Plan section (Affiliated Housing Program, Section 2481.3, second paragraph on Floor Area and Density).

Returning to the issue of constraints (2404), Vice Chair Targ said he's reconsidering the proposal to change the language regarding constraints due to terrain and geology, because 2404 pertains specifically to affordable housing. The issues of steep slopes and earthquake faults apply to housing generally, he said, not just affordable housing. If anything, he said, the physical conditions increase the cost of construction and the price of buildable land. Ms. Kristiansson said the geological issues are addressed primarily in Sites Suitable for Housing. Sections 2462-2464 cover other nongovernmental constraints. Vice Chair Targ said other constraints are the lack of public transportation and employment opportunities. Chair Gilbert said transportation is covered to some extent in Infrastructure and Public Service Constraints (2461).

Ms. Kristiansson said she would revise the draft to reflect tonight's discussion, send a copy to Chair Gilbert and Vice Chair Targ for double-checking, and then submit the revised draft to the Town Council for its June 18, 2014. Chair Gilbert said she would attend the Council meeting. Ms. Kristiansson said after the Council has acted, she also could send the document back to the Planning Commission to share any changes made.

COMMISSION, STAFF, COMMITTEE REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Hasko moved to approve the minutes of the May 21, 2014 Regular Planning Commission meeting, as amended. Seconded by Commissioner Von Feldt, the motion carried 4-0-1 (Gilbert abstained).

ADJOURNMENT [9:23 p.m.]

Denise Gilbert, Chair

Karen Kristiansson, Interim Town Planner