

Chair Chase called the special meeting to order at 8:00 p.m. in the town center Historic School House.

**Roll Call:**

ASCC: Chase, Breen, Gelpi, Schilling, Warr

Town Council Liaison: Merk

Planning Commission Liaison: McIntosh

Town Staff: Deputy Town Planner Vlastic

**Oral Communications**

Oral communications were requested and the following were offered.

**Bill Lane, 880 Westridge Drive**, praised the town for its efforts in addressing earthquake risk and protection from seismic and other geologic hazards, including efforts to ensure a safe town center. He then referenced a new USGS publication on earthquake risk in the San Francisco Bay region and encouraged everyone to obtain and review it. He added that he had delivered a number of copies of the publication to the town for distribution to residents.

**Susan Thomas, 455 Cervantes Road** spoke of the opportunities the town now has for planning its future. She stressed that assumptions that appear to have been the basis for current town center planning efforts should be fully tested and reconsidered in light of what the "community really wants" at the site. She suggested, for example, that community meeting room and classroom needs might be better served by existing buildings and spaces at local schools or vacant spaces in other areas of the town. She stressed the beauty of the town center site and encouraged efforts to keep most of it open. She offered that the exploration of the design effort should be based on "what you need in light of what you have verses all that may be wanted."

**Continued Review -- Architectural Review of site, building, grading, landscaping, and other proposed improvement plans, Portola Valley Town Center Project**

Vlastic presented his November 3, 2005 staff report on the town center project and provided a brief overview of ASCC review to date. He stressed that this special meeting was for the purposes of considering design alternatives for the town center building cluster, mainly building number, placement and massing. He added that at least one subsequent meeting would likely be needed to bring closure on the building design issues including architectural style. He recommended that the ASCC select a date for this meeting first and then proceed to consider the materials and design alternatives provided with the November 4, 2005 memorandum from town center project design team member Susi Marzuola.

ASCC members briefly discussed meeting date options and it was agreed that a special meeting would be held on Monday, December 5, 2005 starting at 8:00 p.m. to, hopefully, complete review of the building cluster and building architecture design review issues. It was also agreed that a subsequent special meeting to address remaining overall site

planning and design issues, would be scheduled after December 5 and that this meeting would likely be held sometime in January 2006.

Project design team members Larry Strain, Jim Goring and Susi Marzuola presented the materials transmitted with the November 4 memorandum from Marzuola, including the following:

- View Analysis of Buildings, Site Plan Diagram
- Four Site Plans of PVTC Building Alternatives -- DD (design development scheme) and Alternatives A, B, C
- Two Floor Plans showing two-story buildings for Alternative B and C (labeled B.1 and C.1)
- PVTC Town Plaza Buildings Alternatives Comparison Matrix
- PVTC Town Plaza Buildings Alternative View Studies Matrix

They reviewed the alternatives using both the town center site model, with building models for the various alternatives, and a power point presentation. The power point presentation included photo simulations of view impacts of the alternatives from various locations within the town center property, essentially as presented on the 11/4/05 "View Studies Matrix." They offered the following comments and clarifications and responses to questions from ASCC members:

- The comments from the October 10 meeting and suggestions from ASCC members did allow the design team to test assumptions and consider building cluster alternatives that appear to open views and solve other design problems, but would require some change in assumptions regarding the allocation of space and use program, particularly for the community hall (CH) and activity room (AR) functions.
- The alternatives with three rather than four buildings do reduce some costs and open options for the town plaza space. The two story building alternatives do create some additional problems and costs in comparison to the one-story designs.
- The photo simulations don't include the 32" lowering of the library building as suggested was possible at the 10/10 ASCC meeting. The library staff would, however, prefer that there not be an internal ramp that would be needed to accommodate the lowering as it takes up precious space and makes maneuvering carts more difficult.
- Models of the alternatives include some different building/roof forms that address some of the height issues expressed at the last ASCC meeting and also begin to address some of the design "familiarity" issues. In response to a question, it was noted that depending on ASCC reactions to the alternatives, different design solutions would need to be explored to ensure that the outdoor areas provide the functions that where being sought with the design development (DD) scheme.
- The two story-building alternatives, particularly the irregularity shaped plan, present some additional structural engineering issues and higher costs, but the overall cost differences might not be significant as there would be fewer buildings.

- A basement presents problems in terms of costs for construction due to ground water conditions. The two story building options would need to include a 1,000 sf basement to accommodate town hall storage needs. In response to a question, it was noted that with the two-story building option that combined the AR spaces with the town hall (TH), the emergency operations center (EOC) would not be in a separate space but likely a shared use with an AR. Since the two-story scheme includes a second story town hall, the EOC would be placed on the lower level, for safety, and require about 700 sf.
- If the town hall and/or CH and ARs were removed from this area, it would result in more open space and less building massing, but the current program is what has been developed with significant community input, including input from the user groups. A radical change in program allocation would require direction from the town council.
- In response to a suggestion that the library be moved to the location proposed for the CH/AR building, the CH to the TH site, and the TH to the library site, it was noted that this scheme would create a new set of access and parking issues and that parking would likely become more visible and impact the options for, and functions of any town plaza space.
- In response to an ASCC question, it was pointed out that a two-story building could be a "green" building, but the bottom floor would present some problems and limitations relative to airflow and capturing of natural light. The building would likely need more artificial lighting and increase air-handling loads.
- In response to a question about the size of the library floor area, it was noted that the library planning study suggested a needed floor area of 8,000 to 9,000 sf, but, the initial design studies included an area of approximately 7,000 sf. This number and the current 6,100 sf design represent design evolutions that stemmed from interaction with the library working team, including library staff members, to reduce the size of the building to address cost, efficiency of space use and impact on the site's building area.
- The project team rated, as objectively as possible, the design alternatives against the various criteria set forth originally with the project and in terms of the concerns expressed at the last ASCC meeting. The conclusions were that Alternative A was the most successful in meeting the criteria.

Public comments were requested, and those presented below offered. (Note, where clarifications were provided by design team members or others, the clarifying comments are shown in *italics*.)

**Richard Merk, Brookside Drive and Council Member**, commented that it is good to have public input and that this should be as open as possible. He, however, expressed concern with input provided as part of the fund raising process and was particularly concerned with the meetings held with the project architects and fund raising group members, apparently after the scheduled ADT meetings.

*Strain* advised that the comments received from the fund raising group were essentially the same as presented at the 10/10 ASCC meeting and would have been addressed in any case as a result of the directions received from the ASCC at the 10/10 meeting.

**Angela Hay, 4570 Alpine Road** expressed concern over the cost differences associated with the various building alternatives suggesting that there would be less cost with fewer buildings. She wondered about risk assessment, and wind impacts through the proposed building cluster area. She also expressed the idea that the library could be permanently located at Corte Madera School.

*Strain advised there is not any "significant" cost savings between the various alternatives. He pointed out that the savings from the two building option, i.e., fewer buildings, would be added back in due to the costs associated with construction of a two-story building. He added that it is also too early to say if there would be any significant maintenance cost differences and that there had not been any wind analyses of the alternatives. He also noted that potential risks and costs for mitigations would increase with an irregularly shaped building, adding that earthquake shaking is more difficult to control "as you go up."*

**Ellen Vernazza, 120 Nathhorst Avenue** suggested that consideration be given to placing the TH functions in a "sunken level" or basement below the library, which could have daylight exposure to a terrace climbing to the town plaza on the south side. She stated such a town hall design could open to a very desirable outdoor space.

*Strain advised that a sunken, buried town hall space of the same size as shown on the alternative plans would cost more than the above ground schemes.*

**Dereck Orme, 208 Canyon Drive**, expressed support for Alternative A, but wondered about the comparison of current town center floor areas verses the proposed plans. He urged caution and stressed that the best plan will be determined based on economics. He added that priorities should be set and a phased program developed with the town hall first and library second. He expressed surprise that it has taken this long to face the seismic risk at the site and cautioned again against "spending money that the town does not have."

**Bernie Bayuk, 198 Paloma Road** offered the following observations:

- "We" should pursue what we want within the limits of what we can afford to pay.
- It would be "dreadful" to have two-story buildings within this complex. It is clearly possible to have one-story buildings that "fit into the landscape."
- Buildings with "odd" rooflines do not belong at this site or as part of the town center.
- Given the site's constraints and open space recreational needs of the community, the administrative offices should not be included in the project. The site should be reserved for "culture and athletics" and not administrative offices.
- Because of conflict with the school activities, a permanent library location at Corte Madera School is unacceptable. Traffic conflicts alone should rule this idea out.
- The existing and proposed square footages for the program spaces should be clearly defined and available for comparison at future meetings.

**Bill Lane, 880 Westridge Drive** stated appreciation for Mr. Bayuk's comments and how far he has come in understanding the town's situation and needs since the start of this project. He offered, however, that the town center is the correct location for the town's administrative offices as the offices truly represent the character of the community. He stressed the following:

- The town offices are the heart of interaction in the community and create a sense of place for Portola Valley. The offices and what they contain define the culture of the town particularly to new people coming into the community. The town offices are often the first place people find out about the culture of Portola Valley and they set the framework of the community perspective.
- Community meetings need to be held close to the town offices and at the place that most represents the place of the town. This is the town center.
- The factors that are so important to understanding Portola Valley, including the local geology and the land use regulations and provisions that have contributed to the community character are all represented in what people see and learn in the town's offices.
- The town offices and corporation yard are essential places that people will need to come to in an emergency. They should be at the center of the community where they are easily identified and located at the time of any emergency.
- The building complex should be one-story and as compact as possible. There should be space for at least 200 persons in the CH facility. Alternative A appears to address most of the issues that were articulated previously.

**Brooke Fabricant, Friends of the Portola Valley Library** noted the following:

- In most cultures, the government function is the most critical aspect of the culture and government activities belong at the town center.
- In this case, the real problem is the need to accommodate "a 15 acre program on an 11 acre site."
- Favor the one-story plan alternatives, either DD or A.
- "No one" wants a two-story building here.

**Yvonne Tryce, 90 Joaquin Road:**

- As a teacher of nature study classes at the town center, she noted it was useful to have town hall and the corporation yard nearby.
- Support one-story building options, but concerned with the reduction in AR program. The usefulness of the spaces needs to be protected.

**Sue Chaput, Alamos Road** offered the following:

- Need to proceed with caution and care. The town should not make mistakes in terms of building locations and risks associated with the faults. The preferred design should minimize the number of buildings at the site and town hall should be moved to an alternative location like Ford Field.
- Los Altos Hills town center is a good example with space for the town hall, library and historic barn.
- Consideration should be given to replicating the old school building in its original location on the Portola Road side of the site. Old 1894 photos are available of the original school that was demolished. Further, it is hoped that the Chilean Woodchoppers house can be moved to the town center property.
- A space that can easily hold 60-90 people on a regular basis is needed. There should be a "Bridge" pavilion to combine the TH, CH and AR spaces and this has been suggested to the project architects.
- It is suggested that the driveway back to building cluster area be eliminated. People can park along the frontage or near the maintenance building and walk to the back building area. This would open the area for better planning of the locations for the buildings.

**Deke Hunter, 5 Cherokee Court**, expressed general support for Alternative A noting it provides for greater flexibility in terms of design options, building costs, phasing, etc.

**Chip McIntosh, 20 Dos Loma Vista** stated general support for Alternative A, noting the more positive indoor and outdoor relationships it affords, including light penetration and circulation.

**Joan Matteucci, 135 Fawn Lane** spoke in favor of Alternative A, but also stated support for considering opening of Sausal Creek through the site. She expressed concern with building close to the San Andreas Fault and wondered about opportunities for placing some of the building program on the Portola Road side of the site.

*Vlasic briefly reviewed the history of geologic investigations at the town center site, and explained that work had been completed to clear the proposed building site in terms of safety from potential fault rupture. He clarified that this work had focused on the westernmost, Woodside trace in the fault system and that the risk at the proposed building site was from ground shaking, similar to that at many other locations in town, even though they may be farther from the fault trace. He added that similar investigations had not been completed for the easternmost Trancos Trace and, therefore, the Portola Road side of the site had not been cleared for building. He noted that considerable work and cost would be needed to further clarify the constraints and any opportunities associated with the Trancos trace and that even with such efforts there would be no guarantee that additional potential building area would be defined.*

**Kevin Westbrook, 1255 Westridge Drive** indicated support for Alternative A, but expressed concern over increased impervious surface area and questioned potential impacts of added runoff.

*Strain explained that the amount of roof area and other impervious surfaces were less with the proposed plan than the current improvements. He added that the drainage analysis in the project's environmental documents confirm that runoff impacts would not be significant.*

**Mary Hufty, 25 Mapache Drive** asked that there be a complete understanding of the impacts of the project on the opportunities to restore Sausal Creek before "the project moves ahead." She added that she believes grant funds are available for such restoration efforts. She also stated a general preference for Alternative A.

**Ed Davis, Mayor**, responded to Ms. Hufty's comments and noted that evaluation of the Sausal Creek matter would take considerable time and expense and the desire at this point is to move ahead with the project as addressed in the certified EIR. He added that the project does not preclude opening of a creek channel through the property, but that this should be reviewed as a separate matter. He also noted that it appears uncertain as to the actual "natural" alignment of Sausal Creek through the area or even across the town center property.

**Linda Yates, 170 Mapache Drive** expressed concern with the alternatives that included the CH/AR structure in a critical view area. She expressed concern over fire access and suggested that a better alternative would be to reconfigure the program so that all of the building spaces are at the northwestern corner of the building cluster site. She clarified that this would mean moving the floor area allocated for the CH/AR room to the "joint" between the library and TH buildings.

**Mary Enright, 1365 Westridge Drive** expressed concern with the all of the alternatives due to the loss of views from the Town plaza area. She also wondered about the ability to change the driveway "turnaround" adjacent to entries to the library and TH buildings, and reduce parking spaces to open the northwestern corner to more building opportunities. She also commented on the public review process and wanted maximum opportunity for public input.

*Goring advised that the "turnaround" was required to satisfy fire safety access requirements and that the scope of onsite parking needed to be preserved to conform to the provisions and mitigation measures of the certified EIR. It was also noted that the parking and access provisions were needed to meet ADA requirements.*

**Karen Fischer, Friends of the Portola Valley Library**, stated that based on past surveys of town residents, over 98% of the respondents want the library at the town center.

**Virginia Bacon, 205 Golden Oak Drive** spoke in favor of the single story alternatives and also raised concern over the steps in the plaza area. She worried about access to the CH for caterers and their vehicles, and the need for adequate spaces for food preparation. She also wanted to be sure that needed street furniture, benches, etc., would be provided in the plaza area.

*Strain advised that the design team was still working on the details for the outside areas and how these would relate to the interior spaces. He added that the designs did however include food preparation areas and provisions for catering van access to them.*

Following public input, ASCC members offered the following comments and reactions to the design alternatives:

**Schilling:**

- The TH must be part of the building complex, as it sets the tone for the town center in terms of town expectations and the sense of place.
- For any preferred design alternative, the costs for daily and long term maintenance need to be considered and kept as low as possible.
- The roof forms need to be simplified as suggested in some of the "model" building examples.
- The single story alternatives are favored because of better scale. Further, due to costs, there should be no basements or elevators in the project.
- The design should not be dictated by the views through the building areas. The current town center buildings block a number of views. At the same time, with Alternative A or DD, there will still be significant views through the site and in the building cluster area.
- Favor either the original DD layout or Alternative A if some program reduction is determined possible.
- The CH/AR building needs to be in an "L" or "U" configuration to keep the roof height down.

**Breen:**

- The additional input is appreciated and helpful in evaluating the issues considered at the last meeting.
- All aspects of the final design need to be carefully considered to ensure the project costs are controlled.
- Alternative DD almost meets all of the design requirements, and with some height reductions would appear to offer a project that would be "subordinate to the adjacent hillsides."
- Alternative A appears to work best in terms of the design objectives, but there appears to still be room for reduction of building size and massing.
- Alternative C is compelling because of its more opens views. The scale of the two-story building is, however, too massive. The opportunities for the town to demonstrate a lead in environmental design are better achieved with the one-story schemes.
- TH needs to be on the ground floor. It is integral to the project and the importance of its place must be respected.



**Warr:**

- The work of the architects is greatly appreciated. Even though this may seem like a "step backward" the consideration of the building siting alternatives and eventually the building forms and architecture will be important in moving the project ahead in the most appropriate way for the overall community.
- The two building alternative may open views, but will result in the loss of a sense of place in the plaza.
- Alternative A preserves and enhances the plaza area and provides opportunities for reducing the scale and visual impact of the CH/AR building. It presents the best opportunities for the for final building cluster area site planning.
- Agree with Schilling that the views through the area will still be there.
- The CH/AR building still needs work and consideration should be given to reconfiguring the floor plan so that the roof can be lower.
- The more "familiar" building and roof forms suggested by some of the building models need to be pursued as they better reflect the rural history of the community and help control the building scale and mass.
- Given all of the factors that influence building and site costs, there probably are not huge differences in the costs of the various alternatives. Further, with proper design and construction, the differences in seismic risk associated with the options may not be significant.
- Although Alternative A is preferred, it is recommended that at least 3,000 sf be the target for the open CH space to provide for a gathering of at least 200 people at a suggested ratio of 15 sf per person.

**Gelpi:**

- The new data from the architects is very helpful and, particularly, the photomontage benefits the appreciation of the potential building massing and view impacts.
- The two-story buildings are not appropriate for the setting and TH should not be on a second floor.
- Consideration should be given to locating the AR function elsewhere, perhaps at an off site school. This would allow the CH function to have a 3,000 sf area and the building cluster to better fit the site. Further, project economies can be achieved with less building program at the site.
- The single story designs would likely be the safest in terms of risk and have lower costs to achieve safety from risk.

- The architectural forms need to be simplified from those presented with the original DD scheme. This should also help control costs.

#### **Chase:**

- The materials and presentations from the architects are very helpful and greatly appreciated as are the comments offered by the public.
- Bill Lane's comments about the importance of the TH space and function, and it's role as essentially the "front door" to the community are important and need to be kept in mind. TH is where people who have not been here before most likely get their first impressions of the culture of the town.
- The two story designs with the need for basements and elevators are not appropriate. The single story designs enhance the ease of access and safety, and offer the best opportunities for ensuring that the buildings will be subordinate to the natural beauty of the site and it's setting. The single story designs also offer the best opportunities for design of quality out door spaces.
- The single story designs create more opportunities for natural light to penetrate into the buildings, therefore enhancing the qualities of the indoor spaces.
- The DD alternative appears to provide for the desired "richness" of the outdoor spaces. While the scope of building mass and view preservation are likely better with Alternative A, more work is needed to achieve the "richness" of the outdoor spaces and indoor-outdoor relationships that appear to be part of DD.

ASCC members discussed their reactions to the alternatives and agreed that overall, Alternative A was preferred, with the qualifications expressed above. Members asked that the project architects develop the scheme further, with particularly focus on the architectural forms and exterior materials and, also, the outdoor spaces and indoor-outdoor relationships. Members also and asked the architects to consider the CH size issue identified by Warr, i.e., to provide for a CH with a minimum assembly space for 200 persons.

ASCC members acknowledged that these requests needed to be shared with the town council for concurrence and asked that staff prepare a memo on behalf of ASCC Chair to this effect that could be forwarded to the town council for consideration as soon as possible. Vlasic advised that this would be done in coordination with Chair Chase and, as may be needed, clarification of potential program impacts, from the project design team.

After offering the above comments and directions, town center project review was continued to the December 5 special meeting. Chase again thanked the design term architects for their input and the public for the comments presented at the meeting.

#### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:07 p.m.

T. Vlastic