

PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING, TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY, MARCH 4, 2015,
SCHOOLHOUSE, TOWN CENTER, 765 PORTOLA ROAD, PORTOLA VALLEY, CA 94028

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

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

Absent: Vice Chair Judith Hasko

Staff Present: Debbie Pedro, Town Planner
Karen Kristiansson, Deputy Town Planner

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

None.

REGULAR AGENDA

- (1) Presentation: Jane Mark, MROSD Planning Manager, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's Proposal of Priority Conservation Area (PCA) within Portola Valley and its Sphere of Influence.

Commissioner Von Feldt recused herself from discussion of this item due to her organization's relationship with MROSD.

Town Planner Pedro introduced the proposal by Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD) to nominate lands owned by MROSD to be designated as Priority Conservation Areas (PCA).

Jane Marks said MROSD has recently completed a vision plan to support their mission of preserving open space lands. Ms. Mark explained that PCAs are intended to be regionally significant open space areas with broad consensus for long-term protection, such as those designated in the Town's General Plan. She said that PCAs do not impose any additional land use regulation or change existing land use zones, do not restrict future development or property rights, and do not require any additional approvals by ABAG or the nominating agency.

Ms. Marks said that PCAs are intended to attract future funding opportunities, including grants, to support long term conservation efforts. She said that in 2007 approximately 101 PCAs were nominated and approved by ABAG. She said that the proposed PCAs in and around the Town of Portola Valley includes land owned by MROSD in the Windy Hill, Coal Creek, and Los Trancos Open Space Preserves. Ms. Mark said these proposed PCAs are consistent with the Town's General Plan Open Space Element.

Chair Targ asked for clarification regarding the proposed resolution which refers to land "owned and/or managed" by Midpen. Ms. Mark said the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) has an approximately 70-acre conservation easement at the Hawthorne property at Windy Hill; however, the property is all owned by Midpen. Commissioner Gilbert suggested the reference would be more accurately described as "owned and managed" instead of "owned and/or managed."

Commissioner Gilbert asked if grants through this program could be used to fund programs that were on the Midpen priority list for Measure AA, or if it was restricted to different items that were outside of the Measure AA priority list. Ms. Mark said those funds could be used for items on the Measure AA priority list. Commissioner Gilbert asked if the trail work on the Hawthorne property, which was designated low in priority, could be done earlier through this program. Ms. Mark said that decision would be made by MROSD board of directors.

Commissioner McKitterick asked whether the PCA designations would limit public access to the open space preserves. Ms. Mark said it would not and is actually intended to promote public access.

Chair Targ asked Ms. Mark to speak to the designations of Regional Recreation and Natural Landscapes. Ms. Mark said the four categories were adopted by ABAG. They are:

1. Natural Landscapes – Areas critical to the functioning of wildlife and plant habitats, aquatic ecosystems and the region's water supply and quality. Ms. Mark said this also promotes climate resiliency and recreation. Examples of these types of open space areas would be critical habitat areas, wetlands targeted for restoration, and watershed protection. She cited as an example the Napa Valley River Corridor, which Napa County is nominating as a natural landscape designation for the PCA.
2. Agricultural Lands – Farmland, grazing land and timberland that support the region's agricultural economy and provide additional benefits such as habitat protection and carbon sequestration. Ms. Mark said that the 2014 PCA program recognizes that working lands, farms, and agricultural lands have incredible benefits to the vitality of the region. This is a special recognition that there are open space areas that can also be agricultural lands, and the intention of this designation is to benefit agricultural resources. If there are grant opportunities available to support new infrastructure to support agricultural uses, this designation would benefit that type of operation. She said that Sonoma County nominated the coastal agricultural area, and Napa County nominated lowlands, agricultural lands, and watersheds.
3. Urban Greening – Existing and potential green spaces in cities that increase habitat connectivity, improve community health, capture carbon emissions, and address storm water. Ms. Mark said this is a new category, which may include, for example, creek corridors, storm water, and greenways. As an example, she said urban forestry areas in cities could be part of this category, along with riparian corridors within a city, community gardens, and local edible park sites. She said that the City of Hercules nominated the Hercules Waterfront in this category.
4. Regional Recreation – Existing and potential regional parks, trails, and other publicly accessible recreation facilities. Ms. Mark said this designation is to promote regional and local trails networks, including the San Francisco Bay Trail and the Bay Area Ridge Trail.

Commissioner McKitterick asked if agencies are using the PCA designations now as part of their grant funding requirement. Ms. Mark said there was a \$10 million grant program based on PCAs in 2009-2010, and there was a lot of transportation related projects, trail projects, and wetlands restoration projects that were tying back to PCAs. She said there is a growing recognition that these are good opportunities to use these as criteria for evaluating grant applications.

Councilmember Richards asked whether there was a minimum size requirement. Ms. Mark said there is no minimum or maximum size limitation regarding the PCA, but that the goal was to promote continuous connected open space areas.

Commissioner Gilbert asked if the Russian Ridge and Montebello Open Space Preserves have already been designated as PCAs. Ms. Mark said that Russian Ridge and Montebello, located in Santa Clara County, will be nominated as part of this process.

Chair Targ asked for clarification regarding the differences of the two maps in the staff report that were developed and why one was superseded. Ms. Mark said the first map, which showed areas that would be worthy of open space protection based on science, was presented to the Town originally. After working with Town staff, they decided it would be better to limit the PCAs to only the lands that MROSD owned, which resulted in the second map. Chair Targ asked if MROSD would be an appropriate agency to nominate a private property within the Town of Portola Valley. Ms. Mark said she thought it would be more appropriate for the Town to nominate private lands rather than MROSD.

Commissioner Gilbert asked staff if the General Plan specifically mentioned anything contradicting the PCAs with regard to Windy Hill. Ms. Pedro said that the proposed PCA designations for Windy Hill, Coal Creek, and Los Trancos Open Space Preserves were consistent with the Town's General Plan, which calls for the preservation of these lands as open space.

Chair Targ moved to recommend Town Council approval of the Resolution of the Town Council of the Town of Portola Valley Supporting Priority Conservation Area Designations within the Town and its Sphere of Influence with the edit specified by Commissioner Gilbert. Seconded by Commissioner Gilbert, the motion carried 3-0.

Commissioner Von Feldt returned to the dais.

COMMISSION, STAFF, COMMITTEE REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Commissioner McKitterick reported that he was invited by members of Open the Watershed to a meeting about opening the San Francisco watershed up to public access. The San Francisco PUC is proposing to open trails to access by permit. A public hearing with the Board of Supervisors has been set for April 2. He said that over the next decade, there may be open public access to multiple locations in the Crystal Springs Watershed and into the coast, in coordination with other public agencies such as MROSD, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and San Mateo Parks. Commissioner McKitterick will share with the Commission a report he is preparing to the Mayor to see if the Town Council wants to get involved in this prior to the public hearing.

Commissioner Von Feldt added that people would like access to the trails above Crystal Springs, but there would be some concern of impacts on habitat and wildlife. Commissioner McKitterick said that it is not pristine land anyway, with paved roads, gravel roads, and trails. At this point, it was not known if there would be enough change from opening the trails to require environmental reviews.

Ms. Kristiansson said the Portola Road Corridor Plan is going to Town Council March 11 and asked if one Planning Commission member might be available to attend the meeting. Commissioner Gilbert said she could go, and Commissioner Von Feldt noted that she would also be there as she had an item on the agenda.

Chair Targ recognized Commission Gilbert for her leadership over the past year as the chair of the Planning Commission.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: January 21, 2015

Commissioner McKitterick moved to approve the minutes of the January 21, 2015, meeting, as amended. Seconded by Commissioner Gilbert, the motion carried 4-0.

ADJOURNMENT [8:20 p.m.]

Nicholas Targ, Chair

Debbie Pedro, Town Planner