

PLANNING COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING, TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY, JANUARY 6, 2016,
SCHOOLHOUSE, TOWN CENTER, 765 PORTOLA ROAD, PORTOLA VALLEY, CA 94028

Chair Targ called the Planning Commission regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Commissioners Gilbert, McKitterick and Von Feldt; Vice Chair Hasko; Chair Targ

Absent: None.

Staff Present: Debbie Pedro, Interim Town Manager

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

- a. Preliminary Review of Proposed Site Development Permit and Modifications to a Previously Approved New Residence for Grading and Driveway Culvert, File #: 01-2015 and X9H-688, 20 Minoca Road, Unger Residence

Ms. Pedro reported that the applicant requested that the item be continued to a date uncertain.

- b. Public Hearing: Review of Proposed Update to the Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (WELO)

Interim Town Manager Pedro presented the staff report and a slide presentation regarding the proposed update to the WELO. She explained the key revisions to the State MWELO, as detailed in the staff report.

She said that the deadline for the Town to adopt an updated WELO is February 1, 2016. Ms. Pedro said she had participated in the working group that updated the 2010 BAWSCA ordinance, a local version of the State WELO to comply with the State requirements. She said the draft ordinance was presented to the Water Conservation Committee on December 5, 2015, and to the ASCC on December 14, 2015, and the recommendation for approval was unanimous with both bodies. She said the ordinance is scheduled for Town Council review on January 13, 2016.

Ms. Pedro explained the applicability of the proposed ordinance as it pertains to Portola Valley.

Commissioner Von Feldt asked for clarification regarding new vs. rehabilitated landscapes. Ms. Pedro said if previously unirrigated land is being planted and irrigated, it is considered new landscape. If an existing irrigated area is being replaced with new irrigated landscaping, then it is considered rehabilitated. In both instances, the triggering factor is if the project requires a permit, typically a new residence or major addition.

Ms. Pedro presented a chart comparing the 2015 State WELO, the 2009 BAWSCA WELO, the 2010 (current) Portola Valley ordinance, and the proposed ordinance, highlighting the key differences. She said there are perhaps 8 to 12 landscape projects a year that are associated with new houses or major additions that would trigger the ordinance.

Ms. Pedro reviewed the Outdoor Water Use Efficiency Checklist which will be used by homeowners who qualify for the streamlined process.

In response to Chair Targ's questions, Ms. Pedro said the State's water usage reduction target is 20% below 2009 figures and the State has provided a form for local agencies to complete and submit annually which will fulfill the State's reporting requirement.

Chair Targ called for questions from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Gilbert said she thought that homeowners would find it and confusing to wade through the ordinance to determine if it applied to their projects.

Chair Targ said the ordinance appeared to be geared toward wealthy homeowners or developers who can afford to hire consultants.

Water Conservation Committee Chair Al Sill pointed out while the regulations are complex, the prescriptive option is streamlined for projects falling within certain parameters. He said that a complex landscape plan would likely require a landscape designer anyway, who should be well versed in the requirements.

With no additional comments from the Commissioners, Chair Targ called for comments from the public. Hearing none, Chair Targ brought it back to the Commission for discussion.

Commissioner Von Feldt suggested that an FAQ would be helpful to communicate the applicability of the ordinance to the Town citizens. She also asked about the feasibility of enforcement. Ms. Pedro said that once a project has been signed off on, there is no enforcement mechanism should a homeowner makes changes afterwards.

Chair Targ said the ordinance appeared to be more geared to large developments or commercial properties.

Ms. Pedro said the State is looking at the water usage issue broadly. She added, however, that even at a micro-level, the landscape projects in Portola Valley are quite substantive with large lots. Ms. Pedro pointed out that new landscape projects historically have the highest water usage and controlling the irrigation associated with new homes is more effective than any other outdoor landscape policy. She said, at minimum, homeowners will be educated to choose low water use native plants and ensure the professionals they hire design efficient irrigation systems.

Commissioner Von Feldt agreed, stating that statistics have shown that Portola Valley residents use much more water than neighboring communities, with 70 percent used for landscaping.

Vice Chair Hasko said she was in complete agreement with the byzantine nature of the ordinance and said that an FAQ would be valuable. Chair Targ noted that the ordinance would only apply to approximately 10 projects a year, all of which are being designed by landscape professionals well versed in the requirements.

Vice Chair Hasko moved to find the ordinance categorically exempt from CEQA. Seconded by Commissioner Von Feldt; the motion carried 5-0.

Commissioner Von Feldt moved to approve Resolution No. 2016-1. Seconded by Vice Chair Hasko; the motion carried 5-0.

Chair Targ suggested it would be interesting to track this issue, measuring the compliance and exploring what's happening on existing one-acre-plus sites, including the Town properties, private, nonprofit, commercial, etc., as well as noting the cost to achieve compliance.

COMMISSION, STAFF, COMMITTEE REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

a. Town Center Master Plan Update Project

Commissioner Von Feldt, who is the Planning Commission representative on the committee for the Town Center Master Plan Update project, presented the Master Plan Vision Statement and an overview of the current uses on the Town Center campus. She noted that the six acre Spring Down Open Space is now included in the planning area and asked the Commissioners to comment on any current issues at the Town Center.

Vice Chair Hasko asked if the tennis courts would be multipurpose permanently. She also noted there is no equestrian loop around the perimeter of Town Center as originally envisioned and would like to see that issue explored.

Chair Targ expressed interest in the connection between Town Center and the Spring Down Open Space Preserve.

Commissioner McKitterick sees Spring Down as the number one issue. He said that as open space it gets little utilization and he would like to see the space integrated with the Town Center and be used by residents.

Commissioner Von Feldt asked the Commissions for comments regarding future opportunities.

Commissioner McKitterick said daylighting the creek should be addressed since the original intent was that the issue would be revisited at a future date.

Chair Targ said he would like to see a future connection between Town Center and Windy Hill Open Space Preserve. Commissioner McKitterick agreed that it is a worthwhile issue to explore.

Commissioner McKitterick said he would like to see the Town continue to look at opportunities to acquire additional lands or trail rights contiguous to Town Center, whether by easement or fee.

Chair Targ thanked the Task Force for their leadership in seeing this project through. Commissioner Von Feldt said part of the process is to reach out to the committees and commissions to gather feedback early on so that everyone is a part of the process. She said the Task Force will develop a priority list and then work to conceptualize and determine the feasibility of the ideas. Chair Targ said the most successful parts of the Town Center have been those that are multi-functional which are used by different groups for different purposes.

Commissioner McKitterick added that he would like to see projects that build community, such as the Farmer's Market, which brings people together and provides a place for residents to congregate.

Commissioner Von Feldt invited the Commissioners to email her with anything else that may come to mind as the Task Force will be soliciting feedback for at least another month.

b. 2016 Planning Commissioners Academy Announcement

Ms. Pedro presented the Announcement for the Annual League of California Cities Planning Commissioners Academy, which will be held in San Ramon from March 2nd through March 4th. She invited Commissioners to register before the deadline of February 2nd.

c. Annual Election of Planning Commission Chair and Vice Chair

Commissioner McKitterick moved to nominate Judith Hasko for Planning Commission Chair. Seconded by Chair Targ. Vice Chair Hasko accepted the nomination.

Commissioner Von Feldt moved to nominate Denise Gilbert for Planning Commission Vice Chair. Seconded by Commissioner McKitterick. Commissioner Gilbert accepted the nomination.

Both motions passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: October 21, 2015

Commissioner Gilbert moved to approve the minutes of the October 21, 2015, meeting, as amended. Seconded by Commissioner Von Feldt, the motion carried 5-0.

ADJOURNMENT [8:09 p.m.]