

**Woodside Fire Protection District
Board of Directors Meeting
Administration Building
808 Portola Rd.
Portola Valley, CA 94028
April 26th, 2022**

The Board of Directors meeting was called to order at 5:30 P.M. and immediately went into closed session.

Directors Present in Closed Session: Holthaus, Miller, Cain

Directors Absent: None

Closed Session: Board of Directors to interview two (2) candidates for the position of Deputy Fire Chief.

Interviews were conducted. Board members gave their feedback and recommendations to Chief Lindner. There was no further action taken by the Board at this time.

Return from Closed Session: The Board returned from closed session at 7:00 P.M.

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors was called to order at 7:01 P.M. by Director Holthaus.

Directors Present: Holthaus, Miller, Cain

Directors Absent: None

Staff: Chief Lindner, Fire Marshal Bullard, Battalion Chief Cuschieri, Battalion Chief Dagenais, Battalion Chief K. Hird, Battalion Chief Smith, Finance Manager Edwards, Pub Ed Officer/Emergency Prep Coordinator Brown

Other Attendees: Mike Wasserman – Capital Program Management (CPM), Joseph Charles – San Mateo County Counsel

Public Comment Non-Agendized Topics:

Bob Turcott shared a written statement where thanked the District and stated – The Residents of Portola Valley are deeply relieved that the District is undertaking a comprehensive hazard and risk assessment for the entire District and will formally designate zones of moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity. We are deeply grateful for your dedication to public safety in this and so many other ways.

The Town of Portola Valley has recently released the DEIR for the Stanford Wedge Housing Project. The DEIR was not prepared by Stanford. It was prepared by the Town with the help of consultants. It is notable that the project has had the active support of our Town Council, which raises questions about the neutrality and objectivity of the DEIR.

The methodology employed in this DEIR will almost certainly be used for many similar development proposals to follow. One Town official estimates that there will be 10 similar proposals in during the next 8-year housing cycle.

- Are the methods employed in the DEIR satisfactory?
- Do they accurately assess the impact on public safety of this development proposal?
- If the analysis methods used in this DEIR are adopted as the standard by which future proposals are evaluated, will the impacts on public safety be adequately assessed?

He stated he has a number of specific concerns which I'll send separately, but, briefly, among them are the following:

- The DEIR assumes that all structures, vehicles, and other non-natural material is nonburn-able.

As a result, the computational modeling predicts that the dense development is protective in the event of a wildfire rather than a significantly exacerbating factor.

- The DEIR claims that the proposed vegetation management would slow the rate of wildfire progression on the parcel, but no analysis that supports this claim is provided. Furthermore, the proposed treatments would convert a sloped landscape that presently has woody shrubs under oak canopy to grass and herbaceous vegetation under no canopy. Experimental data shows that such a conversion would accelerate fire spread by 4-10x.
- The DEIR asserts that non-combustible sheathing is sufficient mitigation for the extremely close structure spacing despite the fact that Cal Fire, NIST, and the IIBHS document that such sheathing does not provide adequate mitigation ([link](#)). No analysis is provided by the DEIR to support this claim. Other important mitigation methods, such as avoiding windows on the building surface that faces other structures, are not employed.

Mr. Turcott informed the Board (CEQA) and WFPD Under CEQA, the Fire District is the agency designated with the responsibility and the authority to evaluate the DEIR from the perspective of fire safety.

He stated that the District's evaluation should be based on the published DEIR, formally released on March 30, 2022, not preliminary, unpublished versions. No other entity, including Town decision-making bodies and consultants who were hired and supervised by the Town to prepare the DEIR, has both the expertise and the objectivity to competently evaluate the DEIR's methodology. He also stated that the DEIR is a lengthy, complex document with portions addressing wildfire safety that comprise well over 100 pages of highly technical analysis. The published document repeatedly references material that is necessary to evaluate the accuracy of the conclusions but is not included in the document. The DEIR was in preparation for approximately 2 years, yet the public and responsible agencies such as WFPD are given only 45 days to provide informed comment. Mr. Turcott stated that if the brevity of the comment period or the absence of supporting material would compromise your ability to adequately evaluate the DEIR, I urge you to assert your prerogative to require an extension and/or the disclosure of relevant supporting documentation. Mr. Turcott closed his comment by stating that the residents of Portola Valley - and those of adjoining communities - depend on the District to evaluate the DEIR from the perspective of contemporary wildfire safety standards with the recognition that the methods used in this DEIR will likely also be used in many similar projects over the next 8-year housing cycle. He urged the District to please share the evaluation with the public.

Rita Comes stated that she depends on this group for anything pertaining to her fire/life safety knowledge and to help answer the questions and review the procedures in the draft DEIR and is imploring urging the Board to review it, especially the sections pertaining to fire and hazards. She also offered her assistance to help review it. She also thanked the Board and Fire District for their attention.

Mary Hufty wanted to make an official statement on behalf of the Portola Valley Neighbors United. She stated that they have a particular plea to ask the Fire District to clearly view what structurally is being changed in Portola Valley. She stated how appreciative she is of the District and stressed that they rely on the expertise of the District and trust the judgment of the District with how they approach the DEIR document. She informed the Board that the document is very challenging to read.

Robert Younge thanked the Board for all the work that is being done with the hazard mapping. He informed the Board that he has tried to read the DEIR and spent a lot of time on it, and he feels that there are some glaring mistakes in it. He stressed to the Board that it is important to review the document carefully for the community because the District has the expertise and independent objectivity that can be used to look at the document. He stated that he feels everyone wants to do the right thing and that he feels this present document does seem correct. He appeals that the District reviews the document carefully and makes sure the document is right.

Ron Eastman thanked the Board and informed them that he also mentioned that the DEIR is very difficult to read. He believes that there are serious flaws in the analysis of the wildfire risk, and he wanted to reiterate what was already been stated. He also mentioned that it has not been peer reviewed, and it is critical that a second set of more informed eyeballs review it. He encouraged the Board to review it.

Kathy thanked the Board and District for their efforts. She has a particular interest in knowing how to evacuate safely. She reviewed the DEIR and was concerned about the information on appendix J page 86 which talks about evacuation. She informed the Board that the parameters used in the report missed a lot of information for example it did not take into consideration The Sequoias, Ladera, Corte Madera, Portola Valley Ranch, Los Trancos, as well as employees, and horses/horse trailers that would be important to evaluate. She was wondering if the Board could review. She also mentioned that did not see any information about if the residents could even evacuate safely.

Consent Agenda:

Items: Director Cain motioned to move items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 to the consent agenda; 2nd by Director Miller. Motion passed 3-0.

Item 5: Fiscal Year Spreadsheet 21-22

Finance Manager Edwards advised the board there was nothing significant to report in the financial report. She stated that budget process has started and that the Battalion Chiefs are turning in their preparation budgets.

Item 7: Station 7 and Station 8 Projects - Update

Mike Wassermann from Capital Program Management (CPM) gave the Board an update on the fire station projects.

Interim Station 7 Update: Mr. Wassermann recapped the Board on last month's report of the interim station budget. Interim Station 7 is almost completed. He advised the Board that they have power now and they are just waiting for card readers and video surveillance cameras which were ordered back in October but are still on back order with no ETA. Looking into other temporary/permanent solutions. Project should be completed May 13th, 2022, except for gate devices. At this time there is no need to move until Station 7 permit has been obtained.

Station 7 Update: Vance Brown, Inc (VBI) is working on the Town of Woodside Planning Dept comments. CJW Architecture, CPM, and WFPD are also working on addressing comments prior to resubmittal of the plans back to the Town. They are on the third and final round of comment review and ensuring everything is properly detailed. Special inspection firms have been selected. Project is tentatively scheduled to be constructed from June 2022 through May 2023.

Station 8 Update: Mr. Wassermann advised the Board the VBI was in a similar situation as Station 7. VBI is going through the Town of Portola Valley's second round of comments. CJW, CPM, and WFPD are also going through those comments as well. Conditions of approval are still being worked on. Landscape agreement and groundwater testing is also needed as a condition of approval. Mr. Wassermann advised the Board did get ASCC approval. CPM, CJW Architects, Stepford, and TEA have been retained to assist team with ensuring that the proper details, equipment, and accommodations are included in the design. Project is tentatively scheduled to be constructed June 2022 through April 2023.

Mary Hufty had a question about the location of interim Station 7 and asked if the location would pose safety hazards. Mike Wasserman informed her about all the safety lights and signage that has been installed at the SLAC location at Sandhill and Whiskey Hill Road.

There were no follow up questions or comments by the Board.

Item 8: Staff Report – New Fire Engine

Staff Reports

Fire Chief's Report:

Fire Chief Lindner advised the Board on COVID-19 updates. Chief Lindner advised the numbers are still stable, but there are increasing numbers. Over the past week they have increased, but hospitalizations have not. Chief Lindner advised the Board that the County and the District are not taking any additional measures but are still monitoring.

Fire Chief Lindner advised the Board on new hires and that they are currently at week 8 out of 17 of the County Academy. BC Cuschieri advised recruits successfully passed their first manipulative evaluation and went through their required Firefighter I testing.

Chief Lindner reminded the Board of the upcoming badge pinning ceremony on April 28th at 1000hrs. 10 people will be recognized, and that a representative of the Town of Woodside will be there to administer the Oath. Over 100 people expected to attend at this point.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS:

No written communication at this time.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:49 P.M. and entered closed session.

Closed Session:

The Board of Directors gave an update to Chief Lindner on the interviews conducted earlier in the evening for Deputy Fire Chief. The Board gave their feedback and recommendations, then gave authority to Chief Lindner to make the promotion when deemed necessary. There was no further action taken by the Board.

Chief Lindner gave an update on a personnel issue. He advised the Board the District had completed its investigation and would proceed further if necessary. Board Members had no further questions and wanted to make sure Chief Lindner was making contact with the appropriate individual(s) prior to closing the matter.

Chief Lindner advised the Board of an ongoing legal issue with the cell tower at Station 7. Chief Lindner advised the matter is progressing in a positive manner and would update the Board as needed. The Board was encouraged with the progress and took no further action other than to keep them updated.

Return from Closed Session: The Board returned from closed session at 8:48 P.M.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 P.M.

The next scheduled meeting will be held May 31st, 2022, at 7:00 P.M at the WFPD Administration Building, 808 Portola Rd. Portola Valley, CA 94028. (Or virtual or a combination of both depending on Covid-19 related concerns).

Respectfully Submitted,

Matt Miller – Board Secretary