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Town Council
Town of Portola Valley
765 Portola Road
Portola Valley, CA 94028

January 27, 2023

To the Town Council of Portola Valley,

I'm writing to once again express my interest in applying for the position of Commissioner on the ASCC. I decided to write a new letter because the Town Council meeting of 1/11 was such an impactful experience for me. This letter covers two topics—1) why I'm interested in serving on the ASCC, and 2) a response to comments made about me at the 1/11 TC meeting.

When I was 27 years old and considering moving back to Portola Valley from Mendocino County, I experienced a series of dreams about a place—about the natural environment, the built environment, the trails that connect, and the people that inhabit; about building community—socially and physically. The place was always exquisitely beautiful. I came to understand—to my then surprise—that the place in my dreams was Portola Valley. I did not know at that time how this place lived in me.

Now I know. This place was woven through me as the weft in the fabric of my being. The formative impact this place has had on me has been profound and continues to reveal itself. I am made from this place and for this place.

Nowadays I walk through this landscape with an awareness of layers of time and history. I feel and contemplate the presence of all humans who live/d here—past, present, and future; the landscape and changes to it—past, present, and future; and the built environment and human-nature interaction—past, present, and future. I see that we are experiencing one important moment in a timeless story of a magnificent place.

I feel grateful to have been formed by this place, and I would be deeply honored and committed to the opportunity to help shape this place now, as part of that timeless story.

My work has been in carpentry, building, landscape, farming, land management, and community organizing. The relationship of humans to place and community is paramount in my

consciousness. I'm passionate about design and the built environment, and how they interact with the natural environment and human communities and the wellbeing of both.

I would like to clarify the comments made about me at the January 11th Town Council meeting, regarding my capacity to fulfill responsibilities as a town volunteer. The comments were made regarding my capacity to chair two committees, but obviously implicitly commented on my capacity to serve on the ASCC.

Three people (and one of those people twice!) commented that I'm not capable of competently fulfilling volunteer responsibilities because of my young family, and that I have been saying so myself. These comments were a manipulation and stretching of the truth. The facts of the matter are:

- In October of 2021 I asked to step down as chair of the Finance Committee because a baby would be arriving in our family and I knew my capacity would be temporarily reduced, as my wife and I made the decision to spend as much time as possible with our children in the first year of Ruth's life. No one else stepped up to chair. In 20/20 hindsight, I would have simply stepped down and someone would have had to step up, but I didn't have that perspective then.
- In March of 2022, a few weeks after the baby was born, Rita Comes emailed me about the town audits. It took me a long time to respond and when I did I acknowledged the circumstances of being a new parent.
- In October of 2022, I acknowledged that for the past year my bandwidth to perform the duties of the chair had been reduced—as I had said would happen—but that I had now returned to restored bandwidth and capacity.
- In January 2023, we are sleeping much better and have the support of a nanny to care for our children. Everything changes.

These facts were distorted and manipulated by those who spoke of me at the January 11th Town Council meeting. For example, one speaker said:

“As of December this person was saying on meetings that she didn't have enough time, due to her young family, which makes perfect sense, um, to catch up with all the finance committee stuff.”

I reached out to this individual to substantiate their remarks. They were unable to do so, because they weren't factual. This is just one of various comments that simply weren't factual.

I understand that members of the public have the right to say things that are not factual in public comment, but I want to point out, for your record, that those public comments were erroneous and manipulative and typify a pattern of misinformation that has grown in our town's public discourse in the past few years.

Best regards,
Lucy Neely