



# TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

## STAFF REPORT

---

**TO:** Mayor and Members of the Town Council

**FROM:** Melissa Thurman, Town Clerk

**DATE:** January 9, 2023

**RE:** Interviewing of Applicants to the Architectural Site Control Commission and Planning Commission

### DISCUSSION

On November 17, 2022, the Town of Portola Valley launched a recruitment to fill vacant positions on both the Architectural Site Control Commission and the Planning Commission. Details of the vacant seats are as follows:

- Two Short-Term Vacancies on the Planning Commission, with One Seat's Term Expiring in December 2023, and One Seat's Term Expiring in December 2024; and
- Two Short-Term Vacancies on the Architectural Site Control Commission, with One Seat's Term Expiring in December 2023 and One Seat's Term Expiring in December 2024

A deadline to submit a letter of interest to serve on either Commission was given as December 19, 2022 by 5:00 p.m.

Six residents of Portola Valley submitted letters of interest by the deadline listed above to the Town Clerk.

For the Architectural Site Control Commission, two letters of interest were received from:

- Lucy Neely
- Carter Warr

For the Planning Commission, four letters of interest were received from:

- Lynda Brothers
- Rebecca Flynn
- Ronny Krashinsky
- Karen Vahtra

An initial interview date was provided to the public of January 4, 2023; however, due to the major storm event impacting Northern California, staff postponed the interview sessions to January 9, 2023.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact associated with the interviews, nor the appointments of volunteers to Town Committees and Commissions.

**ATTACHMENT**

1. Letters of Interest from All Applicants

Lucy E Neely  
[REDACTED]  
Portola Valley, CA 94028  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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

December 22, 2022

Dear Town Council of Portola Valley,

I'm writing to express my interest in applying for the position of a Commissioner on the Architectural and Site Control Commission.

I grew up in Portola Valley and have lived here for going-on eight years as an adult. I think I'm from the most beautiful place on earth. I feel the place as an extension of my own body and count my blessings everyday to be home here. I appreciate the harmony of landscape and built environment and the ability to connect with the stars at night.

I've always been and grow increasingly interested in architecture, space, landscaping, and the interplay between the natural and built environment. I appreciate Portola Valley's particular attention to these relationships and the strong ethos of denizen-driven processes that work to maintain these relationships in harmony.

I've served on the town Finance Committee for four years now, including three as chair. For the past year I've also been a member of the newly formed Race and Equity Committee. I'm interested in serving this place I love and helping it develop in the best way possible during these fascinating times of accelerating change.

Furthermore, I like the remaining members of the ASCC and would enjoy serving with them.

I look forward to conversing with you further. There's so much good work to be done.

Sincerely yours,  
Lucy Neely

## Melissa Thurman

---

**From:** Carter Warr [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 1, 2022 5:01 PM  
**To:** Town Center  
**Cc:** Eden Licup; Jeremy Dennis  
**Subject:** ASCC - Application

Town Council;

I am submitting my letter of interest in again serving on the Architecture and Site Control Commission or the Planning Commission for the Town of Portola Valley.

Tami and I moved to Portola Valley in 1988, 34 years ago. We bought a very small home on likely the smallest lot in Town. We made Portola Valley our permanent home. Tami was a middle school science teacher for 9 years at Corte Madera School. Our daughter Emily has spent her entire life here attending preschool at Carillon, PVTC for theater, Ormondale for grade school, Corte Madera for middle school, and the Woodside Priory for high school before heading off to attend college at TCU. Emily and I have our horses on our property. We actively ride the trails and keep our horses fit with cutting horse practice in our small pen. I moved my practice of Architecture to Portola Valley in 1990 after a year of commuting to and from San Mateo. I have practiced here ever since. The majority of my work is with 20 minutes of my office. Many weeks a year I never leave Town.

I love this valley and what it represents as a home for those who appreciate a rural lifestyle in close proximity to the busy world of the Bay Area. Portola Valley is a treasure founded on great principles set down in the early 1960's by those with courage to protect open space, a rural lifestyle, and the aesthetics/land practices associated. That courage and determination has been inspiring. I had the great privilege to know personally and count as friends several of the Town's founding members and their families. John James, as a sitting Council Member, came to my office in the fall of 1990 at the urging of the planning manager to solicit my participation on the ASCC. I was initially reticent since I was a relatively new member of the community. John spent a long time with me telling me the story of the Town's founding and how important it was to carry on the memories and the principles that carved Portola Valley out of the County's jurisdiction. 'It is our volunteers that make this Town special' he said. "We need talented caring volunteers on the ASCC to be the first line of defense" he repeated. From that day it has been important to carry on these intimate memories and stories to the next generations of Portola Valley volunteers.

John convinced me to serve. I served from 1991 to 2012. My first meeting was with another longtime volunteer and first time ASCC member Bub Eisberg at a site meeting to walk the lands that were eventually approved as the Blue Oaks subdivision. I served through a tough period during the Design Standards Re-Review where nearly all of the original standards were modified to guide and protect future Portola Valley from becoming like some of the other adjacent communities. Many of those years the preparation and meetings were intense trying to be vigilant to protect a way of living. During my 21 years I was keenly aware that my experience as a practicing Architect was valued by the town staff, applicants, and the public. To this day I am stopped at public events and at local stores by previous design review participants to express their gratitude for my measured guidance and carefully balanced attention to all sides of the design review process. I continue to feel the Town benefited because I was a volunteer.

Before and since 2012 I have volunteering at the Councils' behest on various other official and unofficial committee assignments.

I feel the Town would benefit by having, again, a practicing design professional on either the ASCC or the Planning Commission. I look forward to an interview with the Council and an opportunity to contribute again as a volunteer.

Carter J. Warr, AIA, CSI, NCARB lic. No. C-19397

CJW Architecture

130 Portola Road (business)

[REDACTED] (residence)

[www.cjwarchitecture.com](http://www.cjwarchitecture.com)

Lynda L. Brothers  
[REDACTED]  
Portola Valley, CA 94028  
[REDACTED]

Via Electronic Mail  
TownCenter@Portolavalley.net

December 19, 2022

Melissa Thurman  
Town Clerk  
Portola Valley, CA 94028

RE: EXPRESSION OF INTEREST, PLANNING COMMISSION

Dear Ms. Thurman;

This letter constitutes my expression of interest in the one-year vacancy on the Town Planning Commission. I am interested in the position because I believe I have important skills to offer, I believe in public service and I would be honored to work with the citizens and staff of our Town. My skills developed over a lengthy career with appointed positions in federal and state government including a long career exercising skills of problem-solving, obtaining win-win outcomes and collegiality on many boards and on behalf of clients at federal, state and local agencies and various legislative bodies.

Here's a summary of my career with the intention of providing you with insight into the relevant background and skills I'd bring to service on the Commission. I was a biochemical geneticist working on the techniques



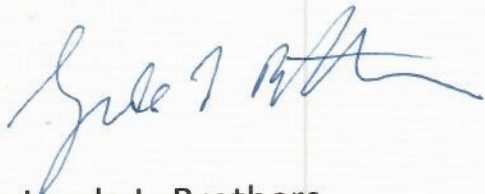
that eventually led to the human genome project, and the founding of Genentech. I chose to go to law school with the explicit goal of addressing scientific matters in the public policy arena and had a career that accomplished that. I held management positions at federal, state agencies followed by the private practice of law. I worked as Subcommittee Counsel, US House of Representatives; appointed Principle Deputy, US Department of Energy (DOE); Executive Vice President for Raytheon Hanford Corporation; Assistant Director, Washington State Ecology Department followed by the practice law. I am a retired partner from Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal which is now part Dentons - of one of the largest law firms in the world. The primary focus of my practice was new facility siting, permitting and development for large (usually Fortune 25) corporations. I was intimately involved in developing low level nuclear waste disposal facilities nationwide, including advising the DOE on licensing of the Trans-Uranic waste "disposal" facility in New Mexico, and very low activity radwaste facility in Utah, and drafting legislation establishing the national compact system for low level radioactive waste disposal. In addition, I was part of multidisciplinary teams that obtained permits, sited and developed spring water bottling facilities, native American gaming facilities, a sports-water bottling facility and completed many complex environmental hazardous cleanup actions. Many projects involved both the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). I believe these representative matters provide insight into the range of my experiences that may be of value to the Town. I understand governmental agencies and their relationships, have dealt with many of the relevant state laws and have many areas of technical understanding as well as the important range of interpersonal skills including listening to public comment and other inputs, and obtaining creative, problem-solving outcomes.

I am fully retired and do not have any apparent conflicts that would affect service to the Town of Portola Valley. I moved here about year ago. I feel like an old timer in that I grew up in Palo Alto, primarily off Arastradero Road, and have spent many years roaming these hills. I would embrace the opportunity to work with the Town staff, elected and appointed officials to address the planning challenges the next year will bring.

I look forward to the opportunity to discuss this vacancy further.

Please confirm receipt.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lynda L. Brothers", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lynda L. Brothers



██████████  
Portola Valley, CA 94028  
Dec. 21, 2022

Re: Planning Commission

To: Towncenter@portolavalley.net

After much deliberation and consulting with other residents about the ASCC and the Planning Commissions, I've decided to volunteer to serve on the Town's Planning Commission (PC).

Portola Valley is facing important planning decisions over the next year and beyond that will shape how the Town can develop in a manner that will respect our commitment to the preservation of open space and the conservation of our natural environment. All decisions of the Planning Commission must be made balancing our General Plan with the laws and regulations of the state of California.

Portola Valley exists in a stunningly beautiful landscape of mountains, hills, and steep ridges straddling the geologically active San Andreas Fault, covered with oak forests and riparian zones along creeks and riverbeds. It's critical that all land use plans respect and preserve that uniqueness while also making it possible for a wider variety of families and individuals to join Portola Valley.

There are several activities in my background that would be relevant for the Planning Commission.

I have a very strong analytical background with master's degrees from the University of Pennsylvania and INSEAD in France. This background enables me to easily grasp complex concepts, understand detailed government regulations, and make logical decisions.

I have closely followed the massive efforts of the Ad-Hoc Housing Element Committee, Stanford Wedge Redevelopment project, and the Safety Element and have frequently contributed multiple ideas for meeting our housing goals. The efforts to refine the Housing Element as well as find solutions for increasing affordable housing in our Town in a manner that respects and preserves our natural environment will continue to be active efforts for several years to come as the Town grapples with finding locations for affordable housing.

I've been on the Sustainability Committee for many years (and the Water Conservation Committee, prior to that). Given the extreme and critical situation of climate change, it is vitally important that the Town continue to encourage the adoption of green and sustainable building practices and be at the forefront of those efforts. I routinely attend lectures, workshops, and green home tours on green building, air sealing, energy efficiency, water conservation, and passive house building and have a strong understanding of sustainable building practices.

In addition, I've recently been serving on the ADU Ambassadors Team where I've become very familiar with the new regulations for ADUs and JADUs. As the Town seeks to find lower impact housing, ADUs and JADUs represent a significant portion of our new Housing Element that can meet those requirements with less of a visual impact on the Town as a whole.

Finally, I'm very knowledgeable about building plans, zoning regulations, permitting, and architectural drawings as I have been involved in the past in designing my own remodel and general contracting a major project at my own property.

Regards,

s/Rebecca Flynn  
██

## Melissa Thurman

---

**From:** Ronny Krashinsky [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 21, 2022 4:12 PM  
**To:** Town Center  
**Subject:** Planning Commissioner letter of interest

[REDACTED]  
  
Ronny Krashinsky

Portola Valley, CA 94028

December 22, 2022

Portola Valley Town Council  
Portola Valley, CA 94028  
*via email*

Dear Town Council members,

I am writing to express my interest in serving on the Planning Commission.

As odd as it may seem, I have a fond memory of reviewing the real estate disclosure packet for what would become our home in Portola Valley. My wife and I had long shared a dream of returning from San Francisco to our roots on the Peninsula to raise our children in a more rural environment. Expecting the usual legalese about leaks and lead paint, I was instead struck by the beauty of the Design Guidelines and Conservation Guide. As I read these documents late into the night, I realized that the Town character was not simply a byproduct of its scenic natural surroundings. The ethos which drew my family here derived from principled land-use planning, from the elegant drawings of structures integrated with the landscape, to the nearly poetic respect for flora, fauna, night skies, and view corridors.

After moving to Portola Valley, I learned that the Town was under great strain. The regional need for more housing was colliding with a desire to preserve the Town's rural character and the need for geologic and fire safety. I found myself unexpectedly enthralled by these challenges. Over the past year, I have closely followed the Ad Hoc Housing Element Committee and related Planning Commission and Town Council meetings. Through this, I learned about the spirit of volunteerism in Portola Valley. I joined the Sustainability Committee earlier this year and, as a member of the Town's ADU Ambassador team, helped craft an ADU survey and educational materials.

My background is in Computer Engineering. I completed my undergraduate studies at UC Berkeley and earned a doctorate at MIT. I spent a couple of years at a startup, and then joined NVIDIA where I've worked for over a decade. I expect that my analytical skills will be helpful in the Planning Commission role. I have a rigorous attention to detail, yet am mindful of big picture goals and impacts. I would approach the Planning Commissioner position with humility, curiosity, and thoughtfulness.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Ronny Krashinsky

Karen Vahtra



December 20, 2022

Dear Members of the Portola Valley Town Council,

I have lived in town for 20 years and believe my extensive experience volunteering within the town and in neighboring communities will be useful in helping guide decisions in front of the Planning Commission.

I co-founded a technology company that went public in November 2001. I am Electrical Engineer by trade and also have extensive business and marketing experience.

I chose Portola Valley over the neighboring communities because I love nature, open space, and a quiet environment. I am very familiar with the design and construction process as I participated extensively with the architect and contractor when I built a house here that was completed in 2006.

After extensively traveling the world, I have found the most satisfaction in giving back to the community. I have volunteered for ten years in a tax program run through the IRS and the United Way for low-income people as a Tax Preparer, Site Coordinator, and Tool Developer. I also volunteered at Stanford Hospital for several years.

In Portola Valley, I volunteered as the co-editor of the Portola Valley Post, created a small ad-hoc Technology Committee after a resident was robbed, served on the Wildfire Committee, and spearheaded an effort with many residents in town during the pandemic to sew and repair about 1,000 masks for the community at large. In the beginning of the pandemic, I walked every street and trail noting each address with a wood shake roof - so I am familiar with every street and neighborhood in town. During the pandemic, I also attended countless Housing Element, Town Council, and Planning Commission meetings and am well versed on how the town government operates.

I enjoy challenging volunteer activities. Both my professional and volunteer backgrounds will enable me to serve the town well as a commissioner.

I look forward to discussing the Planning Commission openings with you.

Sincerely

Karen Vahtra