



**Town of Portola Valley**

# **Commission and Advisory Committee Policies & Procedures Handbook**

Amended by the Portola Valley Town Council  
May 25, 2022

**TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY  
COMMISSION & ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Policies & Procedures Handbook**

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## THE NEEDS AND REWARDS OF VOLUNTEERING

*~ by Bill Lane, Former Mayor*

Our nation is embarking on a time of renewed patriotism that provides an opportunity for each citizen to make a difference in their community through volunteerism. A critical component of our founding fathers' vision for our country was the importance of volunteerism. We in Portola Valley have seen over the years how important this concept has been to the foundation of our community.

During the time leading up to the Town's incorporation on July 7, 1964, there were countless volunteers who called on every household to answer questions and gain support for the legal formation of our Town. In the end, there was record-breaking support for incorporation (81% of registered voters), with reliance on volunteers to perform much of the work being a significant cornerstone of the Town's ongoing governance.

As one of the Town's first mayors elected by the voters, I am proud of all the Town has accomplished! My wife, Jean, and I have had the privilege throughout the years of volunteering in a number of ways, including service on committees.

Today, with demands from a growing population, we have seen more traffic, the need for development controls, increased use of our schools, library, trails, playing fields and so forth, not only by our own residents, but also our neighbors. It cannot be said of Portola Valley that we are a "gated community"!

So many remarkable accomplishments have been achieved, due in large part to literally hundreds of volunteers working with a small, highly capable and dedicated Town staff, along with the support of a retained Town planner and legal counsel. This partnership, with mutual respect, is essential! Our new, award-winning Town Center and Sausal Creek Day-Lighting projects are the latest examples of what can be achieved through this important partnership.

The highest level of volunteerism is the elected five-member Town Council at the top of a tier of appointed Planning Commission, Architectural and Site Commission, and several advisory committees; both permanent and special assignment in nature.

Each and every volunteer's service, irrespective of the level, is critical to this incredible community's continued success! Our commission and committee volunteers, working in concert with the Town Council, ensure the unique quality of life we all enjoy in this very special place continues. Without robust volunteer effort, the unique characteristics of our Town that we can all too often take for granted, will be lost.

Finally, it is often said that you get out of life what you give. Through volunteerism, we not only provide support for our Town; we obtain the rich rewards of friendship and of truly making a difference, while setting a meaningful example for future generations.

## **TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY GOVERNANCE**

The Town of Portola Valley is a General Law City operating under a Council-Mayor form of governance. The Town was incorporated in 1964. Under State law Portola Valley is required to conduct its governance in an open and ethical manner. In addition to the requirements of the law, it has always been Town policy to so conduct its governance; the Town of Portola Valley strives to meet or exceed the legal minimums in this regard.

### ***Town Council***

The Town Council is comprised of five members elected by the citizens of Portola Valley.

The Town Council is responsible for all the Town's governmental functions except those services provided by the Woodside Fire Protection District, West Bay Sanitary District, and other utility providers. Cable and garbage services are provided through franchise agreements entered into by the Town on behalf of its residents. Law enforcement services are provided through a contract between the Town and the San Mateo County Sheriff's Department. Elementary and middle schools are governed by the Portola Valley School District.

The Town Council:

- Receives and budgets all revenues
- Appoints the Town Manager, Town Attorney, Commission members, Advisory Committee members, and establishes salary ranges
- Adopts ordinances, policies and regulations
- Grants franchises
- Considers appeals from decisions of the Planning Commission, Architectural and Site Control Commission, and Town Manager and may affirm, reverse or modify these decisions or findings
- Establishes fee schedules and charges for municipal services
- May buy, lease and hold real and personal property for the Town
- Has the power to declare an emergency

### ***Mayor***

The Mayor is elected by the Town Council and serves for a term of one year. The Mayor presides at Council meetings, acts as the Town's official representative, and signs all official documents, unless otherwise specified by the Council. The Mayor also works with the Town Manager and Vice Mayor to set the Town Council meeting agenda.

## ***Vice Mayor***

The Vice-Mayor serves in the Mayor's absence.

## ***Council Meetings***

Council meetings are open to the public and are held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the Historic Schoolhouse, 765 Portola Road, Portola Valley.

## ***Posting of Meeting Agendas and Ordinances***

Meeting agendas and new or amended ordinances are posted on outdoor bulletin boards at Town Hall, the Nathhorst Triangle and the Village Square. Copies of agendas, ordinances and minutes of meetings may be obtained at Town Hall, or may be obtained through the Town's website, where citizens may register to receive automatic notification that agendas and other important documents have been posted.

## ***Commissions and Advisory Committees***

These policies and procedures apply to *Commissions* and *Advisory Committees*. The purposes and responsibilities of the various committees vary, but they are generally governed in the same way.

A committee's responsibilities are of two types:

In its *advisory* role, a committee is responsible for advising the Town Council, and in some cases commissions, on matters within its area of responsibility. "Advising" may include such activities as review and reporting on discretionary matters such as site development permit applications; providing general information or advice in written form or at public meetings; and recommending actions, possibly including legislation. Although a committee's recommendations may affect Town policies, priorities and procedures, if adopted by the Council, the committee does not have any direct authority over policies, priorities and procedures.

In its *support* role, a committee assists and augments Town staff in the performance of the functions of Town government. For example, the Conservation Committee organizes Town volunteers for removal of invasive plants on Town land, and the Public Works Committee may inspect and report to the Town's Public Works Director the condition of Town streets, bridges and other infrastructure, making recommendations relative to priorities for repair. In this role, the committee must ensure its activities are coordinated with those of Town staff, as directed by the Town Manager. The Town Manager is responsible for the effective and efficient operation of Town government, in conformance with the policies adopted by the Council.

The various committees have differing amounts of advisory and support responsibility, but all have at least one or the other. A group lacking advisory or support roles is not a committee. For example, a group formed to facilitate meetings concerning a unique area of interest among Town residents could be granted resources, such as meeting space, and could be allowed to announce its activities using Town communication methods, but it would not be an advisory committee.

A commission has one additional responsibility beyond those of advisory committees:

In its *regulatory* role, a commission makes legally binding decisions on matters within its authority. For example, the Architecture and Site Control Commission reviews and approves most site development plans. Generally, these decisions may be appealed to the Town Council.

Ultimately, the Town's commissions and advisory committees seek to fulfill the needs of the community as they are identified by the Town Council.

Both commissions and committees are encouraged to develop and communicate to the Town Council recommendations under their purview that will enhance the quality of life for residents, provided, however, the emphasis on committee work is to be placed on meeting the goals and objectives that have been identified by the Town Council.

### ***Official Town Commissions & Committees***

The Town has two commissions: the *Planning Commission* and the *Architectural and Site Control Commission*.

The Town has 16 permanent Advisory Committees:

- *Bicycle, Pedestrian & Traffic Safety*
- *Cable and Utilities Undergrounding*
- *Community Engagement*
- *Conservation*
- *Cultural Arts*
- *Emergency Preparedness*
- *Finance*
- *Geologic Safety*
- *Historic Resources*
- *Nature and Science*
- *Open Space Acquisition*
- *Parks & Recreation*
- *Public Works*
- *Sustainability*
- *Trails & Paths*
- *Wildfire Preparedness*

From time to time, special ad hoc committees are appointed by the Council to make recommendations on issues of importance to the community.

A monthly calendar is published with committee and commission meeting times and agendas on the Town's website.

### ***Town Manager***

The Town Manager is the Town's administrative head and is appointed by the Council. The Town Manager supervises all other staff members and is responsible for managing the delivery of programs and services authorized in the Town Council adopted budget.

### ***Portola Valley Sphere of Influence***

The Sphere of Influence of Portola Valley has been established by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) and includes: portions of the Stanford lands known as the Webb Ranch; the communities of Ladera, Los Trancos Woods and Vista Verde; and an area north of Skyline Boulevard and west of Page Mill Road. These areas are closely related to the Town in issues relating to traffic,

geography and land use. If these areas were annexed, LAFCO has recommended they become part of Portola Valley rather than part of any other jurisdiction.

Currently, while residents of these areas have a Portola Valley address and zip code, they are not legally considered part of Portola Valley for voting and other purposes. However, upon approval of the Town Council, residents of these areas or others may be appointed to serve on Town committees to ensure desired expertise or diversified representation on issues is obtained. In making and confirming appointments, the Mayor and Town Council shall give preference to those applicants who reside in the incorporated area of the Town of Portola Valley other factors being equal.

## **Town Governance Documents**

The Town, incorporated on July 7, 1964, is a community of approximately 4,600 people. Through the Town's General Plan, a document required by California State Law, the residents have expressed their strong common interests in preserving the small town character and natural conditions of the area. The General Plan is a long-range, comprehensive and general guide to the future physical development of Portola Valley. The General Plan includes eight elements as required by State Law: Land Use; Open Space; Sustainability; Housing; Circulation; Safety; Conservation; and Noise. The General Plan also includes a Recreation Element; a Historic Element; a Scenic Roads and Highways Element; and Trails and Paths Element, all of which are unique to our community.

The goals, objectives, principles and standards stated in the General Plan set the framework for the zoning, site development, subdivision and other land use regulations of the Town.

The Town's governmental organization and land use controls further the objectives contained in the General Plan and are based in large part on the voluntary efforts of the local citizens. The size of the Town staff has been kept small through the use of volunteer citizen committees as well as professional consultants for planning, geology, and legal services and contracting with the San Mateo County Sheriff's Department for law enforcement services.

The Town's ordinances were codified in 1984 to form the Portola Valley Municipal Code. The Town Council finds that resident compliance with the Municipal Code and applicable state codes throughout the Town is an important public service and enables the Town to better implement its general plan. Code compliance is vital to protection of the public's health, safety, and quality of life. The Municipal Code includes the following Titles: General Provisions; Administration and Personnel; Revenue and Finance; Business Taxes, Licenses and Regulations; Animals; Health and Safety; Public Peace, Morals and Welfare; Vehicles and Traffic; Streets, Trails and Public Places; Public Utilities; Environmental Review; Buildings and Construction; Subdivisions; and Zoning.



## LIST OF COMMISSIONS & ADVISORY COMMITTEES

### COMMISSIONS

#### ***Architectural & Site Control***

5 Members

Meets 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays, 7:00 p.m.

#### ***Planning***

5 Members

Meets 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays, 7:00 p.m.

### ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Each committee shall have a minimum of five (5) members and a maximum of nine (9) members<sup>1</sup>. Exceptions to these minimum/maximum requirements can be granted by the Town Council.

Committees	
Bicycle, Pedestrian & Traffic Safety	Historic Resources
Cable & Utilities Undergrounding	Nature & Science
Community Engagement	Open Space Acquisition
Conservation	Parks & Recreation
Cultural Arts	Public Works
Emergency Preparedness	Sustainability
Finance	Trails & Paths
Geologic Safety	Wildfire Preparedness

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<sup>1</sup> Exceptions to the size of a committee may be granted in consultation with the Mayor.

# ORGANIZATION CHART

