

THE WOODSIDER



A WOODSIDE TOWN NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2006 EDITION

COMMUNITY CALENDAR*

JANUARY

- 16 Holiday—Town Hall Closed
- 18 Planning Commission 7:30 p.m.
- 23 ASRB 4:30 p.m.
- 24 Town Council 7:30 p.m.

FEBRUARY

- 1 Planning Commission 7:30 p.m.
- 6 ASRB 4:30 p.m.
- 14 Town Council 7:30 p.m.
- 15 Planning Commission 7:30 p.m.
- 20 Holiday—Town Hall Closed
- 28 Town Council 7:30 p.m.

MARCH

- 1 Planning Commission 7:30 p.m.
- 6 ASRB 4:30 p.m.
- 14 Town Council 7:30 p.m.
- 15 Planning Commission 7:30 p.m.
- 20 ASRB 4:30 p.m.
- 28 Town Council 7:30 p.m.

* Meeting dates are subject to change. For more information, call 851-6790.

AGENDA HOTLINE:
306-0327



Call for information on Town Council meeting agendas.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY WOODSIDE!



The year 2006 ushers in the Town of Woodside's 50th anniversary of incorporation. The Town is planning a series of celebrations throughout the year. Stay tuned for more information!



From the Desk of the Town Manager

As I noted in the last edition of *The Woodsider*, the Town Council has received the results of a study that was commissioned last year to assess the Town's development permit application review and issuance process. The consulting firm hired to undertake the study presented the Council with a report that included its observations and findings and sixteen recommendations for improving service, streamlining the process, and strengthening the Town staff's communication channels. While the original emphasis of the study was how the engineering aspects of building projects are reviewed, the scope was expanded to include a more comprehensive look at the process in general. The report is available on the Town's website (www.woodsidetown.org). The sixteen recommendations and their implementation status are included on page 3 of this newsletter. Recommendation 9 is the focus of this edition of *The Woodsider*:

"Publish a website page or community newsletter article on the basics of building in Woodside."

I have tackled this task myself, instead of delegating it to the Planning Director and the Town Engineer and their teams. I am a layperson as far as the basics of building in Woodside are concerned. I do know what our Municipal Code regulations require and I do have an understanding of the other regulatory hurdles that

come into play when building in this town, but I am not a planner, an engineer, a geologist, a building official, or a fire marshal. I took this project on in an effort to describe the "basics of building" from a generalist's standpoint. There is a great deal of information available at Town Hall and on the Town's website about the specific rules and requirements that govern the process for acquiring an approved development permit in the Town of Woodside. We are in the process of updating and improving the "usability" of these sources and, as the status report on page 3 indicates, application submission checklists and standardized formats for review comments will be introduced early in this new calendar year. I am also convening a series of meetings with Town residents who have had experience with the development permit process within the last two years. Invitations will be going out as you receive this edition of *The Woodsider*. If you don't receive an invitation but would like to participate, please call or e-mail me with contact information so that I can make sure to include you. I am sincerely hoping that these meetings will provide specific examples of how the process can be improved to more effectively meet the needs of all Town residents. And...if you have input but can't come to one of the meetings, I'll be happy to schedule a meeting or telephone call with you or to accept your written comments, via e-mail or regular mail. I will honor everyone's desire for anonymity.

The insert that accompanies this newsletter is the primer on the basics of building in Woodside developed in response to the previously cited Recommendation 9. I hope that it is helpful. I have tried to lay out a fundamental framework for understanding the rules that govern the building process and the reasons for them. I

(Continued on page 2)

have taken an approach that assumes that potential applicants and their professionals are not steeped in the finer details of the Municipal Code and I apologize to those of you who are "in the know" and already well versed on certain of these basics.

My staff and I are committed to improving this system however we can. Despite the comments I have heard during recent Town Council meetings about my staff's motivations, we are all here to help residents/applicants through the process, within our legitimate authority. The Town Council has endorsed the sixteen recommendations outlined on page 3 and has allocated needed resources for their implementation. I am personally committed to turning the tide and delivering better service, whatever channel that may take. As I told the Town Council in November, it is imperative that we, the Council and staff, make a good faith effort to earn back the trust, respect, and goodwill of the residents of Woodside if we have lost these because of frustrations concerning the development permit review process. I accept the full responsibility for moving the Town forward in a positive and responsive direction.

I welcome your comments and questions. Call or e-mail me (851-6790 or sgeorge@woodsidetown.org).

IT'S OFFICIAL!

On December 30, 2005, the title to the 6+ acres that are destined to become



BARKLEY FIELDS AND PARK

was transferred to the Town of Woodside by a generous Woodside family. This wonderful gift, bolstered by the \$2.2 million in privately raised funds now on deposit with the Woodside Community Foundation, allows the Town to move forward with construction plans. We are hoping to use the completed park as the location for a Town-wide anniversary celebration and grand opening later this year.

Many, many thanks to everyone who has given so generously—whether of time, money, or property. Barkley Fields and Park is destined to become a true Town gem. Keep your eye on that space!



TOWN HALL DIRECTORY

TOWN COUNCIL

<u>District</u>		<u>Phone</u>
1	Ron Romines	851-8475
2	Deborah Gordon	851-1642
3	Sue Boynton	851-0610
4	Dave Tanner	851-4918
5	Paul Goeld	261-9829
6	Carroll Ann Hodges	851-7264
7	Pete Sinclair	851-3990

PLANNING COMMISSION

(May be contacted through Town Hall)

1	Sara Jorgensen
2	Yvette Ma
3	Richard Anderson
4	Stevan Patrick
5	Tom Livermore
6	Elizabeth Hobson
7	Diane Elder

ARCHITECTURAL & SITE REVIEW BOARD

(May be contacted through Town Hall)

Glenn Atkinson	Peter Mason
John Kapel	Karen Rongey-Conner
Anne Kasten	Peter Rosekrans
Claudia Marshall	

STANDING COMMITTEES

(May be contacted through Town Hall)

Audit
 Bicycle
 Conservation & Environmental Health
 Livestock/Animal Control
 Open Space
 Public Safety
 Recreation
 Trails
 Woodside History

TOWN HALL

Town Manager	Susan George
Town Engineer	Kent Dewell
Town Attorney	Jean Savaree
Town Clerk	Janet Koelsch
Planning Director	Hope Sullivan
Town Geologist	Bob Wright

Phone (650) 851-6790
 Fax (650) 851-2195
townhall@woodsidetown.org
www.woodsidetown.org

IS AIRCRAFT NOISE AN ISSUE FOR YOU?



The San Francisco International Airport/Community Roundtable will hold a public workshop to discuss air traffic over Woodside and Portola Valley. The workshop will focus on community noise impacts in the Woodside/Portola Valley area related to aircraft inbound to the San Francisco and Oakland airports. Participants will learn how these aircraft are routed for arrival, what citizens can do to register their concerns about aircraft noise, and what the future holds for air traffic above the Woodside and Portola Valley area. Representatives from the Towns of Woodside and Portola Valley, the FAA, the SFO Noise Abatement Office, and the Airport/Community Roundtable will attend. A copy of the workshop agenda will be available on the Roundtable web site, at www.smroundtable.com, approximately 5-7 days before the meeting.

Mark your calendars if you are interested. The meeting will take place on **Thursday, January 19, 2006, at 7:00 p.m.** at the Historic Schoolhouse in Portola Valley, 765 Portola Road.



THE BASICS OF BUILDING IN WOODSIDE

Thinking about undertaking a building project in the Town of Woodside? There are some basics that may help demystify the process for you as you move forward. A familiarity of the rules, gained through some advance homework, will better prepare you and your paid professionals as you consider your building objectives. There are many useful handouts available at Town Hall or on the Town's website (www.woodsidetown.org), as is the Woodside Municipal Code. Town staff is available for **pre-application meetings** during which you may consult with staff about your plans and objectives and seek information and/or advice about how to "perfect" your project and your application submission. The Town is working to make the building process more user friendly and customer-oriented by developing application submission checklists, standardizing review comments, improving communications, and shortening review turnaround time by bolstering staff resources. We are working to improve all of our handouts and to develop new handouts to enhance your understanding of what is involved with building in Woodside. This "primer" on the basics of building in Woodside is intended to provide an overview of what may be required of you as you begin the process.



What Are the Rules and Why Do They Exist?

Building in the Town of Woodside is governed by a body of laws and regulations, as is the case in most, if not all, California cities. The Town has adopted the various Uniform Codes, including the Building, Electrical, Plumbing, and Mechanical Codes, among others. Chapter 150 of the Woodside Municipal Code includes the Town's specific regulations relating to the adoption of these Uniform Codes. Section 150.21 requires building permits to be obtained from the Town before activity is undertaken that will "erect, construct, enlarge, alter, repair, move, improve, remove, convert, or demolish any building or structure." As you begin to think about your specific building project, keep in mind that you may need more than just a building permit, however.

In addition to the various Uniform Codes, there are other regulations included in the Woodside Municipal Code that dictate aspects of the building process. These regulations were developed over the past several decades to guide the development of lands within the Town pursuant to the goals and policies included in the Woodside General Plan. The goals lay out the expectation that development of the lands within the Town is to be done in such a way that the natural environment of the Town is conserved, disturbance of natural terrain is minimized, and persons and properties are protected from unreasonable exposure to hazards, including fire, flood, unstable ground, erosion, and earthquakes. The policies lay out the general guidelines for development of land within the Town's planning area, including a guideline that "the magnitude and intensity of land use" should be "limited by natural and other planning constraints." The natural constraints most often found in the Town include steep slopes, geologic hazards, flooding, and proximity to stream corridors. Another constraint is the rural nature of the Town itself. This impacts how lands may be developed relative to the provision of certain basic infrastructure. For example, about 75% to 80% of all properties in Woodside are not served by a public sewer system and must provide adequate on-site private wastewater disposal systems. Similarly, there is not a formal storm drainage system in Woodside, making the management of drainage and water runoff caused by development a serious fundamental concern.

The regulations that were promulgated in keeping with the goals and policies of the Woodside General Plan are found in the Municipal Code and include:

☑ Zoning (Chapter 153): The zoning regulations cover many aspects of building in Woodside. Key among these are the designated **Zoning Districts** and the standards that regulate the uses of lands, density of population, size and location of structures, and area and dimensions of building sites, among other things. These standards vary for each of the Town's zoning districts. Prior to starting a building project, it is critical that the property owner/applicant

understand the specific restrictions that apply, based upon the zoning district of the involved property. A handout is available at Town Hall or on the Town's website that outlines the standards for each district.

The Zoning Code also includes specific regulations that may or may not apply to a particular property. If they apply, their requirements must be incorporated into the building plans at the outset of the project in order to avoid delays in the permit approval process. Included in the Zoning Code are the **Hillside Development Regulations** (starting at Section 153.135), regulations governing **Geologically Hazardous Areas** (starting at Section 153.150), **Stream Corridor Protection** regulations (starting at Section 153.205), and **Architectural and Site Review** regulations (starting at Section 153.220).



The Hillside Development Regulations...

apply to all undeveloped hillside lots where the average ground slope of the lot exceeds 12½% and those developed lots which exceed an acre in size with an average ground slope of more than 12½%. For such lots, the regulations restrict the activities that can take place upon "that portion of a lot or parcel which has a ground slope in excess of 35%." Such areas are not to be altered by grading, removing or altering natural features such as streams, rock outcrops, ridgelines, or drainage swales, removing natural vegetation, or by undertaking any activity related to the preparation of a site for development purposes. For those portions of a hillside lot with a ground slope less than 35%, the regulations provide a requirement that a minimum percent of this area is to remain in its natural state. The minimum percent increases on a sliding scale, depending upon the average ground slope of the entire lot.

The regulations governing **Geologically Hazardous Areas** require the evaluation and review of proposed building construction, site development, and land and subdivisions in specified geologically hazardous areas. These areas are defined in the Zoning Code as: (1) land located within the special studies zone established by the Alquist-Priolo Geologic Hazards Act (a State of California law); (2) land within 125 feet of inferred or known fault traces identified on the official Town fault map; (3) a portion of certain problem areas identified on the General Plan Diagram; (4) land identified as

having a moderate to high susceptibility to landslides (per the Basic Data Contribution No. 43, United States Geologic Survey); or (5) land identified as landslide on the official Town Geology and Geologic Hazards Map. The regulations incorporate State setback requirements for the special studies zone.

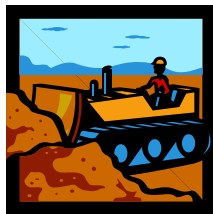
The **Stream Corridor Protection** regulations establish limitations on what activities can be done within a stream corridor. Certain uses can be permitted if a use permit is issued by the Planning Commission. In general, however, the Town's rules protect the stream corridors by prohibiting within the corridors: (1) removal of riparian vegetation; (2) filling or dumping of slash, debris, fertilizers, pesticides, liquid or solid waste, and agricultural waste, including manure; (3) channelization or damming of streams or creeks; and (4) the construction of any structure, including fences. The Stream Corridor is defined as a horizontal distance of 50 feet, measured from each side of the center line of the stream or a horizontal distance of 25 feet, measured from the top of the stream bank, whichever is greater.

The **Architectural and Site Review** regulations spell out which proposed building projects must be publicly reviewed and approved by the Architectural and Site Review Board (ASRB). Generally, a project will be subject to ASRB review if the building location is: (1) within the Skyline or Interstate 280 State Scenic Corridors; (2) within 1,000 feet, measured from the edge of the right-of-way, of Kings Mountain Road, Mountain Home Road, Woodside Road, Whiskey Hill Road, La Honda Road, Portola Road, Cañada Road, or Sand Hill Road, provided the building is visible from the driving surface; (3) within the "Western Hills" comprised of all lands west of Kings Mountain Road, Woodside Road, and Portola Road; and/or (4) located on a ridge line visible from the roads and highways set forth in the preceding three points. The regulations include the specific application materials to be submitted for ASRB review and the factors that are to be considered by the ASRB in reviewing project applications. The Town has adopted a set of **Residential Design Guidelines** and, although they are not a part of the Municipal Code, they are a valuable tool for use in designing your building project.

There are other sections of the **Zoning Code** that may be applicable to your project. These sections regulate signs, parking, and fences, among other things. A review of the Municipal Code or a consultation with staff will assist you in

determining the extent to which you may need to take these regulations into account.

☑ **Site Development (Chapter 151):** The rules for site development were enacted to “protect public and private lands from erosion, earth movement, flooding, and degradation of water quality and ensure the maximum preservation of the natural and scenic character of the Town” and to “ensure that the site development work on each site harmoniously relates to adjacent lands and minimizes physical problems which could result in safety hazards and increased maintenance costs.” Site development means “any alteration of terrain or removal of vegetation for the purpose of preparing land for any land use.” The circumstances under which a site development permit is required are included in Municipal Code Section 151.20. A handout that specifically addresses the Town’s Site Development regulations is available at Town Hall and on the Town’s website.



☑ **Other Pertinent Town Regulations:** There are several chapters of the Town’s Municipal Code that are relevant to a discussion of the basics of building in Woodside. Chapter 51 includes the Town’s rules and regulations governing **public sewers and on-site private wastewater disposal systems**. Chapter 54 lays out the Town’s **water supply standards**. Chapter 55 includes rules for managing properties within the **floodplain**. Chapter 95 governs **encroachments into the public right-of-way**. A review of these sections and a consultation with staff, as needed, will provide a better understanding of the Town’s development standards at the early stages of a building project.

You may need only a building permit to undertake your building project. You may, however, need to go to the ASRB, or apply for a Site Development Permit, depending upon the specific circumstances of your property and your project. You may need to develop your project in a certain manner to be consistent with the Town’s zoning regulations. Understanding the foregoing rules and seeking consultation with Town staff will help you in preparing a complete application submittal.

The Building/Development Process

Once you have determined the scope of your project and have assessed what permits and approvals you will need, you are ready to develop an application submittal package. The contents of the package will vary, depending upon what specific permits and approvals you need to secure. Handouts are available for all the major applications discussed in the previous section and application submission checklists are being developed to facilitate putting the package together.

Once your application package is accepted at the counter, the plans and any related studies or reports will be routed to Town staff members who are responsible for reviewing and checking your plans according to their areas of expertise. Plan sets are routed to a planner, a deputy building official, an engineer, the Town Geologist, the Woodside Fire Protection District, and the San Mateo County Health Department (which acts as the Town’s Health Officer concerning wastewater disposal and water standards). Each reviewer checks to ascertain whether your plans adhere to the regulations for which he or she is responsible for ensuring compliance. For example, the deputy building official, or an outside consultant designated to do so, checks for compliance with various Uniform Codes. The planner looks at zoning compliance. The engineer looks at all Site Development issues, as well as issues related to sewers, private on-site wastewater disposal systems, encroachments, and the floodplain. Plan check comments are prepared by each reviewer and all comments are forwarded to the person designated as the applicant for your project, with a copy to the property owner (sometimes the property owner is also the applicant, but often the applicant is a paid professional, such as a contractor or architect). Responses to the comments are prepared and revised plans developed, as needed, and these are submitted for a second review. Once the plans are found to demonstrate compliance with the applicable codes, the permit(s) can be issued.

The Town is working to truncate its review process and is developing a standardized format for review comments that will make it easier to track the progress of a project through the plan check process. The Town is also developing checklists for development application submissions. The more complete the initial submission and the more responsive it is to meeting the Town’s regulations, the less likely it will be the subject of extensive plan check/review comments and subsequent

resubmissions and checks. Staff is available to meet with you if there are questions concerning any comments generated during the review process. It is advisable that you call to schedule a meeting in advance so that the member(s) of the staff most knowledgeable about your project can be in attendance.

Conclusion

Undertaking a building project represents a major commitment of time, money, and other resources on your part. Understanding what is involved in the process will help you in the early stages of the genesis of your project. There is much information available to guide you in your design and planning stages. Availing yourself of a pre-application meeting and consultation with the Town's staff should be a step that you seriously think about taking early in the process. The staff can't change the regulations, but we can try and make the process as painless as is possible. Arming you and your building professionals with the right information is a critical first step. Please contact Town Hall for additional information or to be directed to the

most appropriate member of the staff to assist you with this major undertaking.



Woodside Town Hall
2955 Woodside Road
P.O. Box 620005
Woodside, CA 94062
(650) 851-6790
www.woodsidetown.org

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE DEVELOPMENT PERMIT REVIEW PROCESS

1. Add one dedicated and field experienced engineer to the Engineering Division and make him/her responsible solely for development review. Status: The firm of CPS Executive Search was engaged to recruit qualified candidates for the new position. The application deadline for the position is January 11, 2006.
2. Prepare a *detailed* application checklist for all divisions to be used by the applicant in preparing the submittal and by the reviewer in evaluating the submittal. Status: A first draft of a detailed checklist has been completed and is being circulated for comments. Targeted completion: January 17, 2006
3. Prepare a standard format for review comments to improve organization and clarity of responses. Status: A first draft has been completed. Final adjustments are needed. Targeted completion: January 20, 2006
4. If plan quality does not improve measurably with the addition of a development engineer, add clerical staff to ease project manager workload so that they can more thoroughly screen submittals. Status: This recommendation can not be implemented until after the new engineer position is filled.
5. After the development engineer position is added, set specific review timelines and measure performance against them. Status: This recommendation can not be implemented until after the new engineer position is filled.
6. Set standards for customer service and measure employee performance against them. Status: This recommendation stems from a finding in the report that phone calls and e-mail messages are sometimes not returned in a timely manner. The report suggests the adoption of a standard such as "All e-mails/phone calls/voice mails shall be responded to within 36 hours." The report also indicates that "before the Town staff can realistically meet such commitments, resources must be added." The Town Manager is pursuing a standard with the members of the Town's senior staff, to be implemented without the addition of resources. Critical to the setting of such a standard is identifying a means for measuring performance against the standard. The Town Manager and senior staff are also working to develop a process for assessing compliance with whatever standard is adopted. Targeted completion: January 21, 2006
7. Advertise the Town's willingness to hold pre-application meetings and encourage new applicants to attend one to go over the Town's process and to discuss realistic timelines. Status: An "advertisement" about the availability of these meetings is to be placed on the Town's website and a flyer placed in the information kiosk at Town Hall. Targeted completion: Ongoing
8. Copy the applicant/owner on all comments and conditions given to contractors. Status: Implemented.
9. Publish a website page or community newsletter article on the basics of building in Woodside. Status: The Winter 2006 edition of *The Woodsider* will be dedicated to the entire development process and a website page developed based upon this information. Targeted completion: January 17, 2006
10. Hold quarterly meetings with the development community to discuss regulatory changes, outline the Town's development review process, and other related matters. Status: Not implemented yet. The implementation of Recommendations 2, 3, 7, and 9, as well as the Town Manager's completion of the pending information-gathering meetings with residents and their professionals, are critical prior to the implementation of such quarterly meetings. Targeted completion: March, 2006
11. Create a menu of standard design options and amenities and set design standards as much as possible to reduce variability at the Architecture & Site Review Board. Status: The ASRB has appointed a subcommittee to work on this recommendation with the Planning Director. Targeted completion: Not yet determined.
12. Assure that applicants are given a copy of staff recommendations prior to finalization and are afforded an opportunity to provide comments in writing for distribution to all decision makers as part of the standard review process. Status: Partially implemented. Staff has begun to make a concerted effort to convey all concerns it may have about a project pending before the ASRB and/or the Planning Commission, prior to the finalization of its recommendations and reports. Targeted completion: Ongoing
13. Set fees and surcharges to fully cover development-related costs. Status: A consultant has been retained to undertake the needed study and to develop the required fee adjustment justifications. Staff feels that increases in fees should not go into effect until the additional resources needed to improve the development process are in place. Targeted completion: April, 2006
14. Purchase and implement a new computer software system that automates the development review project tracking and financial systems. Status: A summer intern completed the initial research on available software. A Request for Proposals (RFP) is being developed by the Town Manager to solicit written proposals. The input of the new engineer will be useful in this undertaking. The impact of implementing a new system upon the day-to-day workings of Town staff needs to be assessed as a part of this process. Targeted completion: To be determined.
15. Expand open counter hours to the public to include the noon period and provide some hours open to the public after 3 p.m. when construction work generally winds down. Status: Not yet implemented. A pilot project is being considered for early 2006 whereby afternoon hours are shifted to accommodate customers with a preference for post-3 p.m. Town Hall visits. Continuing to assess viability of recommendation, given staffing constraints. Targeted completion: January 23, 2006 for pilot project
16. Provide reviewing employees the workspace necessary to be efficient, as funding and space permit. Status: Not yet implemented. This is a long-range undertaking that will require an analysis of space and capital funding. Targeted completion: Recommendations to be incorporated into the 2006-07 Proposed Budget, due to the Town Council in early June of 2006

**CABLE TELEVISION FRANCHISE AGREEMENT NEGOTIATIONS WITH
COMCAST ARE NOW UNDERWAY**

In support of the negotiation process, the Town has developed a survey about cable television service needs and issues. The survey will be sent to every residence in Town. Look for it in the mail and on the Town's website the week of January 16th. Your views and comments are not just welcomed, but will support an important part of the negotiations.

You can fax or mail your completed survey to Town Hall.

Fax: (650) 851-2195

Mail: P.O. Box 620005, Woodside 94062

Thanks in advance for your participation!

**THE WOODSIDER
2955 Woodside Road
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