



**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**Date:** 11/17/2025  
**Time:** 7:00 p.m.  
**Location:** Zoom.us/join – ID# 846 9472 6242 and  
City Council Chambers  
751 Laurel St., Menlo Park, CA 94025

**A. Call To Order**

Chair Andrew Ehrich called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**B. Roll Call**

Present: Andrew Ehrich (Chair), Ross Silverstein (Vice Chair), Linh Dan Do, Katie Ferrick, Jennifer Schindler, Misha Silin

Absent: Katie Behroozi

Staff: Matthew Ball, Assistant Planner; Jacob Garcia, Contract Planner; Corinna Sandmeier, Principal Planner

**C. Reports and Announcements**

Principal Planner Corinna Sandmeier said the City Council’s November 18 agenda would have a study session on the phased improvements for the public plaza along the 600 block of Santa Cruz Avenue.

Chair Ehrich said in future meetings that he would experiment with hand raised votes for the consent calendar, continuations already noted on the agenda, and for any extensions to a meeting beyond the 11 p.m. time, notably noncontroversial items.

**D. Public Comment**

Chair Ehrich opened public comment and closed it as no persons requested to speak.

**E. Study Session**

E1. Study session/Menlo Park Fire Protection District/300 Middlefield Rd. and 114 Santa Margarita Ave.:

Request for a study session to redevelop Fire Station 1, including the demolition of the existing fire station and training tower, and subsequent construction of a new fire station (two stories), training tower (five stories), district operations center (two stories), and underground parking. The project would include rezoning from R-1-S (Single Family Suburban Residential) to PF (Public Facilities), an associated General Plan Land Use Designation amendment, a Zoning Ordinance text amendment to allow greater than 60 percent FAR (Floor Area Ratio), a General Plan text amendment to allow the proposed FAR within the Public Facilities designation, a Use Permit for the higher FAR, overall development as an emergency services facility (Special Use), and the use



of hazardous materials (diesel fuel for an emergency generator and propane for training exercises), and Architectural Control for the buildings and site improvements. The applicant is also requesting use permit approval for a temporary emergency services facility (Special Use) at 114 Santa Margarita Avenue during construction of the project. (Staff report #25-051-PC)

Contract Planner Jacob Garcia presented a summary of the project and proposed entitlements, the project sites, and the next steps in the review and entitlement process.

Austin Dunklee and Kelly Clancy, PBK Architects, spoke on behalf of the proposed project.

Replying to the Commission, Jonathan Hitchcock, project manager, said in 2020 the District conducted a facility needs assessment and determined a projection of future growth.

Chair Ehrich opened the public comment.

Public Comment:

- Jeff Schmidt noted he represented District 3 on the City Council but was speaking as a resident, and drew attention to multiple projects happening within a five to seven year period in the vicinity of this proposal and related traffic and transportation matters. He referred to the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) cycle coming up and asked both from a transportation and public building perspective if that amount of growth was being considered.
- Dean Rubinson, Director of Development for Ellis Partners, said his building was across the street from the temporary facility at the corner of Santa Margarita and Middlefield Road. He said they were supportive of the City and Fire District planning for future needs but noticed the plans for the temporary facilities were not as developed. He encouraged the Planning Commission to require the applicant to further develop those plans. He said it appeared a seven-foot fence was proposed but suggested a higher fence to screen the 15-foot apparatus there, and to require plantings in front of the fence to mitigate the negative visual impact on their building, and suggested retaining the tree on the southeast corner.

Chair Ehrich closed public comment.

Replying to Commissioner Schindler, Planner Sandmeier said staff would need to get more information from the applicant about their long term goals for the temporary site.

Replying to Commissioner Schindler, Mr. Dunklee said one sign would emphasize that this was a District building, and the two other signs would identify the other buildings within the campus – fire station, administration building and training tower.

Commissioner Schindler said the one insignia sign with illumination seemed too much compared to other fire stations' signage.

Mr. Dunklee said it was intended to be illuminated but also tied into the alerting system to communicate what might be happening to the community.

Discussion ensued between staff and the Commission regarding heritage tree removal and the ordinance, planting replacement trees on another site, and the potential of an in-lieu fee instead. Commissioner Ferrick observed impacts on property insurance because of fire hazards from trees close to buildings and branches overhanging roofs.

Commissioner Ferrick noted the increase from 30% FAR to 75% FAR and suggested in return consideration be made of housing for staff. She said the accessible public meeting space and antique fire display proposed were nice elements that provided some public benefit in regard to the increased FAR.

Replying to Commissioner Ferrick, Chief Mark Lorenzen said their entire staff used to be at 300 Middlefield Road, but they outgrew it. He said they wanted to conduct training within the city and not in other jurisdictions that left coverage gaps. He referred to the Housing Element and noted the proposal included room for expansion.

Commissioner Ferrick suggested that a transitional housing component be included in the future proposal.

Commissioner Do said she liked the aesthetics of the proposed buildings and the statement sign but suggested it might be smaller to not overwhelm people walking or biking through the neighborhood. She suggested on the Santa Monica elevation to create some demarcation of the public lobby to Building B to break up the length of that wall. She suggested bicycle racks for when there were community meetings. She said although she shared concerns about the precedent of replacement trees planted offsite that it seemed to make sense here because the properties were so close. She suggested that the expanse of roof might provide opportunities for a green meeting space for employees as well as solar panels.

Commissioner Silverstein raised concerns about FAR limits on public facility zoned parcels. He said he supported use of the roof expanse and solar panels and the addition of bike parking. He expressed concern about the increased parking and acknowledged the undergrounding of it but noted the available surface parking and that potentially the site at Santa Margarita could become a parking lot.

Commissioner Silin referred to concerns raised about other projects in the pipeline in this area. He said the illuminated sign might fit well in the future, but it was unclear if it would in the current aesthetic of the neighborhood. He agreed with the addition of a bike rack and suggested benches as well to add to the community feel. He said he would like to see a proposal for staff housing at 170 Middlefield Road and/or 114 Santa Margarita.

Replying to Commissioner Silin, Mr. Dunklee said he understood the point to have separation between the property and road for safety referring to the Santa Margarita property.

Chair Ehrich said as had been suggested he supported introducing more green into the design such as a green roof as well as a bit more public space, bike parking, or other things to emphasize community space. He said overall he loved the design. He said he was not comfortable approving the zoning ordinance changes as proposed as they seemed too small and reactive based on one project and that it did not take a holistic and future looking view of what was needed. Chair Ehrich recessed the meeting for a five minute break.

Chair Ehrich reconvened the meeting at 9:02 p.m.

Replying to Commissioner Schindler, Mr. Dunklee said they were not pursuing LEED certification but were meeting CalGreen standards. He said it was not in their plans to evaluate the crosswalk at Linfield. He said they could look into it noting their return drive would be moved north and closer to alignment with Linfield.

Commissioner Schindler said related to rezoning she appreciated the macro issue raised and the opportunity to refine how the city approached zoning. She said she would support that effort unless it slowed this project down. She noted comments on sign review. She said she had no concerns as it related to hazardous materials, or use permit for the diesel or propane generator as that was a key component of training exercises. She said related to architectural control that she appreciated the specific description of the metals in the design but that the reflective properties of those mentioned did not come through in the drawings. She noted in particular that the very corner of the building above the glass wall at the corner of Middlefield and Santa Monica could be softer. She said she did not have anything to comment upon for the environmental review component at this time.

Commissioner Silverstein said regarding zoning that they had the opportunity to improve processes and municipal code. He said he would not be comfortable approving a recommendation to change the zoning unless they were confident that it would be far enough so the need to redo was obviated and to do future-proofing. He said regarding traffic and response times that he would urge the District and anyone listening to continue to advocate for safer streets, better bicycle infrastructure, and better public transportation.

Responding to the zoning questions, Planner Garcia said staff could research more possible alternatives to the phrasing of such a development standard for public facilities but noted that attaching that to this project might also complicate the CEQA review in determining the implications of the project.

Responding further, Planner Garcia said the project would come back to the Planning Commission with reference and summary of the feedback provided at tonight's meeting and then would continue forward with a formal recommendation to the City Council.

## **F. Informational Items**

### **F1. Future Planning Commission Meeting Schedule**

- Regular Meeting: December 1, 2025

Planner Sandmeier said the December 1 agenda would have some single-family home projects and a project on Sandhill Road.

- Regular Meeting: December 15, 2025

Agenda not yet finalized.

**G. Adjournment**

Chair Ehrich adjourned the meeting at 9:19 p.m.

Staff Liaison: Corinna Sandmeier, Principal Planner

Recording Secretary: Brenda Bennett

Approved by the Planning Commission on December 15, 2025