



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Date: 9/11/2017
Time: 7:00 p.m.
City Council Chambers
701 Laurel St., Menlo Park, CA 94025

A. Call To Order

Chair Drew Combs called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

B. Roll Call

Present: Andrew Barnes, Drew Combs (Chair), Susan Goodhue, Larry Kahle (Vice Chair), John Onken, Henry Riggs

Absent: Katherine Strehl

Staff: Sunny Chao, Assistant Planner; Deanna Chow, Principal Planner; Angela Obeso, Senior Transportation Engineer; Nikki Nagayo, Assistant Public Works Director

C. Reports and Announcements

Principal Planner Deanna Chow said the City Council considered the 2131 Sand Hill Road, Stanford Annexation and Office Project last week, and continued it, tentatively to its September 26, 2017 meeting. She said the City Council tentatively at the same meeting would consider the 500 El Camino Real Mixed-Use Project.

D. Public Comment

There was none.

E. Consent Calendar

E1. Approval of minutes from the August 14, 2017, Planning Commission meeting. ([Attachment](#))

ACTION: Motion and second (John Onken/Susan Goodhue) to approve the minutes; passes 6-0-1 with Commissioner Strehl absent.

F. Public Hearing

F1. Use Permit/Leila Osseiran/1074 Del Norte Avenue:
Request for a use permit to partially demolish, remodel, and add a second story addition to an existing nonconforming single-story, single-family residence on a substandard lot with respect to lot width in the R-1-U (Single-Family Urban Residential) zoning district. The proposed work would exceed 50 percent of the existing replacement value in a 12-month period. The proposal would

also exceed 50 percent of the existing floor area and is considered equivalent to a new structure. The project was previously reviewed and continued at the Planning Commission meeting of May 22, 2017. ([Staff Report #17-057-PC](#))

Staff Comment: Assistant Planner Sunny Chao said there were no updates to the written staff report.

Applicant Presentation: Andreas Hofmann, property owner, said the existing structure was built in 1954 and was a 1700 square foot home with garage on an approximately 8700 square foot lot. He said the proposed renovation would increase the footprint expanding the master bedroom, relocating the kitchen to the covered patio area, and adding a second story with two bedrooms and two bathrooms. He said the Commission had provided detailed comments when they considered the project at its May 22, 2017 meeting, and he would address each one. He said in the original design they had a 12-foot wall connecting the first to the second floor which was now completely revised by relocating the second floor addition back and to the left. He said they decided to use stucco with stone accents as opposed to using redwood siding. He said the second comment regarded the roof lines and balance. He said the hip roof was used throughout the entire design now with just a flat roof over the entrance door. He said another concern was about the lack of connectivity between the shed roof over the garage and the elevation and termination of the hip roof on the right side elevation. He said all of that had been addressed with the second floor centered with a very traditional roof that went around the sides of the house. He said the fourth comment was to redesign the addition over the garage as it was disproportionate compared to the rest of the house. He said they addressed that by moving the second floor addition to the left and centered and no longer massing to one side. He said a fifth comment was to go over the whole design to make sure it was balanced and to work out the details so it would fit within the neighborhood. He said they believed that they had addressed all of the comments.

Commissioner Larry Kahle said the initial proposal had redwood siding and he did not think the Commission wanted to have that eliminated. He asked if the applicant would be willing to add some redwood siding to the design. Mr. Hofmann said they wanted to give the house a modern feel. He said they experimented with different siding and decided on stone accents to frame the entrance and somewhat above as that aligned with their desired style and also with some of the work done in the neighborhood.

Chair Combs opened the public hearing.

- Cathy Tokic, Menlo Park, expressed her appreciation for the kindness and thoughtfulness of the applicants, her neighbors, noting they were active in the community. She said the homes in the neighborhood were built post-World War II and constructed well but were very similar in style. She said the neighborhood now was charmingly eclectic with home styles that included Tudor, Mediterranean, contemporary, Spanish, ranch, and cottage. She said the subject property proposal was tastefully designed to blend with the surrounding area. She expressed support for the project noting the letter she read was signed also by her husband David. She noted she had two other letters. She said in the first one from Ramsey Najal he wrote that he and his wife April lived at 24 Oakwood Place and supported the proposed project. She said the second letter was from Janelle Gee and Ryan Sandoval who lived directly across the street from the subject property and they also were in support of the project.

Chair Combs closed the public hearing.

Commission Comment: Commissioner Onken thanked the applicant for taking the Commission comments seriously and making significant changes. He said he could support the project.

Commissioner Goodhue said she appreciated the applicants' efforts noting she had voted against the continuance for redesign as she thought the Commission was leaning toward designing from the dais. She said she thought the applicant had responded well to Commission comments.

Commissioner Kahle said he appreciated the changes made, especially the relocation of the second floor to address massing concerns and the change in window materials from vinyl to wood. He said his two concerns were the siding as he did not think it read as contemporary and that the stucco with some limited stone accents seemed overwhelming. He said he would like to see some redwood from the original proposal. He said his second concern was the height of the second floor which would benefit from having eight foot ceilings rather than nine foot ceilings. He said otherwise he thought it was much improved from the original proposal.

Commissioner Henry Riggs thanked the applicant for his efforts, noting that the lot was certainly not a small lot although it was substandard in lot width. He noted two palms and a yucca tree in the front yard and asked if the applicant was interested in removing those as it might be advantageous to get that request made at the Commission level.

Principal Planner Chow said the Planning Commission could provide guidance about trees but any removals would have to be done through the heritage tree removal process.

Mr. Hofmann said both of the palm trees had overgrown their location.

Commissioner Riggs asked about the finish materials on the right side elevation that seemed to have a window seat. Walid Nazzal, project designer, said the material was stucco.

Commissioner Riggs moved to approve as recommended in the staff report with an added recommendation of support should the property owner want to remove any of the two palm trees and/or yucca tree in the front yard. Commissioner Goodhue seconded the motion.

Chair Combs said he recalled that he thought the Commission had been very detailed in its comments and he appreciated the applicants' efforts to address those.

ACTION: Motion and second (Riggs/Goodhue) to approve as recommended in the staff report with following modification; passes 6-0-1 with Commissioner Strehl absent.

1. Make a finding that the project is categorically exempt under Class 1 (Section 15301, "Existing Facilities") of the current California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines.
2. Make findings, as per Section 16.82.030 of the Zoning Ordinance pertaining to the granting of use permits, that the proposed use will not be detrimental to the health, safety, morals, comfort and general welfare of the persons residing or working in the neighborhood of such proposed use, and will not be detrimental to property and improvements in the neighborhood or the general welfare of the City.
3. Approve the use permit subject to the following **standard** conditions:

- a. Development of the project shall be substantially in conformance with the plans prepared by Walid Nazzal and Associates consisting of 12 plan sheets, dated received September 5, 2017, and approved by the Planning Commission on September 11, 2017, except as modified by the conditions contained herein, subject to review and approval of the Planning Division.
- b. Prior to building permit issuance, the applicants shall comply with all Sanitary District, Menlo Park Fire Protection District, and utility companies' regulations that are directly applicable to the project.
- c. Prior to building permit issuance, the applicants shall comply with all requirements of the Building Division, Engineering Division, and Transportation Division that are directly applicable to the project.
- d. Prior to building permit issuance, the applicant shall submit a plan for any new utility installations or upgrades for review and approval by the Planning, Engineering and Building Divisions. All utility equipment that is installed outside of a building and that cannot be placed underground shall be properly screened by landscaping. The plan shall show exact locations of all meters, back flow prevention devices, transformers, junction boxes, relay boxes, and other equipment boxes.
- e. Simultaneous with the submittal of a complete building permit application, the applicant shall submit plans indicating that the applicant shall remove and replace any damaged and significantly worn sections of frontage improvements. The plans shall be submitted for review and approval of the Engineering Division.
- f. Simultaneous with the submittal of a complete building permit application, the applicant shall submit a Grading and Drainage Plan for review and approval of the Engineering Division. The Grading and Drainage Plan shall be approved prior to the issuance of grading, demolition or building permits.
- g. Heritage trees in the vicinity of the construction project shall be protected pursuant to the Heritage Tree Ordinance.

I. The Commission supports removal of any of the two palm trees and one yucca tree in the front yard.

- F2. Use Permit/Srinath Narayanan/1005 Almanor Avenue:
Request for a use permit to demolish a one-story, single-family residence with a detached garage and to construct a new two-story, single-family residence with an attached garage and a basement on a substandard lot with regards to lot width in the R-1-U (Single-Family Urban Residential) zoning district. As part of the proposed development, one heritage London plane tree in the left corner of the rear yard is proposed for removal. ([Staff Report #17-058-PC](#))

Staff Comment: Assistant Planner Chao said the project architect informed staff today that the basement would perfectly align with the wall of the first floor. She said in the staff report she had noted that approximately 30 square feet was outside the wall of the first floor and counted toward Floor Area Limit (FAL) even though the total FAL was under the allowable maximum. She said with this alignment the project was substantially conforming.

Questions of Staff: Commissioner Riggs asked if the excavation for the light well was within the building wall. Assistant Planner Chao said light wells were not included in FAL calculations. Commissioner Riggs said he was thinking about the neighbor's concern regarding excavation near the property line. Assistant Planner Chao said there were three light wells with one on each side and one at the rear. Commissioner Riggs said the change would put the light wells closer to the property lines on the sides. Assistant Planner Chao suggested referring to the project architect.

Applicant Presentation: Greg Miller, project designer, said the plans currently showed the basement coming forward a bit on the right front of the house toward the large oak tree. He said with the revised plan that an area of the basement would be pulled back to align with the first floor footprint, noting that was a mechanical room and did not need to be as large as proposed originally. He said pulling away from the heritage oak tree was good. He said this would not affect the light wells and those would not get any closer to the side or rear property lines.

Mr. Miller said the staff report was very thorough. He said they tried to design a house that would be a good addition to the neighborhood. He said the lot width was 64 feet in a zone requiring 65 feet width which meant the project needed a use permit. He said they tried to keep all other standards below maximum allowable. He said the building was 28-feet in height but under the daylight plane limits. He said the second floor was setback from the front and sides and windows were kept minimal and small both in number and size on the sides to maintain privacy for the neighbors. He said regarding excavation that sheet SB1 was done by an engineer to show that excavation would not pose danger to the neighbors. He said the applicant's family was present as well.

Commissioner Kahle noted the coastal oak tree, #3, in the front was rather close to the house and where a 10-foot deep basement was being proposed. He said he did not see anything in the arborist report regarding that and asked if staff was concerned with the tree being that close to a deep basement. Mr. Miller said that the arborist report had specific recommendations regarding the tree preservation and protection. He said the tree was a fantastic element in the lot and they would do everything to protect it. Commissioner Kahle said on the shoring plan the shoring pier, the stitch piers, did not wrap around the front. Mr. Miller said they did not need to wrap around the front. He said they could use them in the front of the tree if that was what they needed to do to keep the excavation to match the arborist report. He said generally the shoring was on the side as this was a small lot and they could not do a 45-degree cut.

Commissioner Kahle said he did not think the plans matched the left side elevation. He said on the floor plan there was a large window in the bedroom, no window in the closet and one in the shower and that was different from the elevation. Mr. Miller said there would be two windows and the plan was accurate. He said they would not do a high window in the closet. Commissioner Kahle confirmed with Mr. Miller that the one bedroom window would be smaller.

Commissioner Riggs said Mr. Miller had said the windows were small and minimized. He said typically first floor windows were below the fence height or at the fence height, and typically not an issue. He said on the right side neither the office nor the rear room had any windows on the first floor, and asked Mr. Miller if they really wanted to do that. Mr. Miller said there was not much to look at noting the side yard was short and there was a fence. He said they were getting enough light from the front and back where more light would come into the house. He said in the dining room he wanted to use the entire wall for shelves and cabinets. He said for the office they could

easily add a window there but was not sure it was needed. Commissioner Riggs said a neighbor had expressed concern that there was sandy soil related to excavating. He asked what the soils report had found. Mr. Miller said he had not studied the soils report carefully but recalled there was some sand at some point. Commissioner Riggs said that sandy clay and sandy loam were quite different. He asked why they were removing the heritage plane tree from the back of the lot. Mr. Miller said it was a heritage tree by virtue of its size but it was not attractive and dropped a lot of debris. He said when they removed the garage and started grading there was concern that the tree would not survive. He said it was not 100% necessary to remove the tree but they thought it would make for a better lot and they would replace it with several other trees.

Commissioner Riggs left the dais and brought up a slide of the plane tree. He said in his opinion it was a rather well formed plane tree at the intersection of four lots. He said in removing it there would be a hole in the landscaping. He said it would provide shade for two lots from the south sun during the summer and above all it was a heritage tree. He said reasons for the heritage tree ordinance were heat gain, oxygen regeneration, shade and aesthetics. He said he could not understand removing a heritage tree that was very close to an existing structure, which was actually being removed. He said excavation for slab on grade should not be much of an impact on the tree.

Mr. Miller said primarily the tree appearance and its mess was why they wanted to remove it, but they did not have to and would consult with their arborist regarding its preservation and protection during demolition.

Chair Combs said the City Arborist had given tentative approval of the heritage tree removal permit and asked what that would mean if the project were approved by the Planning Commission. Assistant Planner Chao said that tentative approval would become approval if the project were approved by the Planning Commission. Chair Combs confirmed with Ms. Chao that the City Arborist's perspective was that this was a tree that should or could be removed. He clarified with Ms. Chao that the tree removal request would not be reviewed by the Environmental Quality Committee.

Commissioner Andrew Barnes asked if the City Arborist's finding of support for heritage tree removal was based on a tree's health. Principal Planner Chow said the City Arborist looked at different things related to heritage tree removal including the tree health. She said in the case of development there was a consideration of design constraint and appropriateness. She said if the Planning Commission did not approve a project the tree removal permit might not necessarily be granted. Commissioner Barnes asked if the tree was perfectly healthy. Principal Planner Chow referred to the included arborist's report, which said the tree's health was fair.

Chair Combs opened the public hearing.

- Christine Couch, Menlo Park, said her home was across the street from the subject property. She said she had no objections to the project but had some requests for information. She asked regarding the basement excavation if they ran into groundwater what would happen to it; if there was a build time limit in Menlo Park; and how construction traffic and congestion were regulated.

Chair Combs closed the public hearing.

Commission Comment: Chair Combs asked about the speaker's question about groundwater being found during excavation. Principal Planner Chow said during the building permit process engineering, building and planning reviewed the plans and that inspections would occur during construction. She said she did not know if there was a particular concern. Ms. Couch spoke from the audience. Chair Combs clarified the question was whether Menlo Park had regulations for the handling of groundwater if encountered during excavation and whether it would be recycled or disposed. Principal Planner Chow said she did not have specifics on the dewatering of a construction site.

Chair Combs asked regarding build time limit if there was a construction time line that projects had to follow, and if it was not followed, whether there were penalties. Principal Planner Chow said there was no specific time limit but there needed to be an active building permit. She said if it became inactive reapplication would need to be made.

Chair Combs said the final question was about construction traffic and congestion, and whether there was a requirement for a construction traffic plan. Principal Planner Chow said the City's ordinance limited construction hours to Monday through Friday. She said regarding a construction staging plan staff could work with the applicant to provide something that was incorporated into the plans to ensure the construction vehicles would be on the project site and limit the amount of parking in the public right of way.

Chair Combs said he hoped that the speaker's questions had been answered and suggested that she reach out to City staff if more information was needed.

Commissioner Kahle said the project's geotechnical engineer would address any water table issues. He said as far as he knew the City did not have any regulations regarding dewatering. He said the plane tree in question was located in a six-foot public utility easement and per the arborist's report was trimmed to clear overhead utility lines, which was another consideration. He said his concern had been the oak in the front and with the work conducted per the arborist's recommendations that was addressed. He said the house was attractive and well designed, and he thought it would fit the neighborhood very well. He said the rendering showed a tan house but the applicant's letter said it would have a white board and batten siding which he thought would be attractive. He said a minor concern he had was with the balcony in front as it looked nice but he was not sure it would ever be used. He said the other concern was the height as it was right at the maximum allowable. He said the home had 10-foot ceilings on the first floor and nine foot ceilings on the second story and he would love to see that reduced or at least removing a foot if the first floor was two feet off the ground.

Commissioner Riggs said overall the proposal was an attractive house in a popular style and appeared to be well detailed and well done. He said it was sensitive to the neighbors. He said it appeared that the 28-foot height was only at a ridge about six feet in length. He moved to make the findings and approve the use permit with the exception he would not like the Commission to approve the plane tree approval. He said without any more information on why the tree could not be trimmed and preserved and weigh-in from the three other neighbors whose lots would be impacted by the tree's removal that he could not approve with that condition.

Chair Combs asked if separating the project approval and tree removal was possible. Principal Planner said the two could be separated and if the Planning Commission did not support the tree removal, staff would pass that information to the City Arborist.

Commissioner Onken seconded the motion with the intent of retention of the heritage plane tree in the rear. He said the design passed many of the litmus tests the Commission looks out for and he greatly appreciated keeping the live oak in the front as it was a far more important tree. He said he hoped the owner, the arborist and contractor would do everything possible to save the oak tree.

ACTION: Motion and second (Riggs/Onken) to approve as recommended in the staff report with the following modification; passes 6-0-1 with Commissioner Strehl absent.

1. Make a finding that the project is categorically exempt under Class 3 (Section 15303, "New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures") of the current California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines.
2. Make findings, as per Section 16.82.030 of the Zoning Ordinance pertaining to the granting of use permits, that the proposed use will not be detrimental to the health, safety, morals, comfort and general welfare of the persons residing or working in the neighborhood of such proposed use, and will not be detrimental to property and improvements in the neighborhood or the general welfare of the City.
3. Approve the use permit subject to the following **standard** conditions:
 - a. Development of the project shall be substantially in conformance with the plans prepared by Greg Miller Designs consisting of 12 plan sheets, dated received August 31, 2017, and approved by the Planning Commission on September 11, 2017, except as modified by the conditions contained herein, subject to review and approval of the Planning Division.
 - b. Prior to building permit issuance, the applicants shall comply with all Sanitary District, Menlo Park Fire Protection District, and utility companies' regulations that are directly applicable to the project.
 - c. Prior to building permit issuance, the applicants shall comply with all requirements of the Building Division, Engineering Division, and Transportation Division that are directly applicable to the project.
 - d. Prior to building permit issuance, the applicant shall submit a plan for any new utility installations or upgrades for review and approval by the Planning, Engineering and Building Divisions. All utility equipment that is installed outside of a building and that cannot be placed underground shall be properly screened by landscaping. The plan shall show exact locations of all meters, back flow prevention devices, transformers, junction boxes, relay boxes, and other equipment boxes.
 - e. Simultaneous with the submittal of a complete building permit application, the applicant shall submit plans indicating that the applicant shall remove and replace any damaged and significantly worn sections of frontage improvements. The plans shall be submitted for review and approval of the Engineering Division.
 - f. Simultaneous with the submittal of a complete building permit application, the applicant shall submit a Grading and Drainage Plan for review and approval of the Engineering Division. The Grading and Drainage Plan shall be approved prior to the issuance of grading, demolition or building permits.

- g. Heritage trees in the vicinity of the construction project shall be protected pursuant to the Heritage Tree Ordinance and the recommendations in the arborist report by McClenahan Consulting, LLC dated December 17, 2016 (revised May 1, 2017).
- h. ***The London Plane Heritage Tree Removal Permit is not supported by the Planning Commission.***

G. Regular Business

- G1. Ravenswood Avenue Railroad Crossing Study Presentation:
The Ravenswood Avenue Railroad Crossing Study is evaluating the feasibility of replacing the existing at-grade crossing of the Caltrain tracks within the City of Menlo Park with a prioritization at Ravenswood Avenue. The project team will be presenting the project status and requesting input to determine a preferred alternative, to answer questions and to receive feedback. ([Staff Report #17-059-PC](#))

Staff Comment: Principal Planner Chow said that Angela Obeso, Senior Transportation Engineer with the City would make the presentation.

Chair Combs said that after the presentation the public comment period would open prior to Commission questions, comments and discussions.

Staff Presentation: Senior Transportation Engineer Angela Obeso, project manager, introduced Ety Mercurio, project manager for the consultant team of AECOM. She said that they would be presenting project alternatives with a request for the Commission's recommendations on a preferred alternative to take to the City Council. She presented a PowerPoint reviewing briefly earlier studies of the Caltrain Ravenswood crossing done in 2003, the use of a San Mateo County Transportation Authority grant to consider the feasibility of replacing the existing at-grade crossing of Caltrain tracks within the City with the prioritization of the Ravenswood Avenue crossing; Alternative A which would leave the crossing as it is and Alternative B was a hybrid option that raised the train tracks some at Ravenswood Avenue. She said two other options were looked at for the previous feasibility studies and those were trench alternatives that would bring the rail elevation underground. She said those were found to be infeasible within the City limits because of constraints of different rail curvature and grade slope of the rail such that a full trench was not achievable. She said drainage east-west and in the tunnel would be complex and construction would require a long window incurring high costs. She said another option looked at in previous studies was a viaduct or raised track. She said similar to the trench option the constraints of the geometry of the train tracks with required slopes to maintain would not allow the complete elevation needed to have the required clearance over all four of the city's crossings. She said again this would require a complicated, lengthy and expensive construction process.

Ms. Obeso said they took the most feasible alternatives of the previous studies now called the underpass and the hybrid. She said they met with the City's Rail Subcommittee and City Council and received direction from them on how to proceed. She said they also had a series of meetings with Caltrain and the Santa Clara County Transportation Authority and those helped in determining what a feasible scope should look like. She said in late 2015 the City did a request for proposals for consultants to help with the project study report. She said a contract was awarded to AECOM in March 2016.

Ms. Obeso said with the hiring of the consultant to help with the study they immediately began with community outreach noting that since then they have hosted three public meetings, hosted a rail information meeting open to the public, and conducted ongoing one-on-one meetings with all the potentially impacted property owners along the entire rail corridor. She said also they have visited with City Commissions to provide status updates and have visited with the City Council twice. She said after tonight they would make a presentation to the City's Complete Streets Commission and then go to the City council on October 10 summarizing both what they have heard to date, at this evening's meeting and the September 13 Complete Streets Commission meeting, and ask Council to give direction on a preferred alternative so staff could get started with funding and working on environmental and design.

Ms. Obeso said with the feedback to date there had been reoccurring themes and concerns expressed by the community. She said that people would generally like more grade separations as it would increase east-west connectivity and improve delays there. She said another theme was to minimize the height of the railroad as people were concerned with the visual impact of the higher railroad. She said another was to improve pedestrian and bicycle access particularly east to west and improve the connectivity particularly at the intersection of Alma Street and Ravenswood Avenue. She said at the dais were printouts of emails received over the past couple of days to the City Council's email box that the Commissioners might not have seen yet.

Ms. Obeso said in December they had presented three different alternatives to the Commission. She said one was an underpass and the other two were variations of a hybrid. She said related to why they were bringing only two of the alternatives forward that Alternative A, the underpass, was looking just at grade separation at Ravenswood Avenue, leaving the train tracks at their existing elevation and bringing Ravenswood Avenue under the train tracks. She said with that alternative there was no proposal to do any changes at Oak Grove, Glenwood and Encinal Avenues. She said Alternative B was a version of the hybrid that would potentially grade separate Ravenswood and Oak Grove Avenues. She said this would have a steeper slope and a higher elevation of rail. She said Alternative C was a hybrid that looked at three grade crossings at Ravenswood, Oak Grove, and Glenwood Avenues that would have generally a flatter rail elevation through town compared to Alternative B. She said based on the feedback they had received wanting more grade separations and less rail height it pointed them towards Alternative C and focusing more time on it as opposed to Alternative B. She said when they took this to City Council in April it directed them to move forward with Alternatives A and C.

Etty Mercurio, AECOM, project consultant, showed a 3-D animation of Alternative A and Alternative C. She said with Alternative A that access to Alma and Merrill Streets and Alma Lane from Ravenswood Avenue would be lost. She said Alternative C would maintain full access from Alma Street to Ravenswood Avenue and Alma Lane, and Merrill Street would connect into Ravenswood Avenue. She said both Alternatives separated the rail and vehicular traffic improving safety, reducing vehicle delays, and creating better connectivity between the east and west sides of Menlo Park. She said Alternative A would increase traffic on Laurel Street with some diversions of traffic onto Oak Grove and Glenwood Avenues. She said the traffic impact on Laurel Street with Alternative A would be mitigated by adding a right hand turn pocket onto Laurel Street to keep levels of service and traffic circulation at levels that were acceptable. She noted that in the years 2020 to 2040 with Alternative C that the City might well want to negotiate with Atherton to signalize the intersections of Laurel Street and Glenwood Avenue as well as at Middlefield Road and Glenwood Avenue.

Ms. Mercurio said a shoofly was basically a detour for the railroad and was basically the same for Alternatives A and C. He said these were proposed toward the west closer to the commercial properties rather than closer to the residential properties. She showed graphics of the proposed shoofly.

Ms. Mercurio said construction staging for either Alternative A or C was about getting the project ready to move the railroad over to its shoofly. She said for Alternative A, the first stages would be relocating utilities, installing shoring to support the excavation, excavating down the roadway and installing temporary bridges underneath the shoofly itself and constructing the shoofly. She said upon completion of those two stages, the railroad traffic would be moved to the shoofly after which roadway traffic would be moved to the north side and work would then begin on the south side of the roadway, completing the bridges for the railroad and for Alma Street. She said then they railroad would be moved onto its permanent alignment after which the shoofly was removed and the roadway finished to open it up for full traffic. She said duration for Alternative A would be three to four years. She said staging for Alternative C was very similar to the staging plan for Alternative A except it would occur at three locations. She said duration for Alternative C would be four to five years.

Ms. Obeso said to determine preference for Alternative A or C they reviewed all of the comments they received from the public and stakeholders. She said the items they kept hearing became the comparison factors. She directed the Commission's attention to the slide labeled *Alternatives Matrix*. She said this comparison showed with Alternative A that the City would get more moderate improvement with more moderate impact. She said with Alternative C the City would get a greater benefit and level of improvement but also a greater level of impacts. She said at the last community meeting on June 7, 2017 they presented this same information. She said they did breakout tables and asked attendees to vote for either Alternative A or C and why. She said about 85% of the 55 people who attended the meeting preferred Alternative C because it provided more grade separations, increased east-west connectivity for all modes, and achieved some of the goals they wanted to see. She said those who supported Alternative A said it had the highest volume of vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists at Ravenswood Avenue and it had a lower construction cost. She said there was also continued interest in the trench and viaduct alternatives. She said they asked the community about construction considerations and they heard that the community generally would be open to longer working days such as 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. to help construction move more quickly. She said also there was support for some weekend and night work but not every weekend nor every night. She said one other item they heard was that whichever alternative was chosen it was critical to maintain bicycle and pedestrian access at all the crossings during construction.

Ms. Obeso said throughout the process they held a number of one-on-one meetings with all of the potentially impacted property and business owners. She said those property owners who had minimal potential impacts to their access generally preferred Alternative C and those property and business owners with major effects specifically on Oak Grove and Glenwood Avenues tended to prefer Alternative A. She said regarding construction impacts that these owners wanted assurance that access would be maintained to their properties for their residences, their customers, and their clients.

Ms. Obeso said they wanted the Commission's feedback and a recommendation on the preferred alternative. She said on Wednesday they would present to the Complete Streets Commission to

get their feedback and recommendation, and on October 10 they would present to the City Council with a summary of the commissions' feedback and asking for their direction on a preferred alternative.

Chair Combs opened public comment.

- Steve Schmidt, Menlo Park, said he thought Alternative C was preferable. He said that the best solution would be to separate the rail grade all through Menlo Park, which would mean all four grade crossings including Encinal Avenue. He said he was not convinced that it was infeasible for a viaduct line through Menlo Park going to grade at Atherton. He said the study was deficient in not analyzing all four grade crossings. He recommended to opening the process to include an Alternative D that looked at separating all four grade crossings.
- Adam Tobin said he and his wife owned a home on Mills Court, the back of which bordered the train track. He said they supported Alternative C or D as had just been suggested. He said their main concern currently was with noise and horns and quality of life. He said with Alternative A that traffic might get worse at the other crossings and that the noise would not be abated in terms of the horns. He said they were very much proponents of a quiet zone and considered that if Atherton could do so, Menlo Park could also do it. He said he appreciated the information about the shoofly and found generally that Alternative C addressed their concerns.
- Steve Van Pelt, Menlo Park, said he wanted a plan to do one crossing at a time without a shoofly. He said the impetus for that was that potentially there could be seven more under crossings when discussions of the Dumbarton corridor begin. He said the under passing at 5th Avenue was done without a shoofly track. He said he did not know how expensive a shoofly track would be but it would be very inconvenient. He confirmed with Chair Combs that the Commission would make a recommendation to City Council. He said he had submitted two letters to discuss his proposals in great detail and that he did not know if those were being considered or not. He said one letter was submitted in June this year and the other in 2014. He said he was not able to find his letters in any of the information related to this project and asked if he should resubmit them. Chair Combs said he should resubmit to Council and/or Commission and if the letters did not show up to call staff.

Chair Combs closed the public comment period.

Commission Comment: Commissioner Barnes said he would like to see some type of modeling of Alternative C that would show what it would look and feel like noting that the 3-D video did not provide that understanding.

Ms. Obeso noted a photo being provided by Commissioner Riggs of the San Carlos train berm that extended through most of that City as seen from the north or bayside. Commissioner Riggs said relative to Menlo Park this would be a similar view from Alma and/or Laurel Streets. He said the housing viewed behind the berm was two-story which he noted for sense of scale. He said this showed what an elevated track and berm would do to the visual perception and connection between one side of town and the other side. He said the area was landscaped but there was only so much that could be expected of landscaping for such a structure.

Chair Combs suggested staff continue responding to Commissioner Barnes' question as the photo provided by Commissioner Riggs was not part of staff's presentation. Ms. Obeso said she thought

looking at other examples was a good way to get real world view of what the different grade separations would look like. She said the cities of San Carlos and Belmont were examples of what a hybrid grade separation looked like and particularly at the stations. She presented some photos taken by the project team of other station areas with hybrid crossings and said that people could drive or take the train to see what those looked like.

Ms. Mercurio said they had done a similar grade separation study for the City of Burlingame. She said in the 3-D animations they took stills at eye level to give people a sense of when standing at a certain location what the project would look like.

Commissioner Barnes said he could visualize each individual underpass but he did not know what the experience, the look and feel, would be in the spaces in between for local residents with basically a 10-foot wall. Ms. Obeso said still photos could be created from the 3-D models shown this evening. She said at the community meeting they had virtual reality goggles at some locations generated from the same 3-D model. She asked if that was something that would be helpful to bring to City Council. Commissioner Barnes said his primary concern was the split this would create in Menlo Park and not being able to get a sense of the look and feel of that. He said with the scope and major expense of this project it was important for people to have a real sense of what it would be like when completed.

Ms. Obeso said in the area along Alma Street of Burgess Park and the Recreation Center, they took still photos and then put in a model of the elevation of the train running through. She said those were on the website but they could bring those back and share directly with people. She said www.menlopark.org/ravenswood had all of the reports and presentations done as well as the videos and animations. She said also if Commissioner Barnes could identify points of concern that they could work up some still photos and modeling to provide more information.

Commissioner Barnes asked about the data considered for the analysis in the Alternatives Matrix. Ms. Obeso said they did analysis for some of the items such as traffic for which they did counts and traffic models. She said they looked at where traffic would go with Alternatives A and C and how that would improve the delays and different traffic operations standards. Noting Commissioner Barnes' question about noise, she said that was a very complex issue for which they needed to bring in a noise specialist. She said that would be done as part of the environmental study. She said what they did was look at similar case studies where tracks were raised and how that affected noise. She said in general with grade separation that the horns, gates and bells were being removed and those created the noise that was most complained about. She said Caltrain would be electrifying, which would be less noisy than engines, and that would occur before the City's project.

Commissioner Barnes asked if Ms. Obeso would describe the analysis for each item on the matrix.

Ms. Obeso said for the item "Reduce Potential Rail/Vehicle Conflict" that they looked at the number of trains and how often they crossed at each location. She said Caltrain had done studies which provided information on how much delay grade crossings created now. She said in removing crossings they looked at how much potential decrease in delay was created.

Commissioner Barnes asked what the data was for each crossing so he had some sense of which of the two alternatives was optimal.

Ms. Obeso said for “Reducing Potential Rail/Vehicle Conflict” and “Improving East-West Connectivity” that the number of conflicts per crossing per day would be very similar as the crossings were very close. She said they knew roughly the number of vehicles that traveled on each road every day. She said regarding East-West Connectivity they have the traffic volumes for each of the four crossings so they knew right now how many vehicles crossed through there every day. She said also they projected the anticipated growth between now and when this project might potentially be constructed. She said if they were to do Alternative A and grade separated at Ravenswood that drivers who currently take Glenwood Avenue might be more likely to use Ravenswood Avenue. She said their traffic model numbers took that into account. She said they did not bring the detailed traffic studies this evening but if that information was wanted they could pull it out and provide.

Commissioner Barnes said an important data point for him to recommend one of the alternatives over the other was the level of effort in relationship to benefit. He said he hoped for more specificity for each item compared.

Commissioner Onken asked about Caltrain and its Joint Powers Authority and whether they were on board with the potential project. Ms. Obeso said that Caltrain was a partner and their Joint Powers Board owned the right-of-way and operates the Caltrain itself. Commissioner Onken asked if it were possible that the Caltrain might reject a viaduct if the City decided to build that because it was building high speed trains and the project would go away for another 10 years. Ms. Obeso said if the City was committed and pushing toward a solution that Caltrain wanted grade separations as those improved their operations and facility. She said Caltrain would look more toward the City for funding and staff was already seeking funding. Commissioner Onken asked about electrification and pole installation and how this project would mesh with that. Ms. Obeso said that Caltrain would be a partner throughout the entire process and would review everything regarding the project. Ms. Mercurio said that by the time this project went to construction they were assuming that electrification would have occurred and would have to be considered in the design and the construction costs. She said if they had to do a shoofly or whatever other construction would mean that the poles and all would have to be relocated temporarily to keep the commuter rails moving forward. Commissioner Onken asked about the Middle Avenue underpass and what would happen with that with either of these two alternatives. Ms. Obeso said Alternatives A and C would not alter the Middle Avenue crossing. She said she understood that the idea was for Middle Avenue to go under the tracks, although that was not yet confirmed. She said they had team members working on both projects. She said it was expected that the Middle Avenue crossing would get constructed first and the Ravenswood project team would watch closely how that moved forward and would accommodate what was done at Middle Avenue. Commissioner Onken said the alignment for Alternative C would be different as it would climb up approaching Middle Avenue. Ms. Obeso said it would provide more clearance and would be better. Commissioner Onken said he expected the stand of Monterey pines in the middle of Ravenswood Avenue west of El Camino Real would have to be removed. He said the shoofly looked like it went right through the City’s original train station. He asked if as part of the \$400 million for that project alternative if the historic building would be relocated for preservation and then reinstated. Ms. Obeso said they were accounting for protecting the historical building.

Commissioner Kahle said Alternative C had a new signalized intersection at Alma Street. He asked in Alternative A if there was anything that stopped traffic on Alma Street or was it continuous. Ms. Mercurio said at this time they were assuming continuous. She said they would have a signalized intersection at El Camino Real. Commissioner Kahle confirmed that with Alternative A there was no

stopping on Ravenswood Avenue from El Camino Real until Laurel Street. He said the consultant mentioned they were working with the City of Burlingame on grade separation. He asked if grade separation was done city by city and how Menlo Park compared, and whether it became a hodgepodge of up and down along the tracks. Ms. Obeso said both in Burlingame and Menlo Park projects were moving forward because the community wanted to see improvement. She said Caltrain was a partner for every project along their corridor and looked at all the different projects including the up and down of the rail and making sure it met all the constraints of their rail operation. Commissioner Kahle asked if the heights of the Holly Street and Ralston Avenue train rail were higher or lower than what was proposed in Alternative C. Ms. Mercurio said she thought San Carlos and Holly Street would be very similar to Alternative C, which would have a partial excavation and a partial raise. Commissioner Kahle said the photo Commissioner Riggs showed looked much higher than 10 feet. Commissioner Riggs said the photo was taken from the parking lot of Pep Boys in San Carlos. Ms. Obeso said they could look at that element but Ms. Mercurio and she both agreed that it looked like it was 15-feet high at that location rather than 10-foot high at Holly Street.

Commissioner Goodhue said relating back to Commissioner Barnes' comments that she went to the website and looked at the videos and animations to get a better sense of the schematics. She said she feared that when people looked at those that they would not have a full appreciation of what the wall would look like especially for Alternative C given the height. She said Alternative A was much less of a fortress dividing the two parts of the City but there was a fortress effect because Alma Street was cut off. She said she thought it would be very useful as raised in the public comments for people to have some visuals of what it would look like coming from the west side of the tracks going to the Library. She said under Alternative A one could no longer make a right on Alma Street. She asked about someone going to the Arrillaga Sports Complex with Alternative A as there was no right onto Alma Street from Ravenswood Avenue. She said she was very curious what the experience would be with Alternative A whether driving, walking or riding a bicycle. She asked with either Alternative A or C whether bicyclists would travel with vehicular traffic or on pedestrian walks. She said the underpass at Embarcadero at Town and County was constrained with a bridge and bicyclists travel with pedestrians.

Ms. Obeso said in all the locations and alternatives they made sure to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists. She said this was at a conceptual stage but Alternative A would have shoulders so bicyclists comfortable traveling with vehicles would have room to ride there. She said that the sidewalk area would be wider and at a more moderate grade to meet ADA requirements which would allow bicyclists not comfortable riding with vehicles to travel on that path.

Commissioner Goodhue said that her anecdotal experience of waiting for the train at any of these crossings except Ravenswood Avenue was basically like waiting for a traffic light to change. She asked what the wait time was. Ms. Obeso said it was in the studies done by Caltrain which she did not have this evening. She said they could look that up and provide that information. Commissioner Goodhue said she really wanted to know what they were getting in exchange for a visual barrier throughout the City and whether that was worth doing more grade crossings. She asked what city along the Caltrain corridor was most analogous to the City's current crossing conditions or what city had addressed such analogous conditions.

Ms. Mercurio said San Mateo has four existing grade separations all in a row that would completely be replaced and those were an elevated track through residential for four crossings, which needed to have greater clearance.

Commissioner Riggs said he appreciated the comments made by Commissioners Barnes and Goodhue. He said he shared concerns that people were looking at stations and specific underpasses and not looking at the considerable length in between those potential underpasses. He asked staff to put the image of the San Carlos berm on the screen. He said he took the photo to assess whether a berm running through a town created a separation. He said Ravenswood Avenue was part of the Civic Center and there were activities on all four sides of the crossing. He said to lower Ravenswood even with Alternative C was too close to the 5th Avenue underpass to be part of the City's fairly close knit downtown. He said Encinal Avenue was a key way to get between El Camino Real and Middlefield Road, to get between West Menlo and Atherton, from Lorelei to downtown, to get to Encinal School and a traffic light at Middlefield Road. He said Alma Street in the images looked more like Old County Road in Redwood City, San Carlos and Belmont. He said while Alternative C was better than Alternative A it was still a wall. He said they had been told the slopes would not calculate for a viaduct between Encinal Avenue and Atherton Creek but last week he saw calculations by Adrian Brandt, who looked at the Caltrain grades and their requirements, the starting point and the ending point, and found that a via duct could actually be done and was worth a second look. He said he heard comments that the construction of a viaduct took longer to do and was more expensive than Alternative A or C. He said that surprised him as Bart chose to do a viaduct in Oakland that goes through business and residential areas. He said he did not see how doing a viaduct could take longer and cost more than construction requiring a shoofly and buying right-of-way. He said the viaduct option deserved more attention. He said 10 years ago Palo Alto, Menlo Park, and Atherton held a three day workshop to ask citizens without the issue of cost and construction questions what was the preferred Caltrain grade crossing - partially at grade or above, partially below in a trench, down in a tunnel or up in a viaduct. He said the majority were strongly in favor of a tunnel. He noted that the two alternatives given to the Commission to look at for recommendation of a preference to the City Council was as mentioned by Commissioner Goodhue earlier a false choice. He said 80% of the emails to the City Council asked that the City look at other alternatives and it was the same with the emails received by the Commission. He said he thought the Commission's message to Council was that choices had been narrowed to two alternatives and were not what was needed, and that the City should look at doing a tunnel or a viaduct built above the existing Caltrain track that would not create a wall in between. He said Menlo Park should decide what its two best choices were and push forward with those and not start with what Caltrain or what Atherton preferred. He asked if the Chair would entertain a motion. Chair Combs said not at this time as he received more requests for people to provide public comment. He said although he had closed public comment he wanted to make sure that everyone who came to speak on this matter had a chance to speak.

Chair Combs reopened public comment.

- Stephen Kerman said in the comparison of Alternatives A and C there was an item for noise mitigation related to the sounds of the gates, bells and horns, which either of the two alternatives would reduce by eliminating grade crossings. He said another item should be considered as he believed elevating the train would cause the sound of the wheels on the rails to carry much further, and the train would be much more audible and at much more distances even after electrification. He said that should be an item in the comparison.
- John Kadwany, Menlo Park, said he supported the direction the Commission comments were leading. He said he had not spoken earlier as the survey results indicated that 85% of people supported Alternative C which intimidated him. He said he supported the critical comments on

the two choices being made available. He said there was not a sufficient appreciation by others and everyone what the wall would look like for those choices. He said words were not sufficient and pictures were needed to understand the bicycle and pedestrian routes and all of the elements of the lived experience. He said the data quality provided was nonexistent and alternative choices had too much subjectivity and policy judgment baked into too much superficiality based on color coded answers for what would likely be a half a billion dollar project. He supported Commissioner Riggs' idea to expand the decision space of alternatives and consider those that affected the desired outcomes. He said there would be a trade off in that some things in terms of traffic would be improved. He said that it was not possible to build the way out of many traffic problems. He said he was not saying not to do a project but recommending looking at how much they were willing to forego of how the City looked and felt versus providing better traffic for 15% of what were local drivers and 85% of regional drivers. He said he could not support the big divide of the alternatives presented unless the divisiveness was removed perhaps through use of a viaduct. He said environmentally if there was a coherent ecological niche chopping it in half was one of the worst things that could be done.

- William Pflaum, Menlo Park, asked if there was coordination with Palo Alto on the crossing on Alma Street that comes out of Palo Alto, what the elevation of that might be and if it would require changes in the two alternatives presented.
- Wendy Shindler, Menlo Park, said she had to concur that they did not have all the choices they needed and she was worried about the two choices being offered. She said she would like to see more data about going underground and why it would not work. She asked what the cost of leaving Encinal Avenue out of the choices in time, safety and money was. She said she would like the viaduct option looked at. She thought that decisions had been made already that were not supportable and she could not even picture what these would look like leaving Encinal Avenue out of the project.

Chair Combs closed the public comment noting for the second time. He clarified that public comment had been moved before extensive Commission questions and comments to allow people to speak earlier. He said what comments the Commission were making stimulated more persons to speak. He said in the future he might have two public comment periods – one for persons needing to leave early and a second near the regular position in the meeting for persons who were inspired by Commission questions and discussion.

Commission Comment: Chair Combs asked staff to respond to Mr. Pflaum's question about coordination with Palo Alto and possible changes to the train elevation at Alma Street there and if the elevation from Palo Alto into Menlo Park was considered in these proposals.

Ms. Obeso said throughout the project staff had met with Palo Alto and Atherton staff both to coordinate on rail corridor issues but also specifically on this project. She said last week she met with the Atherton Public Works Director and next week she would meet with staff at Palo Alto. She said her understanding of the project that Palo Alto was looking at right now was a study that was they were fairly early into, and that they were focused on their southern crossings. She said they had no information that Palo Alto was planning or considering making any changes to the northern end of Palo Alto crossings, which was where its elevation could influence Menlo Park's elevation. She said the City's study was assuming that the creek and the city limits, at Palo Alto's crossings, and downtown station were to remain as existing.

Commissioner Onken asked Principal Planner Chow if CEQA would be done on this project. Principal Planner Chow said Ms. Obeso had information on the next steps but a project moving forward would be subject to CEQA. Ms. Mercurio said it would be subject to CEQA and with any federal funds it would also be subject to National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA). Commissioner Onken said that impacts being referred to from the alternatives would be reviewed through the environmental review process. He said there had been some confusion that was clarified today that Oak Grove and Glenwood Avenues would not be closed off under Alternative A. He said what was the situation with Encinal Avenue under Alternative C and if it would be abandoned. Ms. Obeso said the Encinal Avenue crossing under both Alternatives A and C as presented now would remain as existing.

Commissioner Riggs asked if it was possible to have at grade crossing for high speed rail. Ms. Obeso said that was a question for high speed rail and she did not have an update as to where they were.

Nikki Nagaya, Assistant Public Works Director, said what they have learned from high speed rail was that the operating speeds they were proposing were allowable at at-grade tracks. She said they could confirm that information. She said with two railroad lines there was an outstanding question on whether a third track would necessitate grade separation. She said there was not a full answer yet from the California Public Utilities Commission. She said earlier this summer high speed rail was moving forward with alternatives that would not entail a third track in Menlo Park and were only looking at two track alternatives through Menlo Park.

Commissioner Kahle asked if the reason Encinal Avenue was not included in the alternatives was because it was too close to Atherton. Ms. Obeso said some comments received were a desire for grade separation there and other comments received indicated a preference for no grade separation there. She said they looked at the traffic volumes for that crossing and it was by far the lowest volume of all of the City's existing crossings. She said the need being less there, staff was directed to move forward on Alternative C with the other three crossings.

Commissioner Barnes asked about bicycle access under Alternative A from Alma Street through Ravenswood Avenue intersection and traveling to downtown Menlo Avenue. Ms. Obeso showed a visual slide of Alternative A showing that Alma Street was a bridge at the same elevation as existing and the same as the train with Ravenswood Avenue going underneath. She said traveling from Willow Road there would be a bicycle and pedestrian connection to get between Alma Street and Ravenswood Avenue but there would not be a vehicle connection. She said that they did not have the specifics yet but there would be some sort of ramp system for bicyclists/pedestrians to get from either the Ravenswood Avenue elevation or Alma Street elevation to the train station. She said that same access would likely be the way for bicyclists/pedestrians to cross El Camino Real to the downtown. Commissioner Barnes asked where the last place on Alma Street would be to turn off at grade into Burgess Park or at what point Alma Street started to rise. Commissioner Riggs asked to see what was determined to be slide 36. Ms. Obeso said Alma Street would be at the same elevation it was today under Alternative A for Burgess Park, the parking lots and Library and other buildings off Alma Street. She said the ramp shown would get one from the Library (on bike/foot) down to Ravenswood Avenue. Ms. Nagaya said if a person was bicycling down Alma Street and trying to get downtown that they could use the wonderful new bicycle lanes on Oak Grove Avenue.

Commissioner Barnes said what he was hearing from the community was if the intersection of Alma Street and Ravenswood Avenue was differentiated at different grades that it would be difficult to navigate. He said it sounded like from a bicyclist perspective that he could use Oak Grove Avenue or the access at Alma Street and Ravenswood Avenue to get downtown under Alternative A. Ms. Obeso said it was critical to maintain good bicycle/pedestrian connection at that intersection as it was used by so many bicyclists and pedestrians now. Commissioner Barnes confirmed that if he was driving on Alma Street that the first opportunity to go left and go downtown would be at Oak Grove Avenue. He also confirmed if he was driving from downtown along Menlo Avenue to Ravenswood Avenue that he would not be able to make a right on Alma Street anymore and would have to make a right at Laurel Street. He asked about Laurel Street's capacity to handle increased traffic volume. Ms. Obeso said they looked at that several years ago. She said when they cut off the right turn access into and out of the Library area that traffic at the intersection at Laurel Street and Ravenswood Avenue greatly expanded. She said based on that and from the traffic model done there was a need for more capacity at that intersection which was why they were recommending a mitigation should Alternative A move forward to have a right-turn pocket to handle extra queuing. Commissioner Barnes said also he thought many drivers were trying to get to Willow Road as fast as they could to get to Hwy. 101 or the Dumbarton Bridge. He said the right-turn pocket would speed up traffic getting onto Laurel Street but volume on Laurel Street would increase. He asked about the increase in volume with that on Laurel Street.

Ms. Mercurio said if Alternative A was done without the Laurel Street right-turn pocket that there would be an F level of service or stand still traffic. She said with the pocket it would be D level of service but traffic would be moving. She said the delays for travel time in the peak p.m. hours would go from 510 seconds to 285 seconds so delays were cut in half during peak p.m. traffic with the addition of the right-turn pocket.

Commissioner Barnes said in terms of the appropriateness of Laurel Street to handle that increased volume it appeared there would be delays. He asked if there had been discussion as to whether Laurel Street was an appropriate road to handle that increased traffic volume. Ms. Obeso said that Laurel Street was part of the traffic model they looked at but they did not focus on it for this presentation as it did not have any issues when they ran it with the new configuration of Alternative A. She said they expected Laurel Street to handle the volume and it was getting the traffic through the Ravenswood Avenue and Laurel Street intersection that had challenges.

Commissioner Barnes asked about electrification and schedule frequencies in terms of Menlo Park only doing the Ravenswood Avenue grade separation or all the crossings. He asked if electrification would impact timing or speed or anything else. Ms. Obeso said she could not speak for Caltrain but it would give them the ability to have more reliable service. She said it was in its best interest because this helped with operations by reducing the potential for collisions, which could cause backups in their whole system. Commissioner Barnes said it had been indicated that Caltrain would prefer that as many cities as possible do grade separations and confirmed that mitigating accidents was of great interest to Caltrain. He asked about funding for the project. Ms. Obeso said for this study the City had a SMCTA grant. She said when there was a preferred alternative the City would be in a better position to compete for funds. She said there were county, federal and other organization and agency funds available. She said they could get on lists but not compete without a preferred alternative. She noted for Commissioner Barnes that she expected funding to be from a variety of sources and she said they did not have a feel as to a preference for large or small grants. Ms. Nagaya said that the City would be willing to seek out every possible funding source. She said San Bruno used Measure A funds from the County for their work that was

recently completed and funds from the Rehabilitation Act and stimulus packages from 2008 and 2009 as they had a project fully designed and ready to begin construction. She said San Mateo also had a significant amount of County Measure A funds and High Speed Rail Authority funds to construct their next grade separation project.

Commissioner Onken said that 85% of the community voiced support of one alternative was important for the Council to hear but he did not think that specifically should guide what the Commission's recommendation to Council was. He said discussions about grade separations and how to manage a busy train line through the City had been ongoing for a long time. He said several years ago there was a very tragic accident at the Ravenswood Avenue crossing raising the question of what to do at crossing to an almost emergency level. He said that heightened the sense of urgency was less now, and he thought the question could be approached very pragmatically. He suggested looking at what the purposes of grade separations were, what would really happen to the businesses located along the rail corridor, whether the City really wanted four years of disruption, and what the gain of the shoofly would be as it would create a very difficult situation for some time. He said another option was to do nothing. He said he could see lots of benefits for the undercrossing at Ravenswood Avenue, noting the increased speed was desirable, Alma Street going straight through was desirable, and that he biked on Alma Street each day so he would be partial to that. He said he thought it would be much like the Jefferson Avenue undercrossing in Redwood City. He said he thought it was a manageable project that he thought would work. He said there was concern about losing the center of the City. He said there were many centers in the City and one was being created at Oak Grove Avenue with the Station 1300 project. He said there were good things for the City to hold onto rather than to wipe them out with a huge berm. He said the impact of disconnecting Alma Street from Ravenswood Street would really reduce the cut through traffic that everyone in the Willows complained about. He said he thought there were a number of small things that were a huge benefit from doing the Ravenswood Avenue grade separation. He said he could not see the benefits of the other crossings and further chopping up the City. He said he supported Alternative A over C if that were the City's only choices.

Commissioner Kahle suggested remembering the Middle Avenue underpass related back to Commissioner Barnes hypothetical bike ride to Amici's and downtown from Alma Street. He said he was surprised at 85% support of Alternative C and wondered if that was due to a misconception that Alternative A would close Oak Grove and Glenwood Avenues. He said he went to the community meeting on June 7 and found that helpful. He said it seemed that the path was already down to Alternatives A and C. He said he was surprised there was still talk about trenching and tunneling and elevating paths. He said if those were even choices he thought the trench or the tunnel option would be difficult but much preferable over an elevated track due to additional noise from that and its visual blight. He said he was leaning strongly toward Alternative A. He said he was deeply concerned about the wall or the berm. He said what was shown in the photo provided by Commissioner Riggs was probably taller than what it would be for Menlo Park but once power poles were added for electrification and lights it would look fairly tall. He said his major concern was that Alternative C would divide the City. He said two additional benefits of Alternative A was a strong bicycle connection on the north-south direction and a year less of construction. He said he had the sense the Commission was leaning toward Alternative A as its recommendation and he fully supported.

Chair Combs said one of his concerns was that they had these two options because for every other option ever considered a decision had been made not to pursue those. He said if they

recommended that they did not like either of the options presented that could reexamination of other options and a never ending cycle of discussion. He said that was not to say that the alternatives presented were desirable in terms of cost benefits analysis. He said with Alternative A there would be lots of concrete and dead space. He said other Commissioners had pointed out that the core area of the City would become desolate looking or freeway looking. He said he did not know if the benefit was worth the cost both related to funding and the cost to the residents' psyche creating a split. He said that he was skeptical whether this was something imminently needed and worth spending substantial amounts of money on for benefits that did not outweigh the costs. He said as promised he would return to Commissioner Riggs who started to make a motion before the public comment period was reopened.

Commissioner Riggs said they heard from public speakers tonight and through emails, and through Commissioners Barnes and Goodhue's comments earlier in the meeting concerns about the two alternatives. He said he did not completely buy into Lee Duboc's description that the choice between Alternatives A and C was bad and terrible but he thought both alternatives were bad. He said to advance that much money and disruption for a couple of bad alternatives did not feel right to him. He said his motion was that Council be requested to consider another option, primarily a viaduct, and address the engineering with a little more skeptical eye with the help perhaps of Adrian Brandt's observations. He said the recommendation would be to look at what most would benefit Menlo Park and not look at what would fit into Caltrain's engineers' preferences as to slope at Atherton. He said the City should also keep the tunnel as an option. He said the latter's huge downside was its expense but it would have hardly any other downsides. He said he wanted to keep the tunnel for rail on the table. He said if they did a viaduct it would be a compromise for the sake of money. He said that his motion was for the options of a tunnel or viaduct to be the preferred alternatives and not Alternatives A and C.

Chair Combs said the motion on the table was to recommend to City Council that they prioritize a viaduct option but keep a tunnel option on the table related to the Caltrain Union Pacific right of way through the City.

Commissioner Onken said one of the speakers asked the question about quiet zones in Atherton and why the City did not have one. He said his experience living near the tracks in Atherton was that they wanted a quiet zone but it was not enforceable as the train engineers were liable if they were to hit a car or object and had not blown their horns. He said it was outside Atherton's jurisdiction to have a quiet zone and train engineers blow the horns just as much at Atherton crossings as in Menlo Park. He said Alternative C would remove horn noise from three crossings.

Commissioner Kahle asked if the motion was to support a viaduct. Chair Combs said the motion was to support an option that was not one of the options presented to the Commission but which was within the Commission's purview to recommend as an Alternative "X." Commissioner Kahle said he would not be able to support a viaduct as an option.

Chair Combs noted that the motion died for lack of a second.

Commissioner Riggs asked whether Ms. Obeso had said related to Alternative A that Alma Street would remain at grade and a driver could turn into the Library parking lot from it. He said Alma Street ran along the tracks. He said he recalled that Ravenswood Avenue would only be lowered 10 feet which meant that Alma Street would have an eight foot clearance underneath so a five to 10% rise on Alma Street would have to begin somewhere before the Library parking lot, and

probably as far back as the skate park. He said Alma Street was going to be a challenge as an uphill ride for bicyclists and to construct. Ms. Obeso said with Alternative A that Alma Street and the train tracks did not change from their existing elevations. She said Ravenswood Avenue would go completely under the train tracks and excavated at approximately 22 feet.

Commissioner Kahle moved to request that the City Council remain open to other options but the recommendation of the Planning Commission was to support Alternative A primarily because it avoided a barrier or wall between the east and west sides of the City. Chair Combs said the motion was to recommend Alternative A. He said he understood the desire for other options but the Commission had only been presented with Alternatives A and C. Commissioner Kahle said there was a lot of support for other options and he did not know if those were realistic but he wanted to at least have it as part of the Commission's action. Chair Combs said the motion was a recommendation for Alternative A with recognition that there were supporters of other options not presented and those could be viable.

Commissioner Barnes said they had discussion tonight as it related to lack of clarity on what a viaduct would cost or why it was not feasible. He asked if Commissioner Kahle would consider attaching to his motion a request for further clarification for additional materials to provide analysis of the options that did not make it to the preferred stage whether a viaduct or overhead and why not, and related to Alternative C to provide simulations of what that berm would be like experientially in the City as that information had not really been provided. Commissioner Kahle accepted Commissioner Barnes' added request and recommendation.

Chair Combs said the motion was to recommend Alternative A. He asked if Commissioner Barnes was offering an addendum and a second or just an addendum. Commissioner Barnes said he was offering a second with an addendum. Chair Combs said there was a first and second with an addendum acceptable to the maker of the first that additional information be provided with reasoning, any logic, and cost estimates around alternatives that were not further explored, and secondly some better idea of what the actual impact of the berm in Alternative C would be to the City.

Commissioner Riggs asked if they expected this information to come back to the Commission. Chair Combs said the expectation was it to be provided to the Council and would be provided to the public.

Commissioner Onken said he did not want to dilute or confuse but perhaps they could just make recommendations and not vote up or down. Chair Combs said at this point there was a motion and second. He said Commissioner Onken had a fair point but his understanding was staff would like to see a full vote of the Commission on what its recommendation was on one of the presented alternatives.

Commissioner Goodhue asked if staff could repeat back what the proposed motion was at this point.

Principal Planner Chow said the motion was to recommend to City Council to support Alternative A primarily to avoid an east-west barrier or berm but to be open to consider other options with additional analysis to identify potential cost implications for those other options such as the viaduct and to provide photo simulations of what the berm experience would be at grade level.

Chair Comb called for the vote.

ACTION: Motion and second (Kahle/Barnes) to recommend to City Council to support Alternative A primarily to avoid an east-west barrier or berm but to be open to consider other options with additional analysis to identify potential cost implications for those other options such as the viaduct and to provide photo simulations of what the berm experience would be at grade level; passes 4-2-1 with Commissioners Barnes, Goodhue, Kahle and Onken supporting the motion, Commissioners Combs and Riggs opposing the motion and Commissioner Strehl absent.

H. Informational Items

H1. Future Planning Commission Meeting Schedule

Principal Planner Chow said on the agenda there was a future Planning Commission meeting date error showing that the second meeting date in October was October 30 but should be corrected to October 23. She said the agenda was corrected in its posting on the website.

- Regular Meeting: September 25, 2017
- Regular Meeting: October 16, 2017
- Regular Meeting: October 23, 2017

I. Adjournment

Chair Combs adjourned the meeting at 10:18 p.m.

Staff Liaison: Deanna Chow, Principal Planner

Recording Secretary: Brenda Bennett

Approved by the Planning Commission on October 16, 2017