

Subject: Comment for October 7 Board Meeting.

Date: Sunday, October 4, 2020 at 5:10:34 PM Pacific Daylight Time

From: Carson Welte <carsonwelte@gmail.com>

To: info@smcoe.org <info@smcoe.org>

Hello,

I am writing in regards to the proposed development of Coyote Hill at Camp Jones Gulch. The proposed development seems like something trying to get pushed through without much thought put into it. Three points I would like considered are as follows.

1. Coyote Hill is a great teaching location. It is great for juxtaposing ecosystems, very important for night hikes, and every student passes by coyote hill with their naturalist multiple times throughout the week
2. Proposed plan greatly increases footprint of camp facilities. Instead of sprawling out into the property and taking away valuable teaching ecosystems, housing should be incorporated into already existing footprint.
3. The increased traffic on the road to coyote hill would be dangerous for students on night hikes and pesky for students and naturalists walking to and from the garden.

Thank you for reading,
Carson Welte

Subject: Comment for October 7 Board Meeting
Date: Sunday, October 4, 2020 at 8:56:54 PM Pacific Daylight Time
From: Lennie Roberts <lennie@greenfoothills.org>
To: info@smcoe.org <info@smcoe.org>
Attachments: GF ltr SMCBOE Jones Gulch housing 10-3-2020.pdf

Dear Superintendent Magee,

Attached is my letter to President Camacho, members of the Board of Education, and you regarding Agenda Items 7 B and C on your October 7, 2020 meeting.

I am sorry not to be able to “attend” the meeting, but I want to reiterate how deeply grateful I am personally for all the work that went into the “three way deal” involving the Office of Education, POST, and the YMCA.

With best wishes,

Lennie Roberts, Legislative Advocate, Green Foothills



October 3, 2020

President Hector Camacho, Jr. and Members of the
San Mateo County Board of Education, and
Superintendent Nancy McGee

**Re: October 7, 2020 Meeting Agenda Items 7 B and C: Housing Recommendation from YMCA
Housing Subcommittee**

Dear President Camacho, Board members, and Superintendent McGee,

I write on behalf of Green Foothills (formerly Committee for Green Foothills), a regional conservation organization that works to protect open space, farmland, and natural resources in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties for the benefit of all through advocacy, education, and grassroots action.

Green Foothills has a long-standing interest in the YMCA Jones Gulch property. We would like to thank your board and staff for your dedication to environmental education at Jones Gulch and particularly for the recent negotiations and decisions that included the sale of the Loma Mar property to POST. The outcome of this sale is a tremendous boon to the thousands of school children in San Mateo County who are able to attend Camp Jones Gulch, as well as County Parks and the YMCA's long-term stewardship of their property.

We have recently been made aware of the proposed construction of two modular homes that are planned to serve as resident housing for the Outdoor Education Principal and Director. We are supportive of provision of on-site housing for your staff. However, we strongly urge you to reconsider the Coyote Hill site. As noted by Director Mark Nolan, the proposed site would be isolated from the other Camp Jones Gulch facilities and Outdoor Education staff housing. Besides the lost benefits not integrating this housing with the other facilities within the existing general footprint at Camp Jones Gulch, the proposed location is at risk from extraordinary hazards in the event of a wildfire, as it is upslope of highly fire-prone unmanaged grasslands and coyote bush.

Since the unprecedented damage to homes and lives from the recent CZU complex wildfires, Green Foothills has been redoubling our advocacy urging decision-makers to avoid locating new residential development within fire-susceptible landscapes such as this, see:

<https://www.greenfoothills.org/reflections-on-the-czu-fires/>

We also note that the San Mateo County General Plan and Resource Management Zoning District regulations (with which this proposed project must comply) strongly encourage clustering of new development near existing developed areas, and avoiding hazards including geologic and wildfire hazards. The County's permit approval process could well be much more extensive and time consuming



due to the significant environmental issues associated with constructing the two modular homes in a more remote location.

We agree with the other concerns expressed by Mr. Nolan, Mr. Alex Jones, UC Santa Cruz Campus Natural Reserve Manager, and Emily Roberts, Camp Jones Naturalist, as detailed in your September 16, 2020 meeting Minutes regarding the inadvisability of the proposed location. I am unable to attend your October 7 meeting, but hope that these thoughts will be useful in your deliberations.

Thank you for consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Lennie Roberts, Legislative Advocate, Green Foothills



Subject: Comment for October 7 Board Meeting.

Date: Monday, October 5, 2020 at 9:42:33 AM Pacific Daylight Time

From: Ellen Young <eyoung1010@gmail.com>

To: info@smcoe.org <info@smcoe.org>

Greetings,

My name is Ellen Young, and I was a naturalist and village leader at San Mateo Outdoor Education between 2010 and 2013. I am writing to voice my concern about the proposed location for the new SMOE principal housing. I am thrilled that housing will be provided for the future principals, but that location is problematic for several reasons.

1. **IMPACT ON PROGRAMMING:** The proposed location, known as coyote hill to naturalists at SMOE, is an AMAZING place to view wildlife with children. I would often use that location for bird watching and insect investigation lessons. I would often use coyote hill as a location for ecosystem lessons as well. Particularly on cool days, coyote hill is a lovely sunny contrast to the cool of the redwoods. Lastly, night hikes are an essential part of SMOE programming, and Coyote hill is one of the best locations. It is one of the safest trails to navigate for students with mobility issues, and it also has some of the very best views of the night sky. Placing housing on coyote hill will eliminate a key teaching location, and add a visual scar that would impact surrounding teaching locations.

2. **ECOLOGICAL IMPACT:** Coyote hill is the only location I ever saw coyotes and bobcats with students. These were truly exciting educational moments for our students. Introducing permanent residents to this location would likely scare off these animals. Additionally, light pollution would likely impact the owl populations that live there and make the soundscape of night hikes truly magical. Additionally, adding more vehicle traffic on the dirt road to coyote hill would likely increase sound and dust pollution in that area (again, damaging the experience for students.)

3. **ISOLATION:** That location is isolated from all other camp funions and housing at SMOE. This will slow the emergency response time of principals if there were a camp emergency. This will isolate principals from the SMOE and YMCA community living in Jones gulch, which sacrifices opportunity for spontaneous collaboration and community building. Additionally, it seems that the isolation of this location increases risk for fire damage. The chaparral ecosystem surrounding the proposed housing would burn very fast and hot during a wild-fire. I don't know how cal-fire prioritizes structures to preserve, but it seems like the isolation of these proposed structures compared to all other camp structures might make it less of a priority to protect. Also, after a burn, this location seems like it might be at greater risk for damage due to mudslides.

In conclusion, while I support the housing project in general, I feel that a more suitable location at Jones Gulch should be identified. Preferably a location that fits within the existing footprint of the camp. If development does move forward in this location, I strongly request that efforts are taken to limit light pollution from the homes.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Ellen Young
Associate Professor of Biology
Cañada College

Subject: Comment for October 7 Board Meeting

Date: Monday, October 5, 2020 at 11:01:43 AM Pacific Daylight Time

From: Jenna Deane <jennacorindeane@gmail.com>

To: info@smcoe.org <info@smcoe.org>

Hello, my name is Jenna Deane and I worked as a naturalist for SMOE for four years between fall 2007 and spring 2011. While the idea of providing principal housing is great, I oppose the proposed location of the housing for these reasons:

-This location is at an intersection of many highly trafficked trails for student groups including trails that are used for night hikes. With two outdoor schools sharing trails, it will become very difficult to spread out in a way that groups aren't impacting each other during this special activity. During the day this is where groups commonly eat lunch on all day hikes or do activities before heading into the garden or further up the hill. Having housing here will unnecessarily decrease opportunities to immerse in nature and activity locations for groups.

-This location is far from the rest of the camp facilities which will be inconvenient for the principal in general but also when needing to respond to any emergencies.

-This location will increase vehicular traffic on the dirt road leading to the proposed site. This will impact sensitive species that live in this area. Has an impact study been done on what wildlife will be impacted? From my experience, this is not only a road for humans, but a highly trafficked wildlife corridor as well. And with the old growth forest so close by, I'm also concerned for the Marbled Murrelets, a species that has just experienced severe habitat loss from the CZU Fire complex. Has impact on this endangered species been studied?

With Jones Gulch already having such a large housing footprint, I strongly encourage rethinking the location of this housing so that it fits within the existing footprint of development, preserving access to nature, and prioritizing wildlife habitat.

Thank you for considering my comment,

Jenna Deane
jennacorindeane@gmail.com

Subject: Comment for October 7 Board Meeting

Date: Monday, October 5, 2020 at 5:20:52 PM Pacific Daylight Time

From: Sarah Ludwig <sarah.k.ludwig@gmail.com>

To: info@smcoe.org <info@smcoe.org>

Hello SMCOE Board,

My name is Sarah Ludwig and I was an employee at San Mateo Outdoor Education during the 2015-2016 school year. I'm writing to comment on the proposed principal housing on Coyote Hill. While I greatly appreciate and approve of the decision to create more housing for SMOE staff, the Coyote Hill location must be voted against and a new location suggested. SMOE is a program and place very dear to my heart, and it is wonderful that SMCOE wants to invest in principal housing that would further create community, support increased risk management, and improve program support/quality overall. However, the proposed location at Coyote Hill is not the right place to maximize these opportunities. A location closer to the rest of the camp buildings and integrated into the existing camp footprint would greatly decrease disruption to students, staff, and wildlife (especially endangered marbled murrelets). Please vote no on the Coyote Hill location and consider a different location closer. Thank you,

Sarah Ludwig

[Sarah.k.ludwig@gmail.com](mailto:sarah.k.ludwig@gmail.com)

Subject: Comment for October 7 Board Meeting

Date: Tuesday, October 6, 2020 at 10:09:18 AM Pacific Daylight Time

From: Emily Lansdale <eolansdale@gmail.com>

To: info@smcoe.org <info@smcoe.org>

To whom it may concern,

I am writing as a previous SMOE Naturalist/Village Leader and concerned citizen. It has come to my attention that the county is moving forward with plans to build housing for our Senior Staff on Coyote Hill.

While I'm excited that these positions are being provided housing, which will streamline our program and provide the best possible care for our students, the location chosen is a very poor choice. I wonder who made this decision? As a former SMCOE employee, I would have appreciated being consulted in making a decision that will affect every aspect of our program. I think the selection of a spot down in the central part of camp where the other staff are housed makes a lot more sense. Let me tell you why.

Coyote Hill is a very important teaching space for our students. It is one of the best and most accessible spaces to lead students in bird studies or insect investigations. The coyote brush that grows all over the hill is excellent habitat for small mammals, birds, and all types of insects. Students love settling in next to a bush, with a view of the tops of the redwoods, and journaling about the openness and tranquility of this spot. Since Outdoor Ed. is primarily wooded, this is one of only a few spots where students get this perspective. Consequently, Coyote Hill is also one of my favorite spots to take students on Night Hikes. This emblematic activity opens a child's understanding of their own capabilities, and nothing sends this message home better than lying down in the grass and staring up at a vast starry sky. Finally, our educational garden space sits right next to the spot proposed for building. This garden is a haven in the redwoods, peaceful, quiet, yet full of wildlife. The whole idea of Outdoor Education, giving students an opportunity to truly immerse themselves in the untouched outdoors, is threatened by this building proposal.

Light pollution, noise pollution, car traffic, and concerns about staff privacy are a few of the reasons building on Coyote Hill is a misled idea. I hope this comment has served to provide some useful context to making such a big decision.

I also want to take this opportunity to express my disappointment with the County Office of Ed for their lack of support in going to bat to help the current SMOE staff keep their housing at Jones Gulch during this global pandemic. Their refusal to negotiate with the YMCA to agree to let us stay in our home until next year's program not only greatly decreases the likelihood that I return as an experienced Naturalist Leader to help reopen the program, but it feels inhumane and scary to be sent out into a challenging housing market with a pandemic underfoot after being laid off. We agreed to pay rent and help maintain the facilities, but we needed County support in convincing the YMCA to let us stay. We did not receive this. It feels only slightly ironic that such time and energy is being given to an initiative to build new housing when the county couldn't find the time to help house its current staff.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration and your continued dedication to quality education for our students. I know we share the same goals and I hope you make the right decision.

Sincerely,
Emily

Subject: Comment for October 7 Board Meeting

Date: Tuesday, October 6, 2020 at 11:50:47 AM Pacific Daylight Time

From: Trish Delish <treefrawg@gmail.com>

To: info@smcoe.org <info@smcoe.org>

Dear SMCOE Board,

I am writing to oppose the current plan to build staff housing next to "Coyote Hill" in San Mateo Outdoor Education's Jones Gulch site. I oppose this plan for the following reasons:

- I worked as a naturalist at the site during the 1990s and this area provides an amazing respite for students to experience science and nature in a vibrant and rich ecosystem of redwoods, grasslands and creeks.
- The proposed site is right in an important hiking and teaching area for students and would disrupt their experience of being in nature.
- This site would increase traffic in an area that currently only has very limited traffic for maintenance purposes only
- This site would impact the wildlife including many endangered species
- This site would be isolated from the rest of the staff and students. A site closer to the other current buildings would make more sense.

Thank you for your consideration,
Patricia Unruhe, educator
treefrawg@gmail.com

Subject: Comment for October 7 Board Meeting

Date: Tuesday, October 6, 2020 at 12:49:52 PM Pacific Daylight Time

From: Alison Irwin <irwinalik@gmail.com>

To: info@smcoe.org <info@smcoe.org>

To Whom It May Concern,

After four years of employment with SMOE and three as part of the leadership team, I can say confidently that the establishment of housing for the future directors and principals of San Mateo Outdoor Education is an essential step forward for leadership retention, program safety, and ultimately the longevity and success of the program.

However, the site proposed, Coyote Hill, is not an appropriate location. Coyote Hill is a critical education site that thousands of students visit every year. There are many heavily used trails that cross through the area, and it is one of only a few open sunny spaces to use for dispersed active learning games or to keep students safe and warm on cold or windy days. Construction and buildings will take up this precious space and negatively impact student's ability to use and enjoy the area.

Also the main benefit to having a principal on site is to respond quickly to concerns or emergencies, and Coyote Hill will be the furthest on site housing that exists. Why have an on site principal if they aren't able to be an immediate resource in responding to serious concerns? They should be closer to the office and cabins.

Finally, the road to Coyote Hill is used three nights a week by many student groups for night hikes, the most impactful activity of the week for many students. For any group with a student in a wheelchair or other physical disability, it is the widest and safest trail to use and allows those students to participate in the night hike. If there is housing on Coyote Hill, cars with bright headlights will be driving up and down this pathway, it will increase risk, and the lights will ruin the student's night vision and overall experience of the night hike. Housing for the principal or director will greatly benefit the program, but choosing a location closer to camp will preserve an essential learning space and maximize program safety.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Alison Irwin

Former Senior Naturalist 2013-2017



Virus-free. www.avast.com

Subject: Comment for October 7 Board Meeting

Date: Tuesday, October 6, 2020 at 2:18:33 PM Pacific Daylight Time

From: Whitney Cohen <education@lifelab.org>

To: info@smcoe.org <info@smcoe.org>

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my very strong hope that you'll protect Coyote Hill from development, and build any necessary new buildings within the existing footprint of the developed camp at Jones Gulch. I was a Naturalist at SMOE in 1999-2001, and the experience changed my life. I now teach about teaching Environmental Education at UCSC and am the Education Director at Life Lab, a national nonprofit focused on school gardens. In both of these roles, I have had the privilege of collaborating with hundreds of environmental education sites and programs across the country. Among these programs, SMOE stands out because of its unique focus on creating a sense of absolute "magic" for the students who visit. For many SMOE students, their time at Jones Gulch may be one of their *only* opportunities to spend time in an undeveloped, wild space. This experience can be formative for them and instill in them a lifelong love of the natural world, as it certainly did for me. If you build houses on Coyote Hill, that opportunity to know an undeveloped, wild space will be significantly reduced, unnecessarily. I know that the San Mateo County Office of Education has committed significant time and energy into promoting environmental literacy and nature connection, which has been wonderful to see and support. Building houses on Coyote Hill would, in my opinion, be a step in the wrong direction, and I encourage you to protect this special, open space for the future generations of SMCOE students who will visit for years to come.

Thank you for considering my perspective,
Whitney

Whitney Cohen (*pronoun: she*)

Education Director, Life Lab

education@lifelab.org

831-459-5395

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Subject: Proposed Coyote Hill Housing Project

Date: Tuesday, October 6, 2020 at 5:30:45 PM Pacific Daylight Time

From: michael einermann <michael.einermann@gmail.com>

To: info@smcoe.org <info@smcoe.org>

To whom it may concern -

I am writing in strong opposition to the housing project on Coyote Hill at Jones Gulch. I am a former teacher naturalist at SMOE, serving as an intern in 1999-2000, and returning as a senior naturalist for the 2000-2001 academic year. That time in my life was pivotal, and the landscape of Jones Gulch had a profound affect on my life. A native of Massachusetts, I had never encountered a landscape so rich with biodiversity. I spent countless hours wandering that vast landscape, tracking Coyote, Deer, Bobcat and Pig, searching tirelessly for songbird species who had captured my imagination, and learning about the plants and trees that inhabit that hillside. In all my travels, I have rarely encountered a place as magical and transformative as Coyote Hill.

I am now a resident of Marlboro Vermont. I am a builder by profession, I am familiar with the need for housing, and I understand a bit about site development and how to blend housing into the landscape. My fear is that the proposed structures will greatly detract from the wild beauty of Coyote Hill. It seems to me that a suitable location could be found that utilizes a site that has already seen some human impact. I will not pretend to understand all of the nuances of the situation, I simply implore you all to think about the implications moving forward with this plan. At a time when coastal California has been devastated by wildfires, it would be prudent to think carefully about development and its impact on fragile natural communities. Additionally, one must consider the impacts to young children and teacher naturalists who will be visiting Jones Gulch in the years to come.

I have visited SMOE a few times since moving back east in 2003. I am hopeful that in the years to come I will visit again with my two sons, and walk up to Coyote Hill to visit the landscape that had such a valuable impact on my life all those years ago, and that I may find that it is virtually unchanged.

Thank you for your consideration.

Michael Einermann

Subject: Comment for October 7 Board Meeting

Date: Tuesday, October 6, 2020 at 7:14:33 PM Pacific Daylight Time

From: Tom Evans <ottertom87@gmail.com>

To: info@smcoe.org <info@smcoe.org>

Dear San Mateo County Board Members,

I am writing to you as a former employee of San Mateo Outdoor Education (1991-92, 1995-98) in opposition to the proposal to build administrative housing on Coyote Hill within the Jones Gulch campus.

SMOE has a 50 year history of providing deeply enriching education experiences for the students of San Mateo County. For most of that history, SMOE has utilized the incredible YMCA facility at Jones Gulch, which includes broad diversity of outdoor spaces including old growth redwoods, groves of broadleaf buckeyes and live oaks trees, and open meadow and brushlands on Coyote Hill. The value of the open sunny hillside to the educational experience of SMOE students can't be understated - to traverse different habitats in a few steps creates wonderful scientific and sensory learning experiences. The value of this open area is amplified when used for night hikes, allowing clear views of the stars and constellations that are obscured by the urban development 'over the hill.'

The proposal to build modular housing facilities in this location will greatly diminish the unique value of this location on the Jones Gulch campus. The presence of buildings within the hillside area would interrupt the opportunities for students to experience these transitions of ecosystems as a natural landscape rather than a human habitat. The impact on night hikes is staggering (naturalists would often jockey for position on these trails on clear nights to provide this unique experience for the cabin groups).

The location of this housing proposal has other practical issues. It spreads out the program's facilities. I now work as an urban planner and our focus as a field is to use space efficiently, to save transportation time, reduce infrastructure costs, and minimize human impact on the land. The increase in travel on the access road would disturb hiking groups and could pose a safety conflict at numerous trail intersections.

Expanding staff housing options within the already developed areas of the Jones Gulch campus makes much more practical sense for the SMOE operations and the ecological functions that students are there to experience. Please reconsider this plan.

Thank you,

Tom Evans

Subject: Comment for October 7 Board Meeting

Date: Tuesday, October 6, 2020 at 9:15:27 PM Pacific Daylight Time

From: Shea Nolan <26wyliei@gmail.com>

To: info@smcoe.org <info@smcoe.org>

To the San Mateo Board of Education, regarding the placement of 2 modular homes on Coyote Hill:

My name is Shea, I was a student at San Mateo Outdoor Education in 6th grade, a cabin leader during my senior year of high school, and a naturalist intern during the school year of 2019-2020. I strongly disapprove of the placement of these two modular homes on Coyote Hill. The last I saw that location was before evacuating Jones Gulch during the August Lightning Complex fires, and it was bustling with wildlife. As I passed by, a flock of a dozen quail and their chicks scampered into the coyote brush sending out their assembly calls: "lake tahoe! lake tahoe!" At the same time, little cotton-tailed rabbits bounded away from their foraging grounds, while a small herd of deer looked up and stared in bemusement. That area is a valuable habitat for the local fauna, and it would be a shame to squander its importance in the name of development.

I can speak from experience that it is a lovely location to bring students for a brief respite from a long hike in the hills. It is an excellent viewing area where they can possibly see our amazing California wildlife while munching on their trail lunch. I would be sorely disappointed if future students were treated to a view of staff housing, rather than what perhaps could be their first ever view of a mule deer, a grey fox, or a wild turkey. All these species and more have been sighted in that area!

Additionally It is a prime spot for nighttime star gazing. Not only does it provide an expansive view of the stars and moon, but it is also the easiest and most accessible location to reach for an astronomy-based night hike. If I had a student who, for whatever reason, could not hike a long distance (whether by disability or a minor injury), I would use Coyote Hill as a night hike destination due to its vehicle access.

An open clearing in the middle of the woods is a rare thing indeed, and I could always rely on Coyote Hill to show my students the amazing night sky of the Santa Cruz Mountains. It is a shame that observing a night sky untouched by night pollution is so rare these days. I ask the Board: would you, in good conscience, limit our students access to the night sky, a vanishing natural resource? Would you, in good conscience, impact the precious natural environment of Jones Gulch and diminish the experience of our students? I leave that decision in your hands, but I ask that you consider the unintended consequences of your actions.

Thank you for your time,
Shea, aka "Scale"

10/4/20

Dear Hector Comacho Jr and the board

Thank you for taking up the issue of housing for future outdoor ed directors. As the outdoor ed Site Director/Principal for the last 28 years and as a naturalist in the late 70s and early 80s I have, probably more than any one, the longest institutional knowledge about the program. Although I agree with moving ahead to provide this housing, I disagree with the location that is currently being proposed. I agree with all of the reasons, that Mark Nolan has previously outlined, why this is not the best location. However, there are two reasons that are fundamental goals of the program why this location should be rejected.

The two most important goals of the outdoor education program are;

- To ensure the physical and emotional health and safety of students
- To provide a top-notch outdoor education experience

As Site Director/Principal I have spent nearly every Wednesday night on-call, sleeping in the outdoor ed office. The year before last, one of our staff housing units was not being used so I started spending the night there and for the first time in all those years I woke up rested and refreshed. This would be the hope for the future director. They would still be on-call but sleeping in their own bed at home. However, I would not recommend it if the housing were to be placed in the proposed location.

I haven't been woken up every Wednesday night but enough times throughout my tenure to know that a quick response is often needed. The proposed housing location would not afford such a response, particularly during the rainy months when the road is a mud pit. Alternative locations for housing that are closer to other staff housing in camp would dramatically reduce the response time. Even though the participating classroom teachers are assigned to be on-call it is true that many of our long-time teachers are retiring and that the newer batch of teachers are less familiar and confident in handling the various occurrences.

Some of the late night wake up calls have been to deal with a smoke alarm that goes off at 3am, take care of an overflowing toilet, to clean up and care for a student who vomits on their sleeping bag, to deal with a student who runs from their cabin, a cabin leader not in their cabin, a tree branch that hits a cabin and a host of other incidents. One time when the senior naturalist was on call and returning to his home, he extinguished a fire that had caught on the curtain of an unoccupied cabin. A couple of years ago I had to crawl into a culvert to coax a student out who had crawled in half way. Even though this was something that happened during the day I realized that just when you think you've seen if all something new can confront you.

Now for the 2nd goal. A few years ago, Mark and I were leading a teacher workshop at the Estes Park YMCA. When we lead the group out to take them on a trail it was a 20-minute walk before we were out of the camp footprint and into a natural area. This helped me realize how lucky we are at Jones Gulch to have such a spectacular outdoor classroom. At one time, one of the many YMCA master plans was to build new cabins further up the hill instead of on existing footprints. This would have destroyed the easy accessibility of prime teaching areas and just as we experienced at Estes Park it would have moved the natural environment, our classroom, further away. I'm glad that they finally rejected that master plan but the proposed housing location would do just that.

The area in question is a prime teaching area. It introduces students to the chaparral/grassland communities, it's a place where students can easily find insects and see examples of succession. It is also a hub where groups can gather for instruction or to safely play running games that teach various concepts. Not long ago some fossils were actually found in that location. It is also a prime night hike area. Because we share the trails with San Joaquin Outdoor Ed, on any given night there are 5-10 groups (60-100 students) taking night hikes. Flat trails that are out of the trees and away from the lights of camp are at a premium. This is one of the few places where students actually get a chance to see the stars. And, in some cases, where students see stars for the first time in their lives.

When I first became Site Director/Principal of SMOE I would have jumped at the chance to have housing provided and to raise my three boys in the Jones Gulch community. For a time, they were part of the Pescadero/Loma Mar community but, alas, even back then housing was too expensive. Had I been offered the housing in the proposed location, knowing what I knew from being a naturalist, I would have rejected living there. For one thing, back then it was still an extension of the hillside flora. The area was cleared and flattened for the summer horse corral that was later moved for one reason of being too hot. At times there is a 5-10-degree temperature difference between Coyote hill and down under the redwoods in camp. When you think of it this is the area most prone to wildfire.

One of the alternative sites proposed would be on the footprint of an abandoned cabin. The cost for the destruction of that cabin is high but I would encourage the board to carefully examine and compare the budget proposals. Furthermore, eventually this cabin will need to be removed and if it is in the future, the cost will be much greater. Another consideration is to develop the area at the green house (one of the oldest and most dilapidated housing structures) where the green house is replaced with both staff housing and director housing.

I'm certain that for the people, including YMCA staff and naturalists, who live there and experience the proposed area on a daily basis, they would also deem it as an unsuitable building site.

We have one of the most celebrated programs and sites in the state, let's not chip away at our ability to keep delivering an unforgettable experience for students and staff.

Thank you for your consideration

Steve Van Zandt
Site Director/Principal

Subject: Comment for October 7 Board Meeting

Date: Wednesday, October 7, 2020 at 8:00:00 AM Pacific Daylight Time

From: Alexander Jones <alexandersubhashjones@gmail.com>

To: info@smcoe.org <info@smcoe.org>

Dear San Mateo Board of Education members-

Thank you for taking the time to read my comment on the Housing Recommendation from the YMCA Housing Subcommittee. I want to acknowledge the time and hard work that the Subcommittee has put into the consideration of San Mateo Outdoor Education (SMOE) staff housing at Camp Jones Gulch. My name is Alex Jones, and I worked as a naturalist at SMOE in 1998-1999, and I credit the high caliber of the program's training and its uplifting spirit as the singular early professional experience that has moved me through my career as an environmental educator. I now work as manager of the UC Santa Cruz Campus Natural Reserve, where I support undergraduate student involvement in education, research, and stewardship. I use the principles, techniques, and joy I absorbed at SMOE daily in my work, all these years later. I, as will so many others, will sorely miss Steve Van Zandt and Mark Nolan when they ultimately leave SMOE.

The commitment to building housing for their successors makes perfect sense and I am in full support of building housing for the future administrative staff. I, however, do not support building staff housing at the proposed location on Coyote Hill. I spoke at the September 16th meeting to voice my concerns, some of which I will reiterate here.

1) The project location lies directly in an area heavily used by SMOE programming. Students use the road leading to the site extensively during daytime program activities, including trips to the SMOE garden, but especially use the road during night hikes. The night hike is a common highlight for students that attend SMOE. Students silently--okay, quietly--follow a naturalist up narrow trails and the road to Coyote Hill without using lights, passing along messages that keep each other safe and build a sense of trust and solidarity among group members. They have traditionally used the road for solo walks as well, where they test their boundaries and build confidence, emerging braver at the other end of the road. Many of the trails in Jones Gulch are too eroded to provide an adequate and safe night hike experience. Though the night hikes may seem trivial when attempting to site a building project, I believe it's important to remember that the staff for whom the buildings would be built will have these kinds of programmatic concerns as well. Adding more traffic on this road would cause disruption to the immersive nature experience students get at SMOE, in addition to being a safety hazard.

2) Coyote Hill has transformed from a grassy hillside, as it was in the late 1990s, to a dense coyote brush shrubland, with Douglas-fir and oaks transitioning the shrubland toward woodland and forest. This process of natural succession reveals a lack of management to keep the area open, but more importantly poses a fire risk to any future residents on Coyote Hill. With the recent CZU Lightning Complex Fire in the Santa Cruz Mountains that destroyed 1,490 structures, we have seen the tragedy that can happen when building within the Wildland-Urban Interface.

3) In the September 16th meeting, members of the YMCA Housing Subcommittee referenced exploring other site options. Have you explored the open grassland site north of the YMCA office?

Thank you for taking the time to consider these comments, and for the support you give to the SMOE program, especially during these challenging COVID times.

Sincerely,
Alex Jones
831-334-0515

Subject: Comment for October 7 Board Meeting

Date: Wednesday, October 7, 2020 at 8:00:00 AM Pacific Daylight Time

From: Alexander Jones <alexandersubhashjones@gmail.com>

To: info@smcoe.org <info@smcoe.org>

Dear San Mateo Board of Education members-

Thank you for taking the time to read my comment on the Housing Recommendation from the YMCA Housing Subcommittee. I want to acknowledge the time and hard work that the Subcommittee has put into the consideration of San Mateo Outdoor Education (SMOE) staff housing at Camp Jones Gulch. My name is Alex Jones, and I worked as a naturalist at SMOE in 1998-1999, and I credit the high caliber of the program's training and its uplifting spirit as the singular early professional experience that has moved me through my career as an environmental educator. I now work as manager of the UC Santa Cruz Campus Natural Reserve, where I support undergraduate student involvement in education, research, and stewardship. I use the principles, techniques, and joy I absorbed at SMOE daily in my work, all these years later. I, as will so many others, will sorely miss Steve Van Zandt and Mark Nolan when they ultimately leave SMOE.

The commitment to building housing for their successors makes perfect sense and I am in full support of building housing for the future administrative staff. I, however, do not support building staff housing at the proposed location on Coyote Hill. I spoke at the September 16th meeting to voice my concerns, some of which I will reiterate here.

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Sincerely,
Alex Jones
831-334-0515

Subject: Comment for October 7 Board Meeting

Date: Wednesday, October 7, 2020 at 9:02:03 AM Pacific Daylight Time

From: Vanessa Olivieri <v.rose.olivieri@gmail.com>

To: info@smcoe.org <info@smcoe.org>

RE: Proposed construction of housing on Coyote Hill at San Mateo Outdoor Education's site at the SF YMCA.

To whom it may concern,

My name is Vanessa Olivieri and I worked at San Mateo Outdoor Education from 2007 - 2011 as an educator and Health Care Specialist. I fully support the development of additional housing for senior staff at San Mateo Outdoor Education. Unfortunately, I oppose the proposed location on Coyote Hill near the water towers.

My opposition is based on its distance from other staff and the weekly student population. As a health care specialist during my tenure at SMOE I responded regularly to late evening and middle of the night needs of students. I was able to reach the camp office within minutes and I was able to reach all camper cabins within 5 minutes walking. This timely response directly correlated to the proximity of my housing to the living quarters of students. The proposed building site for the new housing would require vehicular travel for any response, delaying timely care for students attending the program. Furthermore, depending on the time of the call, a response may adversely affect ongoing programming (like night hikes) for San Mateo or San Joaquin Outdoor Education. With principals fulfilling on-call capacities during every week of program, the response time from a proposed building site must be considered.

Quality of life and community connection is paramount to the success of San Mateo Outdoor Education and the location of the proposed housing would be isolated from other staff members of the YMCA and Outdoor Education programming. Personal well-being aside, distance from other staff housing could further reduce principal response time to emergencies, as in-person house calls may be necessary to recruit required help. As we know, power is liable to go out during storms and going house to house may be the only way to get in touch with staff members in order to support emergencies with the students.

For reasons of safety and connection to students and staff I highly encourage a reconsideration of the proposed building location for new permanent housing for senior SMOE staff. I think that additional full time housing is crucial to the success of the future leadership of SMOE and the placement of this housing is equally crucial to the success of the principal's work.

Thank you,
Vanessa 'Kiskadee' Olivieri

Subject: Comment for October 7 Board Meeting

Date: Wednesday, October 7, 2020 at 9:48:33 AM Pacific Daylight Time

From: Erin Davenport <erin.purtell@gmail.com>

To: info@smcoe.org <info@smcoe.org>

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing in defense of Coyote Hill and oppose construction of new staff housing at this location. I was a San Mateo Outdoor Education naturalist at the turn of the century and had life-changing moments with students seated on or near Coyote Hill where the forest edge meets the open meadow. The deer know this place well, the benefits that the vantage point affords, bearing witness to the arrival and retreat of rain, fog, and daylight. On night hikes, we closed our eyes and cupped our ears to amplify the sounds of crickets and frogs, owls and coyotes resonating over this unique topography. Coyote Hill is one of the more accessible locations for students to immerse themselves in the natural landscape and witness first-hand the magic of Jones Gulch. Whenever I have visited in the last 2 decades, Coyote Hill is the one place that has changed the least. It is where I still find that connection to the experiences I had at the edge between college and career. Where the unique vantage point provided me with the inspiration to remain connected to beautiful places with access to unique experiences in a natural landscape. I grew from my SMOE roots to become a manager in Yosemite National Park where the influence of places like Coyote Hill move me to protect the resources and experiences despite pressure for increasing services and infrastructure. The preamble of Wilderness Act of 1964 best captures the value of this important balance:

"In order to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition ..."

Please do not expand the construction footprint to the unique setting of Coyote Hill. Thank you for considering these comments.

Subject: [POSSIBLE SPAM] Comment for October 7 Board Meeting
Date: Wednesday, October 7, 2020 at 10:34:14 AM Pacific Daylight Time
From: Amelia Rosenman <ameliarosenman@gmail.com>
To: info@smcoe.org <info@smcoe.org>

Dear San Mateo County Board of Education,

I urge you to oppose the location for proposed housing for future Outdoor Education principals at Jones Gulch.

The Coyote Hill location by the water tanks that has been proposed is a poor choice for camp housing and will negatively impact Outdoor Education programming in a number of ways.

Whenever you choose to build a camp in a nature setting, you are making a lot of compromises. Of course, staff housing and buildings like a dining hall, camp office, etc. are important for the program to function smoothly. However, we should prioritize keeping all the camp housing contained to as small a footprint as possible, in order to maximize the opportunity for students to go on hikes (particularly night hikes) on trails that are away from housing, quiet, peaceful, and actually dark at night. The camp footprint at Jones Gulch is actually quite large already, and affords plenty of room for additional staff housing. Since the access to nature is the biggest asset of the site overall, we shouldn't encroach on that by building houses far from the center of camp.

Coyote Hill is the first place on that side of camp where the land starts to feel truly wild, and I expect building housing there would impact the ecosystem of the hillside (including deer, coyote, foxes, rabbits, and smaller critters), much in the way the YMCA staff housing on Condo Hill already does. We should keep the housing to the Condo Hill or the main camp area.

Thanks,
Amelia Rosenman
Former Naturalist, San Mateo Outdoor Education (lived on site for 5 years)