

[Talk give to Santa Clara Co. HLUET Cmte meeting, May 21, 2015]

Text in red: variances between distributed written comments and the “as-presented”.

HLUET Cmte members: Chair: Dave Cortese; member Mike Wasserman

Hi, I’m Larry Ames.

I was appointed to the County’s Los Gatos Creek Streamside Park Committee in 1984 by then-Supervisor Zoe Lofgren.

I was the County Parks Commissioner representing Supervisor Blanca Alvarado.

Presently, I’m Chair of the San José Neighborhoods Commission, on the CGF Board, and founder of the Friends of the Willow Glen Trestle. I’m here today ~~on behalf~~ as a friend of the trestle.

I’m having a strong case of déjà vu: 22 years ago, I was here under quite similar circumstances: I was spearheading a community project on the Los Gatos Creek and getting absolutely nowhere with the City of San José.

Just as all seemed lost, I came to the County and talked at “Item Not On the Agenda”, and the County Supervisors quickly figured out a way to sidestep the City’s obstructionism and to find a solution, which is why our Los Gatos Creek Urban Stream Restoration Project prominently honors Santa Clara County, and only mentions the City in passing.

I’m hoping that perhaps you can work that magic again.

Despite over two years of negotiations, reasoning, lobbying, newspaper editorials, and an incredible outpouring of public support, and thank you, Dave, for you letter. Despite all that, on Tuesday the City Council ruled finally and formally that they do not want the Willow Glen Trestle, and that they want it immediately torn down and replaced with some prefabricated catalog-order steel structure.

While a prefab bridge, like the trestle, would connect the Los Gatos and Three Creeks Trails, only the trestle can also connect future generations to the Valley of Hearts Delight’s agricultural heritage.

Santa Clara County has granted the City several million dollars, as have the Open Space Authority and the State of California, to buy the trail right-of-way and the trestle.

If the City does not want the trestle, I’m wondering if perhaps there might be some way for the County, perhaps working with the other agencies, to “repossess” it: take it back, and develop it and the trail as a County regional facility.

The City can not start demolition immediately because the Friends have a Court Injunction. Our lawyer tells us that we might be able to hold them off for another month, maybe two – perhaps allowing time for some negotiations.

San José seems mired in petty politics. I know you can’t take action today, but I’m hoping that the County can do something, perhaps act as a higher authority and find some way to do the right thing: to save this piece of our local history for the community, now and for generations to come.