

Willow Glen Resident

FRIDAY, JANUARY 5, 2018 COMMUNITY-NEWSPAPERS.COM

PRESERVATION

City challenges decision to put Willow Glen Trestle on historic register

Fight to preserve old bridge heads into new year

By Julia Baum

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An old battle between San Jose city officials and a group of neighbors trying to save the Willow Glen Trestle from being demolished apparently will continue into the new year.

The San Jose City Council voted 9-2 in closed session last month to challenge a state commission's decision to place the defunct 95-year-old railroad bridge on California's historic register. Council members Don Rocha and Raul Peralez dissented.

Trestle

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Last year the California Historical Resources Commission unanimously declared the trestle a state historic landmark, prompting former city manager Norberto Duenas to send a letter several months later asking it to reconsider.

Although prohibited from disclosing any details about the closed session, Councilwoman Dev Davis, who represents the Willow Glen neighborhood, said in an interview last week the city is pursuing legal action on grounds that the commission's vote contradicted its own standards for determin-

ing historic designations. It will ask the court to order the state to use standards and procedures outlined by the commission in determining the trestle's fate.

City leaders and a group called Friends of the Willow Glen Trestle have been at odds since 2014 over the wooden bridge. The city wants to dismantle the trestle and replace it with a new, \$1 million custom-built steel span that's been sitting in storage while the dispute plays itself out. But the Friends group insists the trestle's historic ties warrant a \$2 million restoration.

Davis said in a statement that it's well past time to remove the trestle and finally complete the Los Gatos Creek Trail connection.

"Like the majority of the

community, I really just want to get the trails connected," Davis said. "I'm disappointed that this has been delayed for nearly four years now."

Former councilman Pierluigi Oliverio, who spoke against the trestle's placement at the state commission hearing last year, agrees.

"This recent action marks the fifth City Council vote in favor of installing the new bridge so residents may enjoy a connected trail," Oliverio said. "There will never be a trail unless the bridge that was purchased four years ago is installed."

In a report for the city last revised in 2015, historian Stephen Mike-sell wrote that the trestle "does not meet the man-

datory sections" of a historical resource as defined by California Environmental Quality Act standards. Similarly, a federal historian rejected the Friends' application to place the trestle on the National Register of Historic Placement in 2016, stating that its historic significance was "blown out of proportion."

Friends leader Larry Ames could not be reached for comment, but state historic preservation officer Julianne Polanco sent him a letter recently confirming that the commission's determination is final, and "the Willow Glen Trestle will remain listed on the California Register."

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