

PALO ALTO DAILY NEWS

Also serving Menlo Park, Mountain View, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, East Palo Alto, Atherton, Portola Valley, Stanford, Sunnyvale and Woodside

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An Open Letter to Dr. John Hennessy President, Stanford University

Dear Dr. Hennessy,

Stanford's administration seems unreasonably determined to rush to demolish the historic Bracewell Radio Astronomy Observatory on Alpine Road.

The order has been given for immediate demolition of the five dish antennas and associated equipment, despite community appeals and worthy proposals from Stanford faculty members and student organizations to use the facility for academic purposes.

Friends of Bracewell Observatory Association (FBOA), a charitable 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, offers to provide long-term funding and expert maintenance for restoration and subsequent academic use. We respectfully ask for due consideration and discussion of the proposal letters you have received from us. Having received no reply from you, we are making this public appeal to you.

As you must know, among other proposals from faculty, your own Astronomy Department has proposed preserving the five dish antennas under our funding to use in its teaching program. But their realistic proposal appears to have been rejected by your administration, not for academic reasons but because of financial considerations that do not recognize our proposed endowed donations and services.

Given our offer, and the fact that the observatory dishes carry a \$10 million replacement cost, we feel it would be a tragedy for the telescope to be demolished for no compelling reason. After many dry years, research funds are now once again supporting university observatories like this one at several respected colleges.

Stanford has not suggested any competing use for the property that has any academic standing. Why have we not received a response from you to discuss our proposal to save and support the observatory?

What is the real reason for the rush to demolish? Many have begun to wonder if the haste implies Stanford has unstated plans for new development in the Alpine Road area. The dishes have been in place for decades, and they certainly can be allowed to stand while faculty and funding proposals are thoroughly explored.

We call upon you to:

- Rescind the demolition order to allow time for a carefully considered decision
- Gather all the facts first-hand by convening a meeting so all parties can be heard
- Accept our funding and maintenance proposal

Respectfully,

BOB LASH, M.D.

President, Friends of the Bracewell Observatory Association (FBOA)

On-line rescue petition: http://www.bambi.net/stanford_dishes/rescue.html

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