

STATEMENT TO HHC REGARDING SITE 515

Good evening commissioners. My name is Charles Carter I am the director of Land Use and Environmental Planning at Stanford, the owner of the property.

We are here today to support staff's expected recommendation that any discussion of the analysis of the historical significance of site 515 be delayed until the next scheduled hearing of the HCC. We appreciate staff's recognition that Stanford did not receive sufficient notice to prepare for a discussion.

We would, however, like to take the opportunity to comment on the process that allowed this item to come before the commission and ask it to consider directing staff to act in the future in ways that better serve public and land owner interests.

The facility in question was used for important research by a distinguished Stanford faculty member but the site has sat vacant and unused for close to thirty years. In its abandoned state, the equipment fell into disrepair and the site became an overgrown dumping ground, an attractive nuisance and potential safety risk. The School of Engineering eventually proposed to remove the equipment, clean-up the site and return it to the university for future academic use. Prior to the actual demolition of the antennas remaining on the site, the Schools of Engineering and Humanities and Sciences(with FOB's involvement) took more than a year to determine if there was any academic program that could restore the site for research or teaching. No user was identified and the University decided that demolition was the proper course of action.

By the time we applied to the building department for a demo permit, County Planning Staff had, apparently due to the lobbying of FOBO, decided that the site might be potentially significant historically and informed SU that it would need to submit documentation regarding the historic potential of the site for analysis before it would sign off on the permit. This was done even though the facility meets none of the published criteria for triggering an historic analysis: it does not trigger such review under the County Code because it is not on the County Inventory of Historic structures and it does not trigger such review under Stanford's General Use Permit because it is less than 50 years old. Put simply, the County staff cannot make up rules that the County has not adopted publicly after following the necessary procedures. If neither the County Code nor our use permit give the County discretion to deny or condition a demolition permit based upon effects on historic resources, then no such discretion exists. We therefore took exception to staff's determination that further evaluation was required and notified County Counsel in September that a historical analysis cannot be required and that our permit should be issued. We had received no response to our letter and in fact had heard nothing from the County until we learned that the item had been agendaized for comment on the FOBO's intention to submit a nomination to the California Register of historic places.

We should have been informed well in advance of tonight's hearing that a structure on Stanford's property would be the subject of this Commission's discussion. Instead, we were notified only this Monday. A similar thing happened to us last fall when a Mills Act Contract on Stanford land came before this Commission. Therefore, we ask the Commission to direct staff that the owner of property should be noticed immediately when an item is submitted for HHC review, and as early as possible before the matter is agendaized.

Now we are told that because the item was included in the published agenda, it could not be pulled and the HHC would have to decide whether to continue the item. We are confident that we can present evidence that the facility does not achieve a level of historical significance that would make it eligible for listing on the State Register or even the County Inventory. However, we continue to believe that no analysis is warranted, and that our demolition permit should have been issued when requested. We also believe that the activity triggered by the staff's actions is a waste of our time and resources as well as the County's.

Stanford University is a non-profit educational institution widely acknowledged for our leadership and accomplishments in historic preservation, sustainable development and environmental protection. We have a substantial professional planning staff, including two historic preservation specialists, a university committee that advises on preservation issues and an active local historical society with whom we meet regularly. The Board of Supervisors and Stanford worked together to develop the explicit preservation policies adopted in the Community Plan and General Use Permit for Stanford University, including the identification of important historic resources..

With all due respect to the Commission, whose members have always demonstrated professional interest and respect for our efforts in historic preservation, we are concerned that recent staff actions have disregarded the findings of our preservation planners and the adopted policies of the Community Plan and GUP and are eroding our relationship with the County. We intend to fully comply with the policies and conditions adopted by the Board of Supervisors but we will vigorously resist the imposition of new conditions developed without policy support.