

The Almanac
Wednesday, May 17, 2006
Guest opinion: Stanford offers its point of view
by Larry Horton

I was dismayed to see Stanford described in last week's Almanac as essentially saying to Portola Valley: Here is a plan for your trail; take it or leave it.

Stanford's offer to Portola Valley is not a take-it-or-leave-it offer to fund a specific trail design "or some very modest modifications of it." Stanford has offered to pay up to \$2.8 million to Portola Valley for enhancements to the Alpine Road trail that Portola Valley chooses to make within a broad set of general guidelines.

One option for Portola Valley would be to implement a set of construction plans that Stanford commissioned from a highly respected engineering firm using the recommended widths set forth in those guidelines. Stanford's offer letter to Portola Valley makes it clear that Portola Valley does not have to implement those plans. Portola Valley "may prefer to follow different plans" and still be eligible to receive funding.

Santa Clara County must concur that Stanford's provision of money or resources is in accordance with the agreement between Stanford and Santa Clara County regarding the Alpine Road trail. Santa Clara County has already agreed that the plans engineered to implement the recommended widths qualify for funding, but other plans proposed by Portola Valley are eligible to receive approval as well.

Stanford is not seeking to force any plan on Portola Valley; rather we have pledged to work with Portola Valley to reach agreement on plans and to assist Portola Valley in obtaining Santa Clara County's concurrence with them. Stanford's offer will also provide Portola Valley with funds to correct existing problems related to the trail's proximity to the creek.

These same principles apply to the portion of the Alpine Road trail in unincorporated San Mateo County. Stanford is offering up to \$8.4 million to the county to implement safety, aesthetic, and functional improvements to the Alpine Road trail, including new protections for the creek. We are not dictating that the county must accept any specific plan in order to receive funding, but are committed to working with the county to achieve its objectives.

The Almanac article also repeats misinformed claims made during a five-year controversy that was finally resolved by a 4-1 vote by the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors upholding Stanford's position on the general use permit condition on trails. The Almanac was wrong in saying that the 2000 general use permit "required Stanford to build two trails into the hills across Stanford lands" and in saying that Stanford will "avoid building trails on its lands." The entire S-1 trail segment is on Stanford land. Some of the Alpine Road trail (C-1) is on Stanford land; the rest is on public rights of way designated for the trail, often next to Stanford lands — and Stanford will pay for improvements on all.

The issue now is whether and how to use the funds Stanford has offered. We believe the local jurisdictions can best make those judgments.

Larry Horton is director of government and community relations at Stanford.

Almanac replies

Despite local opposition to its trail design, Stanford, with the blessing of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, "offered" San Mateo County \$8.4 million and the town of Portola Valley \$2.8 million to build a trail on its chosen alignment. If either the county or the town chooses another alignment or a design that does not meet the approval of Stanford or Santa Clara County, Stanford has said its money will be withdrawn and given to Santa Clara County.

The Editor