

From: [Sean Gallegos](#)
To: [Los Altos Historical Commission](#)
Subject: FW: [External Sender]Please send letter to the Historical Commissioners
Date: Friday, June 26, 2020 7:30:21 AM

Good Morning Chair Lang and Commissioners,

I have received the following comments from a resident regarding the Halsey House item.

Thank you,
Sean Gallegos
Liaison

From: Jane <janebree@aol.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 25, 2020 4:08 PM
To: Sean Gallegos <sgallegos@losaltosca.gov>
Cc: Donna Legge <dlegge@losaltosca.gov>;eward@losaltoshistory.org; Chris Jordan <cjordan@losaltosca.gov>; Jon Biggs <jbiggs@losaltosca.gov>
Subject: [External Sender]Please send letter to the Historical Commissioners

To: Chairman Lang, Historical Commissioners and Staff
Date: June 25, 2020
Subject: RE: **Halsey House Agenda**

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this Commission meeting conversation regarding the Halsey House in the Historic Redwood Grove Nature Preserve. The house was **originally designed historic in 1981.**

The Friends of Historic Redwood Grove (HRWG) have been organized since 2014. We continue to be an active group - with a small steering committee leading the way. Our overall goal is to see that the property remains a nature preserve, and the Historic Halsey House is preserved along with the redwoods.

Additionally, we have been a fundraising group seeking financial support from individual members of the community and grants that could help us with the project. We raised approximately \$35,000 in small donations to fund an initial city RFP and Feasibility Study to renovate the house. Mark Sandoval was hired and paid \$25,000 to complete the study for the City: approximately \$10,000 remains in our designated Friends fund with the Los Altos Community Foundation. We will continue to fundraise for a new plan when it is developed. According to Supervisor Simitian's office, there will be money in the budget for Historical grants beginning next year.

Following are several issues we wish to comment on:

1. Sandoval Feasibility Study for Adaptive Reuse – 2015

a. As directed by the Los City Council, the Historical Commission subcommittee, staff, the History Museum staff, and the Friends identified several grants from the Santa Clara County. In this process, the group realized that the Sandoval Feasibility Study for Adaptive Reuse was not enough information to complete the applications. A Historical Structure Report (HSR) was needed. Understanding this situation, we were unable to apply for several county grants, but we did apply and receive a State of California grant with support from the City of Los Altos. This report was finally available in its completed form in February of 2020.

b. The Friends are pleased with the complete report and the results of the Historical Structures Report. It confirmed that the house could be saved even though it was in poor condition from neglect. We feel that we can now work with the suggested steps to preserve the Halsey House building in its entirety or a significant portion. As was reported in the Recreation meeting on June 15th by Dr. Ward, the director of the History Museum, *the Halsey home and the Redwood Grove are connected*. The grove of Redwoods is not natural to this environment, and if it were not for Emma Halsey wanting to develop the house property to the wishes of her father, the redwoods from the Santa Cruz mountains would not have been planted, making it what we know today as our unique Historic Redwood Grove.

c. The Friends feel that the 2015 Sandoval Feasibility Study suggested a plan that is and has been far too expansive and intrusive for the Historic Redwood Grove area. The total cost is too expensive. *We do not recommend using this plan*. There may be some internal reports that could be helpful, but other simpler plans could be designed to fit our community needs. We are looking to be able to adapt the interior of the historic house for passive public use - nature preserve collections, displays, perhaps small passive nature classes, plus the Recreation summer camps headquarters, while keeping the exterior preserved. We do not ever wish to see any parking or commercializing of the property. That was a policy established by the Park & Recreation Commission 46 years ago when the property was purchased. The Friends of Historic Redwood Grove see this land as a unique nature retreat and preserve.

2. Historical Structural Report - Preserving the existing building

a. Move away from the Feasibility Study and now in 2020 support and follow the Historical Structure Report recommendations. Work with the community to suggest a new less intrusive and lower cost adaptive reuse design. We could support reducing the footprint of the Halsey House if that would help the project.

b. Immediately avoid any more damage to the city owned Halsey House: 1. continuing abatement of rats 2. Protect the roof and foundation from further water damage 3. fence the building to protect house and the public. Spend the funds remaining that were approved by the City Council two/three years ago. (\$25,000 was appropriated by the City Council and to our knowledge only \$6,000 has been spent) to complete this work.

c. Follow Historical Structure Report recommendations - create a timeline and stages of improvement - supporting a new interior design plus creating a simple outside bathroom structure for public use, repair and reuse as rental the caretaker cottage, and improve the creek pathway from Historic Redwood Grove to Shoup Park.

d. Protect the Flagpole - it is made from one tree log and is sturdy but old.

e. Treat the entire property with respect and make it a valuable working asset for the community. We would like the Council and Commissions to appreciate the special natural environment that belongs to the City and all the residents.

3. Communication

We feel we have lost the ability for all of us- the staff, Commissions, Friends and History Museum to share and work together. We hope that the City can help us make that happen without compromising the Brown Act.

Thank you.

Marie Backs
Chair, Friends of Redwood Grove
542 Orange Ave., Los Altos