

the Honorable Sam Liccardo, Mayor of San José
and Members of the San José Council
200 E. Santa Clara Street,
San José, CA 95113
via email, sent Nov. 16, 2015

re: Item 5.1 on the Nov. 17 Council Agenda: "Audit of the Golf Course Fund"

Mayor Liccardo and Councilmembers,

On Tuesday evening, you will receive a report that details how the city-owned golf courses are costing the city money, and you will consider how to proceed. I urge that you vote to keep the properties for the public's use and enjoyment as parklands, either retained for golf or repurposed for other uses such as soccer or open-space.

As I said at the Oct. 7th Parks & Rec. Commission meeting, the Los Lagos Golf Course was city-owned parkland before the golf-course was built, and if the course is removed, it would need to go back to parkland. (I was on the Coyote Creek Long-range Land Utilization Task Force in 1990 when the golf course was first proposed, and I fought against the initial plans that called for chopping down trees all along the creek so that golf could be played back and forth over the denuded creek channel. As a side benefit, it was that task force that first crafted a riparian setback policy.) If Los Lagos were to be closed, portions of the land could be used for soccer and other field-sports, community gardens, open space, and enhanced streamside habitat.

Rancho Del Pueblo is a rather land-locked parcel in an open-space-deprived district. It is a small 9-hole course and driving range, and host to First Tee – a rather special youth program. If golf is not viable on that site, I would recommend converting part of the land to soccer or other community-serving open space use. It is not appropriate to sell it off for high-density housing, as the area has poor access. Also, there are wetlands on part of the site that should be preserved. The San José Neighborhoods Commission wrote the Council a letter in May 2012 in support of preserving Rancho Del Pueblo, citing the need for "inner-city-green-space".

I am not a golfer myself, nor much of a fan of the financial and environmental impacts of golf courses. However, they are city-owned park lands in in a city that is deficient in regional open-spaces.

Please, vote to keep the golf course lands for the public's use.

Thank you.

~Lawrence Ames
member, 1990 Coyote Creek Long-range Land Utilization Task Force.