

For Immediate Release
March 27, 2008

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Senate Agriculture Committee to vote April 1 on fate of Cow Palace

**Effort to make Cow Palace a “surplus” state property
Includes misinformation, exaggerations, and is unnecessary**

Public urged to support “Thirteen Acre Solution”

Overview

SB1527, a radical bill introduced by State Senator Leland Yee that if approved by 2/3 vote would declare the Cow Palace a “surplus” State property, should be killed in committee. Proposed by Yee in February, the bill will be voted on by the Senate Agricultural Committee on April 1. **Approval clears the way for it to be sold to Daly City, which plans to raze the Cow Palace and build a retail center and high-density housing. At issue are the needs of Daly City residents who want shopping and other retail services on or near the historic site. However, these needs are being addressed by the Cow Palace Board of Directors who are willing to lease 13 acres of Cow Palace property to Daly City for a shopping center. This “Thirteen Acre Solution” would allow development on at least thirteen acres of adjoining land, providing an income stream that would pay for Cow Palace upgrades and improvements. The bill is unnecessary because the “Thirteen Acre Solution” provides Daly City with acreage for a retail center, the pretext for the bill, and allows the Cow Palace to remain in service to the community.**

Negotiations broke down on this “Thirteen Acre Solution” when Daly City declined a rent proposal on April 10, 2007, and did not counter offer. Instead, they hired a lobbyist to convince Senator Yee to help them obtain the entire Cow Palace property by having it declared as “surplus”. **This bill is an attempt to circumvent negotiations. Senator Yee is urged to remove his bill and instead provide mediation for the stalled negotiations between Daly City and the Cow Palace Board.**

Daly City and the Cow Palace Board of Directors began negotiations over 3 years ago for the long-term lease of thirteen acres of Cow Palace property. This land, together with another 24 acres already owned by Daly City and a private party, comprise a total of 37 acres at Carter and Geneva Avenues. Alternatives 1-3 in the Daly City Master Plan show that these 37 acres will provide the local community with all the retail amenities it has requested, plus up to 300 units of affordable and market rate housing.

No study has been done by Daly City showing the economic or environmental costs associated with tearing down the Cow Palace, or how they would fund purchase of the Cow Palace land. SB1527 has much larger ramifications and has not had any study, compared with the more than 3 years of study put into the lease of the 13 acres by Daly City.

The claim that SB1527 is only intended to move negotiations forward is misleading. If any portion of the Cow Palace is declared surplus and sold, the Cow Palace loses the only asset it possesses to facilitate needed improvements. The Cow Palace can be a thriving and vital part of the Northern California Agricultural and Cultural community once again, but only if it has the self-sustaining income from lease of its unused land. **Mediation with Daly City for long-term lease of the 13 acres is the solution to all parties concerns.**

Cow Palace Facts

- Since 1941, the Cow Palace has been a **premier Bay Area venue** -- From Elvis in the 50s, to JFK and the Beatles in the 60s, and the Grateful Dead in the 70s, this facility is legendary and world famous;
- **Since its opening, over 30 million visitors have enjoyed a wide variety of offerings. In 2007 over 540,000 people attended sixty different events** at the Cow Palace, including the Grand National Rodeo, the Dickens Christmas Fair, the Garden and Dog shows, educational seminars, sporting events, large ethnic celebrations, and religious conventions;
- The Cow Palace **provides affordable entertainment and cultural events to over 250,000 lower income families** in the surrounding area. If it is torn down, many of these families cannot afford to travel outside the area or pay the premium ticket prices charged at other facilities;
- Because of its densely populated urban setting, it can **serve as a command post** in the event of a major disaster. It has generators, showers, sleeping quarters, helicopter landing space, and can provide shelter for thousands. In fact, the Cow Palace was used during World War II to house troops;
- Contrary to statements made by Proponents, the Cow Palace **receives no money from the State General Fund**. It operates as an independent self-supporting entity. Any supplemental funding that it requires to produce the Grand National Rodeo comes from fees collected by the State Division of Fairs and Expositions. Any proceeds from a sale of Cow Palace property would **not** go into the State General Fund to assist in balancing the budget;
- Contrary to statements made by Proponents, the Cow Palace is **99% ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant**. It has been continually upgraded to meet this regulation. The Cow Palace has just two remaining ADA projects to complete, neither of which are in normal public use areas;
- Proponents contend that necessary seismic upgrades would cost \$45 million. Although he was notified in writing by the State Division of Fairs and Exhibition Director Mike Treacy on February 21, 2008, that this is not accurate, Yee and his staff continue to use this misleading number. In fact, a recent estimate put potential seismic upgrades at \$4.8-7 million. The Cow Palace had **zero structural damage in the 1955, 1969 and 1989 Bay Area earthquakes. It is overbuilt, engineered to flex, and sits on bedrock**;
- **The Cow Palace is safe**. In addition to normal security and EMTs, the Cow Palace spends over \$150,000 annually to hire Daly City Police officers for certain concerts and special events. It is extremely rare that officers are needed to make arrests. The vast majority of Cow Palace events do not require police presence, attracting family audiences to the area;
- The Cow Palace **contributes significantly to area businesses and regional tourism**. Over half a million visitors buy gas, stay in hotels, and eat in restaurants. The producers, crews, vendors, and contractors of all sixty Cow Palace events use local services to buy building materials, do printing, and purchase advertising; they also hire locally. No study has been done to show the economic impact of eliminating this significant facility from the area economy.