Statement of Robert Henry

Newcastle City Council Meeting

September 4, 2018

Council members, Mr. Manager and Ms. Attorney:

My name is Robert Henry. Our family is a resident of the SE corner of Newcastle.

I last spoke here on May 1 regarding a proposal to log a 35 acre parcel which is entirely within the city of Newcastle and abuts Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park. In fact, about 10 people spoke on this issue at the same meeting!

This parcel contains the DeLeo Wall, from which one has a regional viewpoint to Mt Rainer. The wall has long been reached from the Newcastle Trail system

I want to keep you appraised of what has happened since May 1.

On May 3 the DNR comment period for this Forest Practices Application closed. On May 7, an interdisciplinary team of 22 government affiliated professionals met on site, including representatives from King County, Newcastle, DNR and the owner. On May 17, DNR, very carefully following their processes, approved the permit application, pretty much as written.

The City immediately appealed to the PCHB (that’s the Pollution Control Hearing Board, a 3 judge panel with oversight of DNR), and has a full week on the docket next March, 2019.

There were 220 public comments filed with DNR, many outraged, none positive.

At the same time a group named SaveDeLeoWall has formed, of which I am a founding member. Our initial goal is to educate ourselves, the public, various governments and other outdoors-focused citizen advocacy groups. Our web page has had 4400 visitors since April. In late April we had posters at most trail heads describing the logging proposal.

On the basis of our ground work, strong public response, and strong response of existing advocacy groups, the local non-profit land trust Forterra has agreed to take up the case, and negotiate with the owner to buy the property….assuming the owner will sell. Forterra will act as a bridge until the various non-profits, the city and/or county raises funds to purchase the parcel.

The City negotiated with the owner for no logging until this Saturday, Sept 8, and indeed there has been no logging.

Legal appeals, government and institutional reviews are ongoing.

Public and private negotiations are occurring, albeit much more slowly than I would like.

The ultimate goal is to work with Forterra to create a public-private partnership to purchase the property as permanent open space.

The SaveDeleoWall group will raise funds in order for Forterra to cover their immediate costs of negotiation and getting an “Opinion of Value”, and work in all future fund raising efforts to acquire the parcel.

I ask the City to extend the “no logging” gentleman’s agreement. I also ask that the City get a formal stay from the PCHB, to kick in on Sept 8. That’s this Saturday!

In my opinion it is absurd (and outrageous) that DNR can ignore or override the City of Newcastle’s planning authority (and, for that matter, its copious existing research and documentation) simply because the owner attests to keep the parcel as forest land for a period of 10 years.

Thank you for your interest and efforts.