

# Nonprofit gets nod to manage Los Gatos stables — for now



by [Annalise Freimarck](#) April 2, 2025



Ashley Byington said she's glad Bear Creek Stables is getting restored. She boards her horse Pete there. Photo by Annalise Freimarck.

Ashley Byington brushes her horse Pete in his stall at Bear Creek Stables in Los Gatos, smiling at his little huffs of air. Pete is the third horse she's boarded there, and while she said it was "a great place to grow up," the dilapidated stables have seen better days. With a push from the community, the facility is one step closer to restoring its former glory.

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space board of directors unanimously approved a temporary contract extension March 26 with nonprofit Friends of Bear Creek Stables, allowing its members to continue providing basic care for the 19 horses on site until December. The contract was supposed to last from January through June, but was

extended to give Friends of Bear Creek Stables more time to raise the \$250,000 needed for Midpen to sign a 12-year contract and make the nonprofit its long-term operator. The nonprofit has raised roughly \$60,000 to date after the former operator, Chaparral Corporation, left the site in January.

If Friends of Bear Creek Stables is selected as the long-term operator, it will need to raise another \$250,000 and rake in \$100,000 from boarding fees and programming before fully starting restoration. After that, the nonprofit can start reinstating more programming, such as horse summer camp, and must contractually serve at least 3,000 visitors annually.

Director Craig Gleason, who represents the district where the stables are housed, said the temporary contract shifted the conversation about the stables — from uncertainty to determination.

“The fundraising target here is aggressive, and I think it’s good to see that because I think if we can do that... it will mean that (we’re) not just operating on a shoestring,” he said at the meeting. “It will allow bigger things to happen, so I’m really looking forward to seeing this go forward.”

The vote comes after the board [almost shuttered](#) the stables last November because they needed up to \$10.5 million in repairs after years of neglect and lengthy permit delays. That, plus an estimated \$300,000 in annual operating costs, is a bill Midpen would largely have to cover, even after using some funds from Measure AA — a 30-year, \$300 million bond passed in 2014. Friends of Bear Creek Stables members fought for the stable, which used to board 72 horses in Los Gatos’ Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve, and the board agreed to try to save it.

Melany Moore, the nonprofit’s vice president, has advocated for the stables for about 11 years. She said she’s glad Midpen is seeing eye-to-eye with Friends of Bear Creek Stables because the site is beloved.

“I feel super grateful,” Moore told San José Spotlight. “There’s so many people that have come together (for this).”

The stables have a lengthy history in the Los Gatos mountains. They began in the 1930s, and some of the original buildings like the Tevis barn are still standing.



Byington said she's thankful she still gets to bring her 5-year-old to the historic stables, adding it's great to see them on a positive trajectory again.

"It's stayed special just because everyone who's been here has always really worked so hard to keep it so nice and family-friendly," she told San José Spotlight. "The community has always been so positive, and it's like a second family."

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