

Public Comment for Upcoming Commission Meeting

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**Comments:**

Placitas is a community in which folks walk their dogs, horses, ride bicycles, etc. When I hear things like, "because of the free roaming horses, a person is going to die some day, and then what?", I am always baffled. A person will "die someday" over many things. I grew up in Upstate NY where hitting a deer "someday" was expected. You learn quickly that driving a motor vehicle is serious business, it is not a toy. Animals of all kinds exist no matter where we live. Do fatal accidents happen? Absolutely, a person could die or kill another driver by simply swerving into oncoming traffic to avoid a squirrel or bird. If our local drivers fail to see a 800 plus lb. animal in the road, such as a horse, elk, bear or cow, we have a bigger problem than the mere presence of wildlife. Solutions regarding dark roads here in Placitas would be an affordable and simple ask vs. proposing an ordinance that violates private property personal privacy.

Rather than placing mobile radar signs in areas that are not being monitored by actual police, why not install 3-4 permanent solar speed limit signs (much like those in the Tierra Madre community)? These signs are highly effective as they not only draw attention to the speed limit, they light the area subtly without threatening New Mexico's Night Sky Protection Act. Placed along HWY 165 starting at the Ranchos Development/Community Library, another at or near the Tunnel Springs/Overlook Developments & another past the Villiage between Perdiz/Gringo Gulch areas, signage would more effectively cover the largest stretch where collisions seem to most frequently occur. Why not also consider downward lit streetlights to increase visibility along the same stretch? It is, after all, our most traveled pathway leading us to the Elementary School, Post Office, Church, Food Pantry & Event Center. "For more than two decades, speeding has been involved in approximately one third of all motor vehicle fatalities, in 2020 killing 11,258, or an average of over 30 people per day". Speed poses a threat to all who reside & travel through this community. Why not focus on our main HWY vs. wasting time & tax dollars patrolling private roads, communities and properties?

Start at the source and then share your findings with your constituents. Provide us with current & historical stats, facts & preventative measures vs. a threat of punishment to residents who wish to reserve their right to choose for themselves how to ration food, water or sustenance to living creatures. What if a neighbor likes to feed birds without prejudice and a Hawk swoops down for a snack, but decides the neighbor's pocket pooch looks more appetizing, & carries the pup away? Should Planning or Zoning step in? Should the sheriff's department & county fine the bird lover & throw them in jail for the unfortunate event? Should we, as a community create a culture where neighbors spy on one another, take photos & complain if a free roaming horse happens to wander onto their property & heaven forbid... take a drink of water from a bird bath or my domestic horse's troth? Should my neighbors who have an orchard that indirectly provides sustenance to passing: coyotes, free roaming horses, birds, deer, maybe even bears, be forced to cut down their fruit trees? If you pass an ordinance like this, where will it end? By not allowing safe feeding stations for our free roaming horses, the county forces them to do what horses (wild & domestic alike) naturally do... roam for food & water. Offer solutions & feeding stations, define how & why a permit would/could be offered, and outline where the fee for the permit will be allocated, and folks could further understand why utilizing such areas might be more appropriate for both animal & human alike. Don't simply take away the ability to offer support to wildlife or starve them out; give us humane & safer options. Residents are not being asked to turn a blind eye or refuse refuge, food, water or vet care when "domestic" dogs & cats are dumped in Placitas. If the argument is that these horses are "domestic", "feral" or "dumped" why should we be treating them differently? On the contrary, if the argument is they are "wild" and we are wrongly domesticating them by feeding or watering them, then why are there not better protections in place to monitor overall well-being?

Beyond dumped animals, our public social media forums are loaded with locals asking for help finding their lost dog, many without collars or tags, many who repeatedly "found their way out of the fence again". How about the number of complaints regarding dog on dog & dog on human attacks on our local hiking trails and free space areas due to unleashed dogs? What of the "Villiage Goat" who is often standing in the middle of the 165 waiting for food, attention, or the inevitable collision with a motor vehicle? What is being done about the fully in-tact pit bull that runs loose in the village? Placitians will say things like, "oh yeah that's the dog who lives at the A-Frame" or "shoot, yep that's the village goat, give him a banana and he will go on his way". Are

ordinances being drafted to address these concerns as well? Stop making this a horse problem & recognize that we have a community problem. Stop arguing about why it matters if a horse is "feral", "domestic", "free-roaming" or "wild". Instead, acknowledge that they are living, breathing creatures that deserve humane treatment. It's important to understand that a search for food & water is not the only reason free roaming horses are visiting neighborhoods and crossing busy roadways. They are driven by their instinctual nature to eat, drink & protect their herd. Fights among stallions over mares and territory will drive a herd from one location to another just as easily as a new food source.

Instead of the constant posturing between county, residents and some of our local "rescues/ sanctuaries", why don't we strive for healthy collaborations? How is the county supporting the existing sanctuaries or good samaritans who offer safe haven for contraceptive measures, sustenance and vetting? Folks who agree with the ordinance seem to feel that horses should be either euthanized or rounded up and sent to sanctuaries, but do they realize that our local sanctuaries are underfunded, overcrowded and are barely making due to simply cover feed and vet care? The round ups from the past led to horses sent to slaughter, mares separated from foals, injuries and deaths. Can we not learn from those mistakes and do better?

I have read the public comments regarding the drafted ordinance, & I must say that some members of the community seem confused that purchasing a home in an area where even our local real estate agencies exploit the free roaming horses for their own benefit, meant they might actually see wildlife within their community and properties. "Come to Placitas, a beautiful wildlife corridor" (insert majestic pictures of the free roaming horses)... I can't imagine the perception when those appealing ads are juxtaposed with an ordinance that suggests that "should a free roaming horse step onto your property and drink from your birdbath, you will be fined up to \$300 and thrown in jail". With proper community outreach & education, new homeowners can be given the tools necessary to feel safe & to make a difference should they wish to participate. I believe we can start making change that impacts the future of our community, without violating the privacy of our residents. Whether it be the local sheriff's department, planning and zoning or neighbors simply spying on neighbors, the idea of enforcing and policing residents on their private property feels violating, ineffective & a poor use of tax payer dollars. This is a Fence Out state, plain and simple. The county should not involve themselves with petty quarrels between disgruntled homeowners & their HOAs. Government offices are wasting time & energy placating residents who never bothered reading their HOA rules, & are now angered by the possibility of incurring costs should they CHOOSE to fence out animals "wild or domestic".

Please DO create an ordinance that fines people from feeding any animal from inside a motor vehicle on a county road and on ANY AREA of the 165. While patrol cars are parked along this stretch monitoring speed, they could easily be ticketing for this behavior as well. I can't tell you how many times I have seen a person standing in the middle of the 165 with a carrot in their hand offering it to one of the herds frequenting the area... or the priceless moment where I witnessed a woman standing in the middle of the road with her camera, taking a picture of a tarantula, with no regard to her own safety, or that of others having to dodge her car that appeared to have stopped directly in the driving lane with her door left wide open. I suggest that you start with the 165 & in the meantime, consider appropriate and safe feeding stations to help sustain wildlife that we, as a community have made dependent upon us.

It doesn't matter the genetic make up of the Placitas horses, if they are "feral", "dumped" or "wild mustang descendants from the time of conquistadors", they are living beings who deserve respect no matter what we wish to label them.