

Public Comment for Upcoming Commission Meeting

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Comments:

I vehemently object to the proposed ordinance AS WRITTEN without clarification of its justification, a cost/benefit assessment of its impact, and a rational revision that is evidence-based, specific to the problem, and representative of the stake-holders, i.e., the people who reside in Placitas.

Why is this sweepingly broad ordinance being pushed through at this time without careful study and inclusive community discussion of more rational solutions? Currently, alternatives based on data are being considered that explore voluntarily-supported remote feeding stations. These could provide supportive nutrition to the horses commensurate with the availability of vegetation and water for their health and welfare during environmentally stressful times of the year. Options are being explored at locations far from highway 165 and our few well-traveled roads. It is my understanding based on annual surveys that the population of our horses is declining due to more effective contraceptive measures. Why not promote humane population control instead of impending starvation?

The need for safety nets for the horses who have roamed this area for 600 years must precede further consideration of this ordinance. Some residents supplement horses with food and/or water far from roads but within 500 ft of their dwellings. What is the rationale, specifically, of a 500 ft limit of feeding from a dwelling? I ask again, what is the evidence that this ordinance will have anything but a detrimental effect on the horses and create more community uproar?

Moreover, it is paramount to prevent Placitas from becoming known for county-mandated starving of wildlife during drought and winter. Solutions that favor population control of healthy horses with more limited interaction with roads must be explored BEFORE such an ordinance is voted upon.

The proposed ordinance is devoid of any study that will substantiate an improvement in public safety through its enforcement. Vehicle/horse collisions on Hwy 165 are horrendous and none of us would want to be involved in or witness one. However, these collisions are rare and have most often occurred along a 4-mile stretch of HWY 165 from Rancho de Placitas through the village to Gringo Gulch. Many of these collisions have been the result of drivers driving recklessly and exceeding the speed limit. There may be fewer than 10 households feeding the horses near the highway. Wouldn't a less draconian solution that focuses on the most affected area be a better option? Additionally, grasses along the highway receive more water from run-off than the surrounding hills. Will the horses not still feed on these grasses along the highway? A more limited restriction of feeding by humans near the highway is a good idea but even that will not solve all problems.

If the commissioners are truly committed to promoting public safety in Placitas, they should seriously seek remedies to enforce speed limits and deter aggressive driving which certainly cause the majority of collisions.

Horse-loving vs horse-hating neighbors may now disagree on what if anything should be done with Placitas Mustangs, but such an ordinance will likely result in disagreements that can escalate to neighbors "ratting on" one another to authorities. What will be the cost of manpower and fiscal resources to uniformly enforce this ordinance? Has this been studied? What will be the public outcry if horses are slowly starving in front of us? Does anyone really think that we will not incur negative media attention that focuses on dead horses on Placitas property?

Furthermore, I anticipate that our real estate advertisements aimed at retirees who boost our tax basis will be unable to truthfully sell our village as a place to view wild horses, savor wildlife, and foster appreciation and balance of nature for its residents.

Investigation is requisite to understand the likely consequences of any proposed solution. Is it not likely that starving horses will

increase their range, more frequently crossing the highway in a desperate search for food in gardens in the village? We need to base restrictions on property owners on science not on a public feud between those who revere and support nature and those who wish to selfishly drive aggressively, promote man's domination over the environment, and/or antagonize perceived "liberals".

Why does the likely fate of our horses depend in large measure on people in Sandoval County who have no view, interaction, or stake in Placitas or our wildlife? This is a village issue. Let's have a scientifically- sound educational session, a civil public debate, and solve our problem within the Placitas community.

In summary, I respectfully urge the commissioners to defer further discussion of this ordinance until a study is conducted, other solutions posited and seriously considered, and the citizens of Placitas themselves engage in evidence-based solutions to reach consensus.

Dr. KV Woods