

Public Comment for Upcoming Commission Meeting

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Comments:

Concerning Ordinance No. 5-10-23-?? Ordinance to Ban Feeding of Free-Roaming Horses in Sandoval County, NM:

Commissioners:

Please take a few minutes to re-read your proposed Ordinance. It is poorly conceived and written, and filled with misrepresentations and inaccuracies. A few examples:

Whereas, the feeding of free-roaming horses makes them dependent on humans and leads them to stay in populated areas instead of moving throughout their natural range;
This has no basis in fact. The herds roam for miles every day. Feeding does not make them dependent on humans, or encourage them to remain in a single location. Rather, lack of suitable, "natural range" forces the horses to seek food and water in areas they might otherwise avoid. The Commission seems to believe that the horses have access to verdant rangeland. This is not true. The herds have been driven from their historical range by the BLM and Forest Service, by mining and cattle ranching, by the Pueblos, and by human encroachment.

Please identify the "natural range" throughout which the horses might roam.

Whereas, there is an overpopulation of free-roaming horses in Sandoval County which leads to traffic accidents and endangers the welfare of citizens;

How is this assertion substantiated? Where does this purported overpopulation occur? Most traffic accidents are caused by humans who drive like idiots. Blaming the horses for human foolishness is convenient, but please provide evidence.

As for the welfare of citizens, the vast majority of Placitas citizens enjoy having the horses present. They are an integral part of this community, would never deliberately harm a human, and increase our property values.

Whereas, there are residents of Sandoval County who feed the free-roaming horses food that may cause harm in their health and may aggravate the horses if approached during mating and foaling seasons;

This paragraph is nonsensical. Can the Commission cite examples of improper feeding? Does feeding aggravate the horses only during mating and foaling seasons? When exactly are these seasons, and what is the causal relationship between food and aggravation? Midway through your sentence, your syntax gets muddy; I cannot make sense of this. What exactly are you trying to say?

Whereas, the safety issues in Sandoval County are driven largely by the presence of free-roaming horses and that expanding patrols or ticketing for speeding and other criminal offenses will not be effective;

Did anybody proof-read this sentence? Of the hundreds of safety incidents that have occurred in Sandoval County over the past several decades, I doubt that more than a handful can be attributed to free-roaming horses. The Commission needs to provide statistics to substantiate this assertion.

By "Sandoval County" does the Commission mean "Placitas", or are horses causing trouble in Rio Rancho, San Luis, and other

areas?

How can the Commission possibly suggest that “expanding patrols or ticketing for speeding and other criminal offenses will not be effective.”? Please present studies that prove that law enforcement is a waste of time, money, and effort. If this is true, we may as well disband the Sheriff’s department, and state and municipal agencies as well.

By this logic, enforcing the feeding ban will be ineffective as well. Why bother enacting it?

Section 14-42: Unlawful Feeding of Free-Roaming Horses

It shall be a crime called “unlawful feeding of free-roaming horses” to feed a horse without a horse feeding permit.

If the term ‘government overreach’ means anything, arbitrarily restricting my right to put out hay and water on my own property is an example of such.

You have created a Catch-22 situation in which non-existent permits are required for an act the Commission has declared dangerous, and counter to the public good. Please clarify how a permit makes a dangerous activity safe and acceptable.

Section 14-43 Horse Feeding Permits and the accompanying “Resolution to Establish a Permit Process for the Feeding of Free-Roaming Horses”

Pursuant to a resolution adopted by the Board of County Commissioners, Sandoval County may issue horse feeding permits to an organization which (1) has been granted tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and (2) has demonstrated experience and knowledge of horse management and protection. The failure of the Board of County Commissioners to enact a resolution establishing a horse feeding permit process shall not be a defense to a violation of this article.

By your logic, feeding the horses is a crime unless it is done by a non-profit in possession of a permit that does not exist. If we ignore the absurdity of this, we must suppose that non-profits are deemed to possess special knowledge and resources, and that they will be issued permits at some point in time.

The non-profits do the best they can with severely limited resources, but has the Commission toured their holding pens? The horses are restricted in their movements; get little to no exercise; no grazing, no fresh grass; little or no shade, and in many cases, must drink filthy water. They are subject to diseases, injuries, and stresses associated with overcrowding. Contrast this with the free horses, and tell me who is better off.

Do you have statistics on equine mortality rates for both the penned-up and free-roaming horses?

How can you seriously expect these over-stressed non-profits to open their pens to even more horses? Do you expect them to feed the wild ones along the roads bordering their pens? If the non-profits try to feed and water the horses adjacent to their pens, their neighbors will invade the next Commission meeting.

If enforced, this Ordinance will result in death by dehydration for those horses that cannot access the Rio Grande, or mountain springs. For the few horses that survive into June, even a short period of drought will ensure starvation. This will accomplish your goal of eradicating the herds, but at a horrible cost.

The alternative is civil disobedience on the part of Placitas residents. This will make criminals of us, and subject us to the horrors of incarceration. Does the County have the resources to build more jail cells, or will you simply cram us all together in a one-toilet stall? Feed us horse meat? Will we be afforded due process, or simply be rounded up?

Section 14-41. Burden of Proof

The last time I looked into the matter, the Commission does not get to decide who bears the burden of proof in a criminal case. You might want to look into this, and also determine how this proof is to be obtained. If hot tips to the Sheriff or surveillance drone videos result in arrests, you had better ensure that all legal procedures are followed to the letter.

This is exhausting; please shelve this Ordinance.

Regards,

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