

Public Comment for Upcoming Commission Meeting

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**Comments:**

This is my personal experience as a resident concerning the presence of horses in Placitas.

When we moved here ten+ years ago the horses seemed to roam open non-residential areas. We had no issues and enjoyed their presence at a distance. This is per an understanding that if an animal is termed wildlife (to protect a right to exist) then humans are not to feed them (a standard across the country as enforced by wildlife departments to protect both animals and humans). However, in the last few years the horses (re: wildlife) have moved into local neighborhoods encouraged by the supplied and/or incidental availability of food. Like bad bears, the horses have become nuisance animals. This might be manageable for areas on the outskirts or Placitas, or those with houses further apart, but that is not true for all of this area. My opinion has changed - but this is hard to explain to people in the unaffected areas as were we a decade ago. While we continue to support the horses right to exist, we do not support residents feeding horses in the neighborhood because of the following:

1) About two years ago I watched a herd grazing near a well-used intersection by our house. At that time a school bus descended the hill toward that intersection, a truck was coming from a different direction, and a woman was walking her dog along the road. The commotion caused the horses to stampede up the hill past the pedestrian. While everyone was fine - this could have ended very differently.

2) One night while I was walking along the street in front of our house, I began to realize horses were grazing around the area. I took this to be of little concern until I passed a large juniper where a horse on the other side was startled by my appearance and reared up which sent me scurrying for cover. Fortunately, the horse settled and the herd was not startled into a run, or this too could have ended very differently.

Both of the previous incidents prove to me that the population density and presence of horses in large herds creates a potential risk to horse or human. I relay these incidents because most people talk about horses and speeding cars which is a distraction to the real problem of an area that is not designed for such co-existence.

3) On many nights at around 3 AM the horses have passed through our neighborhood seeking food, making it difficult to avoid unknown and surprising damages. We have been trying to restore the landscape areas with southwest plants but horses have broken limbs from bushes and trees, trampled ground cover plants, and unearthed drip irrigation,. Understand this is not an isolated horse coming through but please imagine a group of twelve horses passing through a fragile New Mexican landscape.

4) As someone who frequently walks the neighborhood, I can tell you the landscape is changing because of horse density. People that either encourage or don't scare off the horses have their yards turn into pastures, and these areas spread out to surrounding properties along horse routes. These well-trampled areas are no longer New Mexico native desert but wind-blown manure-filled pastures that fill with tumbleweed and mistletoe-ridden juniper. Because of this, the once attractive Arroyo Venda is in some spots more appropriately called Arroyo Cagada.

The previous two items beg the question - if it is okay for residents to feed horses then why is not expected that they should also make arrangements to deal with the consequences - manure in the streets, landscape destruction, property damage and potential physical dangers?

In conclusion, if horses are truly wildlife that need protection (like bears, deer, etc.) then they should not be fed by people in a populated area such as Placitas. A feeding ban sounds logical to discourage the horses from becoming nuisance animals (as outlined here) as we move toward a solution that helps protect both horses and people.