



Proposed RV Resort Near Golf Course Raises Concerns

by Marilyn Loser

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I'm closely watching updates regarding the proposed 500-space RV park near the Alamosa golf course. I would have fewer concerns if the project were slated for development on privately owned, barren land. However, the developers want to purchase Alamosa Ranch (AR) land for more than half of the originally proposed RV sites.

As reported in the February 9 issue of the Valley Courier, a number of citizens spoke out regarding the park at a recent City Council meeting; I among them. My two main concerns involve selling off AR land and the effects of a huge RV park on our small city.

Doing a search on the web, I found listings for 328 RV sites in the Salida/Poncha Springs area -- tourists tend to stay there longer than in Alamosa. I also looked at Coast to Coast Network (CCN) RV resorts (the proposed development would be associated with CCN). Of the 2 in Colorado, the one on Blue Mesa Reservoir has 300 full sites -- people often do stay in this area for a week or more at a time. Other RV parks around the reservoir have an additional 111 sites. This is a total of only 411 sites around a 96-mile destination shoreline.

In my cursory search of other CCN associated properties, the largest I found was in California near Palm Springs with 478 sites. This is where 'Snow Birds' flock for the winter, not just for a short stopover.

Currently, the Alamosa area has about 172 RV sites and two more RV parks are in the works -- one by North River Greenhouse and the other by Splashland. Who is going to fill all the proposed spaces?

I understand from Randy Wright, Executive Director of the Alamosa County Economic Development Corporation and Chamber of Commerce, that folks have been attempting for years to lure Great Sand Dunes visitors into spending more time in Alamosa. He said visitation to the Sand Dunes has doubled in five years and 62,000 RVs were at the dunes last year with no place to stay.

The February 10 issue of the Courier reported that the Local Marketing District Board supports the RV resort. The article also said, "the partners are looking to downsize the resort to between 300 and 400 spaces." 300 sites bother me less.

I'm still concerned about selling AR land; I wouldn't want this to be the start of piecemeal selling off of the ranch. I'm on the Tree Board and love living in Alamosa because I value our open spaces, wildlife habitat, plants, and animals. At a time when many municipalities in our country are refurbishing or trying to acquire open space, why are we planning to sell ours?

Several citizens have proposed trading some of the flat, open, and arid AR land for the privately owned 30 acres that has stands of trees and is nearer to the Rio Grande. The idea is to preserve this more natural area for folks to enjoy now and in the future. The private land is just south of the road to the disc golf course and the 35 acres of AR land proposed for development is north of the road. The online Google Earth map of the area is dated September of 2016 and clearly shows the barrenness of the AR land compared to the treed private land.

According to the August 2012 Alamosa City Ranch Management Plan, “Although the purchase of the Ranch was motivated by the need for soil and additional water rights ... since the initial purchase of the property, trails have been added to the property as well as small parking areas, a disc golf course, wildlife viewing areas, and signage.”

I do hope a soon-in-the-future long-term plan for the Alamosa Ranch will not allow our open spaces and children’s heritage to be sold off a few acres at a time.

NOTICE: There will be a community forum regarding the RV resort, hosted by the developers, on Friday, Feb. 16, 7 – 9 pm, La Manzanilla Farm barn, 6492 State Hwy. 17. This is north of Splashland.

“A Toronto [Canada] civic affairs bulletin entitled Urban Open Space: Luxury or Necessity makes the claim that “popular awareness of the balance of nature, of natural processes and of man’s place in and effect on nature – i.e., “ecological awareness” – is important. As humans live more and more in man-made surroundings – i.e., cities – he risks harming himself by building and acting in ignorance of natural processes.” Beyond this man-nature benefit, urban open spaces also serve as islands of nature, promoting biodiversity and providing a home for natural species in environments that are otherwise uninhabitable due to city development.” Wikipedia Urban_open_space webpage