



July 7, 2020

This letter was sent by the town manager to a citizen to answer their questions about the development of an RV park in Lakeside and since there is a referendum petition being distributed, we felt it would be good for our citizens to know both sides of the story:

There has been a lot of misinformation about the RV park that was recently approved by the Town's Planning and Zoning Commission and Council, and hopefully, I can address your concerns and help you be assured that this RV park won't diminish your neighborhood. This property of approximately 344 acres used to belong to the Forest Service and is now private property and subject to development under the Town's zoning ordinances and General Plan. The Forest Service for many years has been working to divest itself of properties that are not contiguous to the National Forests. This property is surrounded by the County, Town and reservation. The new owner of the property and the Lion's Foundation began the process to acquire this land over 20 years ago so it wasn't a secret that its use would change. It isn't Forest Service property anymore and as private property shouldn't continue to be viewed as Open Space. Under state Statute a private property owner must agree that it remain Open Space and he has not done that. The owner also has the right to close off all the trails if he so chooses because it is now private property.

The developer's desire is to create a high-Quality RV park on 25.5 acres in four phases that will preserve as many trees as possible because he wants travelers/tourists to enjoy and experience the feel of the forest environment. One of the most often asked questions we get at our Visitor Center is about the availability of RV camping spaces. There aren't any of this type available in the Town of Pinetop-Lakeside. The approval for this park also stipulates that no one will be allowed to live there year-round. This will not be like the other so-called RV parks that exist in the county. The individual spaces are a minimum of 30 ft wide and 1500 square ft and will most likely be larger due to the developer's efforts to preserve trees.

Over the last several months the developer has met with several of the residents of Vallery Lane and worked to address their concerns. One of their concerns related to a buffer zone. To show that he was listening to their concerns, he agreed to create a 100-foot buffer between Vallery Lane and the wall that will be constructed around the whole park. The current proposal that was approved by the Town Council has increased the buffer zone to 150 ft.

The owner of the property also desires to continue to allow public access to the Rim Road for hiking and biking. We are also working with him on the donation of the Rim Trail to the Town so that we can continue to maintain it for public use.

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Another concern of the residents of Vallery Lane was that access to the RV Park would be on their street and that there wouldn't be adequate emergency exits. The only ingress/egress access will be from Highway 260 so there won't be any increase of traffic in their neighborhood. ADOT has approved their request and there are also two emergency-only exits. The first would use a paved road next to Joy's Furniture which will exit through the traffic light on Lockwood and the other would be on Vallery Lane. Again, these are emergency-only exits. This exceeds the number that was requested by the Fire Department.

Another concern that was expressed was fire danger. This property will be developed using Firewise principles such as approved thinning and cleaning the forest floor and eliminating dead wood. There is greater fire danger within the Blue Spruce subdivision itself due to the lack of adequate thinning.

Lighting was also raised as a concern. This development will fall under the Town's lighting codes which are designed to preserve the dark night skies.

Noise; there will be an RV park manager living on site, who will address any issues that might arise. If necessary, the Town's police department would enforce it.

One last concern that has been brought up is potential impacts on Camp Tatiyee: the RV park will be fully fenced. The two property lines are over 350 apart and the nearest building is over 1400 feet away. The property in between is private property. In addition, the Lion's Foundation owns the property that Camp Tatiyee is situated on and they are in favor of the development of the RV park.

Legally, the owner has the right to develop this property. In order for the Town to deny his request we would need to have a legal reason to do so. After listening to the residents at both of these hearings no one could come up with a legal reason to deny the zoning request of RVP. Many of the neighbors' concerns were actually related to Site Plan questions which is the next step in the process. The Site Plan when it is developed will be brought back to the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Town Council for final approval. Public input will also be allowed. Normally, the Site Plan is only approved by the P&Z but in this case the Town Council asked that they have final approval. Public input is always encouraged because we want to be able to look at these projects from all sides and not miss anything.

I can assure you this will be a high-Quality RV park that will fill a great need in our community. The tourists and visitors that use it will benefit our local retail stores, restaurants and grocery stores. Many of our small businesses struggle through the winter holding on for the summer and the current pandemic has certainly taken an additional toll on them. The Town's desire has been to seek out and partner with quality developers that will benefit our community, its residents and our visitors.

Thank you,

Keith Johnson
Town Manager