

Red Rock News
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My name is Marie Brown- [street address omitted], in Sedona.

Chairman/Commissioners:

Prior to my retirement in August of this year I worked for the City of Sedona for 19 years. In 1995 one of my responsibilities was that of Park and Recreation Director. I stood on the steps of the Prescott Court House with the late Mayor Ivan Finley to bid on the last 8+ acres that completed the Posse Ground Community Park. Our ability to bid on this property was due to the efforts of Barbara Antonsen who fought long and hard to prevent this land from an institutional taking by Yavapai College.

In 2001 I approached Madeleine O'Callahan and several of Barbara's friends and asked if they would consider raising funds to reconstruct the performance area in honor of Barbara.

This project was part of the City's Park and Recreation capital budget and Stella Carruth estate dollars were used to pay for the initial electrical plan and the first conceptual design presented to the neighbors approximately three years ago. The comments from that meeting showed there was concern about sound, traffic and parking.

Since that time the Friends of Posse Grounds have held two years of Red Dirt Concerts, which have helped, in the exploratory process to ultimately come up with a facility that addresses the neighbors concerns as well as the performers needs.

Barbara's Park is about 2 acres includes open space with picnic tables and benches, a performance shell for approximately 300 people, is closed on three sides and is designed for day use only. It is a small venue for small town community events.

The Cultural Park, comprised multiple acres of land, could accommodate up to 5,000 people, had no sound protection walls for the stage and they held evening performances. This venue was designed for large tourist based events and was not oriented to accommodate local organizations or talent.

The neighbors current concerns regarding sound are valid. Currently anyone can request rent the stage area and as long as they keep the music within the city's sound code they can bring an orchestra to play on the stage. The Dirt Concerts confirmed that an open stage provides very little sound protection. The Friends are working with sound engineers that have 40 years experience in acoustics. The project being proposed will provide a sound containment shell that is closed on three sides. Unlike a band shell that projects the sound up and outward this concept projects the sound downward and retains much of it within the containment shell. This would provide better sound protection for the surrounding neighborhoods than the current stage.

It should also be noted this area can be used for non musical events such as theatrical performances, poetry readings, rehearsal space, lectures, story telling and even the a capella singing of the Sweet Adelines.

The landscaping plan provides for native trees and shrubs that will require minimum water. The Friends of the Posse Grounds are researching innovative systems to save, store and use as little water as possible. They are committed to making this a green sustainable project that others can emulate.

This landscaping will further protect and contain the sound from escaping the site.

Different types of landscaping can also be used around the perimeter of the shell to prevent youth from climbing the structure.

This site and park hold a lot of Sedona's history. The Stage Coach Players performed on a stage on this site in the 1950s. Over the years while this was State Land there were rodeos, square dances, country fairs, Fourth of July Celebrations, Sedona Days, the original Jazz on the Rocks, Apple Festival, and the Pops Concerts to just name a few events. The School has been at its location above the park for 35+ years. There has always been traffic on Posse Grounds Road. I venture to say some of those earlier events produced more traffic than this proposed project.

The City has lowered the speed limit to 15 miles per hour within the park to provide for park participant safety. They have reconfigured Carruth Rd. so buses and cars have the option to go down Soldier Pass to a signaled intersection on to 89A.

Although the City currently has a facility use packet for anyone wanting to rent the park facilities it needs to add regulations that can help mitigate the traffic associated with use of the performance area.

The City paved the parking area across from the proposed facility so that it could accommodate events held at the park. Some of the Red Dirt Concerts had 300+ people in attendance. There was never a parking problem. In fact about 15% of the residents walked to the event rather than using their cars. A trolley stop is provided within the design to provide another means of reaching events without bringing cars to the site.

The Friends of Posse Grounds are committed to raising the dollars to build the facility on City land. They have pledged not to build until they have all the necessary dollars in the bank to complete the facility. Once completed the City will maintain and operate it.

The Friends of Posse Grounds have proposed and would welcome a meeting with the park staff and appointed representatives from the neighboring homeowner association to work on formulating a list of regulations specific to the use of this site.

Posse Ground Park before and after incorporation has always been a community park meant to serve the needs of the entire community.

Barbara had a dream to provide a gathering space where friends could meet and enjoy each others company and a variety of events. Lets work together to make this dream a reality.