



THE TAOS NEWS

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My Turn

The devolution of Kit Carson Park

By Bob Fies

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A few weeks ago Tempo lauded city manager Rick Bellis for bringing sleepy little Taos into the Big Time Entertainment arena. He did this by hiring Mitch Miller to be director of facilities and events in order to sign big-name bands to lure crowds of 3-5,000 to our beloved park. For Mumford & Sons (what a congested mess) they even brought in 9,000 folks (18,000 stomping feet).

Without a coherent budget of expenses and revenues, the mayor and his two go-along councilmen approved building a huge butt-ugly stage, [requiring] heavy equipment excavating 18 inches of trampled grass and replacing it with “gravel pave” and sod (the new trample-proof variety?), four-foot deep trenching along the root zones of our trees – and closed the heart of the park for three months.

Well, Miller and Bellis have hit pay dirt. You can't get much bigger than Sting. But what does it really mean for Taoseños and how did it come about? Certainly not through open public discussion. Rather Bellis used backroom dealing and computer budgetary manipulations – the same way that we almost got a mega-Smith's in the Couse pasture and that unfortunately got us put on the hook with Red River and Angel Fire and the county for \$650,000 of expected cost overruns so that wealthy Texans can save a few hours of summer travel time by flying to our costly “Airport for the Rich.”

A few questions seem to be in order. Do we really need to bring big events into the heart of town when peripheral sites can be developed? Do we want them at all? Do we want an enormous stage sitting empty in our park for 357 days this year? Does Taos really want to become Telluride? Is bigger really better? Does bringing in more money for Taos' future enhance or detract from our multicultural, historic, creative and ongoing past? Are Bellis' values our values? Would monies lavished on events be better spent on the park itself, such as decent bathrooms rather than two privies and a slew of porta-potties?

How much does all this brouhaha cost, anyway, and where is it coming from? How much does extra policing alone cost? Has Director of Facilities and Events Miller focused on events to the detriment of our jewels – Kit Carson Park and the Youth and Family Center (whose staff says that he's seen there “very, very rarely”)? Would we rather have the Lilac Festival held on grass or on blacktop? Why did the mayor choose Bellis as he was being dismissed from the Taos County just as he was from his prior two employments? Do we want a city manager who manages according to directions from

the council and the people and follows our Taos 2020 plan or do we want one who manipulates from his back office?

Do these questions create a churning in your stomach? Perhaps it is time to talk with your mayor and councilmen so that we stop being stung?

Bob Fies is a retired physician living in Arroyo Hondo who passionately wants government to work for all.