



# ORO VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 69754  
Oro Valley, AZ 85737-0021 [www.ovhistory.org](http://www.ovhistory.org)

October 2, 2020

The Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers  
Town of Oro Valley  
11000 N. La Canada Drive  
Oro Valley, AZ 85737

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers,

Board Members of the Oro Valley Historical Society (OVHS) are concerned with what seems to be a redirection of the use of the Steam Pump Ranch (SPR) Historical Park. We, at one time, seemed to have a stronger partnership with Parks and Recreation and we were in the loop regarding any substantive revisions to the Master Plan and changes to SPR activities and events. Of late, it seems that we only find out about these changes at public meetings or when an event is advertised to the public. We understand we have no ownership of the property and cannot affect any decisions. Perhaps Parks and Recreation feel they have no obligation to keep us informed or consult with us. That would be an unusual way to conduct a partnership.

When the Pima County bond to purchase Steam Pump Ranch was proposed it was with a mind to preserve the property and keep its historical integrity.

<https://webcms.pima.gov/cms/one.aspx?portalId=169&pageId=12940>

“A Master Plan was concurrently developed to assist the Town of Oro Valley to decide on a strategy for the future use of the property and its various ranch buildings. Consensus developed to focus on Steam Pump Ranch as a heritage education center for residents and visitors to the Town of Oro Valley that would take the stories of the two ranching families and the role of Steam Pump Ranch in the development of the region.”

Given the recent presentations at the Historical Preservation Commission (HPC) meetings by Parks and Recreation, it seems that the emphasis has shifted from heritage education and preservation of the buildings to a “commerce center”. We have recently seen a drive-in movie theater, El Toro, take root near the Pusch House Museum. In our opinion, it detracts from the historic nature of the site. There seems to be a greater emphasis on community activities and private money making functions (i.e. wine festivals, concerts, weddings) at SPR and less emphasis on local history and historical related events.

One of the major proposed changes to the Master Plan, is to move the Heritage Garden. One of our Board members recently obtained a large grant to concentrate on plantings in the current area. If the removal of the current Heritage Garden proceeds, OVHS requests clear communication from the town regarding logistics and the timelines so that the donor of the grant can be consulted regarding current and future funding decisions.

The OVHS was never asked for their opinion regarding any of the changes presented at the HPC meetings. We feel that it would be an affront to the voters who passed the bond to gravitate so dramatically from the original intent. We would like to know if Pima County has been contacted and if they have endorsed the change in the Master Plan and use of the property. Were there any members of the community or community groups that were asked to participate in considering the change in purpose for SPR or was this a unilateral decision by Parks and Recreation?

As we see continued development in Oro Valley, it would be a shame to see one of its few historic jewels become commercialized as this proposal seems to indicate. We hope you will take a closer look at these changes. We would appreciate your response to our concerns.

Yours truly,

Roxana Reidy Johnson

cc: Ms. Mary Jacobs

cc: Ms. Gail Munden