



## ROARING FORK VALLEY HORSE COUNCIL

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[www.facebook.com/keephorsesontrails/](https://www.facebook.com/keephorsesontrails/)

July 17, 2022

To the TOSV Town Council,

The RFVHC is a non-profit organization that represents over 700 equestrian members in the Roaring Fork Valley and beyond. Our Trail Safety Sign has been recognized nationally by the Equine Land Conservation Resource (ELCR), Lexington, KY.

### BOTTOM LINE

Everyone that we have talked with has said emphatically that they want to keep and improve the Snowmass Rodeo. And yet, the actions being taken by the TOSV, right now, may be proving to be the opposite. In order to provide a high quality, functioning rodeo space the Town Council must add essential elements to the design plan for continued rodeo operation success.

### CONTEXT

The design team hired by the Town Council has put forth plans without understanding the management of and actual 'back of the house' and 'front of the house' function of the rodeo. Without a full understanding of these elements, the liability consequences of this plan are high, and the evidence is clear that the designers and the builders have been provided with incomplete and inaccurate information. The Planning Commissioners and Town Council are not listening to perceptive recommendations.

### PARKING LIABILITY & EVENT SAFETY

The current design at the Town Park entry is not safe. The proposed truck and trailer parking lot for competitors and their horses is insufficient. There are generally 35 to 40 trucks and trailers 52 foot in length that will need to fit into the 42,327 sq. ft. parking space provided in the current Design One Town Park Plan. The "Back of The House" and "Front of The House" employee parking for over 50 cars is not referenced in this plan, nor is the parking for the many cars that competitors drive to the rodeo. Cramming horse trailers and cars into a small space will expose people, their vehicles, and the standing and tied up horses to the threat of loss or injury.

"The Back of The House" operations include two stock contractors, the flank man, 2 judges, 2 flag girls, chute operators, 2 rodeo clowns, the announcer, 2 pick up men, the timer, rodeo secretary & the well-staffed, popular staffed petting zoo. Students from across the nation, enrolled in the Aspen Music Festival School, sing the national anthem every Wednesday night.

"The Front of The House" operations include ticket sellers, EMT's, an ambulance, 6 vendors and trailers, 6 parking attendants, 4 security guards, many service providers in the Bar and Food tent, and SWHA volunteer Board Members. Many family members of the rodeo contestants arrive and require handicapped parking, as well.

## PARKING STATISTICS –

A 53-foot trailer is 8.5 feet wide. You need a spot 12 feet wide, so the 9-foot-long horse can be tied to the side of the trailer. The driver, the contestants, their horses, and their children need ample room to work around the horses tied to the trailer, so that everyone is safe. You will need to get 16 rigs in a row and there are only two rows per acre. The current proposed equestrian parking area (42,327 sq. ft.) is less than an acre of land (acre = 43,560 sq. ft.) The long rectangular shape of the area makes for precarious maneuvering to park and exit with cramped 25-foot ingress, egress.

According to the current Town Park Plan, less than 32 trucks and trailers can fit into this restrictive lot and the expanded pull off at “Check Point Charlie” will only take four more 52’ horse transport rigs. Most Rodeo Competitors will bring 4 to six horses for multiple events. For example, barrel racers may have two horses running in the arena, while their significant other may have one or two horses for team roping, and their kids may ride also. Rodeo is a cowboy family effort – 4 family members – 4 horses or more. Please go to the link to get nationally accepted truck & trailer facts.

<https://www.fs.fed.us/t-d/pubs/htmlpubs/htm07232816/page14.htm>

## PARKING LOT INGRESS & EGRESS

The 25-foot proposed exit width for the current parking lot is also a dangerous and restrictive area. The turning radius of a 52-foot rig is something that you cannot understand unless you have tried to maneuver a truck and trailer yourself. The existing plan is not safe for Ingress and egress.

## PERMEABLE SURFACE

The Town Council has tasked the designers with making sure asphalt surfaces are used for rodeo parking. The Planning Commissioners have recommended changing this into an investigation of “permeable” surfaces. Asphalt for livestock and any horses and riders is dangerous, especially if it rains. Steel shoes become slippery. Unloading and loading horses becomes an accident waiting to happen.

In addition, the current Rodeo Plan does not offer an area for warming-up the horses. (Please see the attached document that describes the warming-up needs of horses, as athletes to prevent injuries.) Therefore, the Town Council, the POSTR Committee, the designers and the builders are endangering the animals and the contestants by their insistence on warming up horses in the parking lots, on asphalt bike paths, or on the cinder bike and foot paths, which will be meticulously built, surrounding the wetlands and the rodeo grounds.

**The RFVHC asks that the permeable surface of the Flex Field be made available for equestrian parking and for a warmup area for rodeo competitors, or for any group that uses the arena for events in the future. This will allow space for many more vendors, activities, and tents and for other arena uses. Without exception, every equine activity using the arena will require a warm-up area. The Lipizzaner’s, for example, would need this warmup space for a performance contract. Full use of this Flex Field Space does not have to be a permanent decision. As the wetlands and surrounding lands are “finished” and developed, and as other uses for the Rodeo Arena are explored and utilized, the community and the rodeo operators can look forward to having a brighter, safer, and more efficient future. This proposal is a win / win.**

## GENERAL PARKING

It is true that parking is much needed for both summer and winter. The Intercept Lot, Two Creeks and other park and ride locations will utilize busing and prearranged rodeo / hotel shuttle bus transport to reduce rodeo spectator traffic congestion.

**If the current Town Park design plans are left as is, the plan will diminish the stature of the rodeo, and the rodeo grounds will become an unsafe liability for all involved.**

## THE WESTERN MYSTIQUE

When the TV series "Yellowstone" came out, the public has notably embraced Western Mystique. So, what is the Snowmass Rodeo? 85 rodeo competitors come from Grand Junction, Delta, Loma, Meeker, Rifle and the Roaring Fork Valley. Over 200 to 300 children compete in the Calf Scramble and 12 children a week can compete in Mutton Busting. Children from all over the world assemble to take part in these events. Last Wednesday nights' rodeo - Mutton Busting winner was a child from England.

As you can see, the Snowmass Rodeo is more than just an event. The rodeo is a family affair, thrilling local residents, their guests and visitors from all over the world, many of whom are staying in Snowmass Village hotels. Recently someone referred to the Snowmass Rodeo as the "Jewel in The Crown" of Snowmass Village. 2000 spectators are entertained and well satisfied every week. Our RFV Western Heritage is showcased once a week for 11 rodeos throughout the summer, captivating the hearts and minds of 22,000 people, who leave Snowmass with a True Western experience.

## BUDGET

TOSV owns the property, represented by the Town Council, who tasked the POSTR Board, which is made up of volunteer citizens, to choose from alternative layout designs to balance parking, recreation, and the rodeo grounds. The POSTR board chose the current rodeo blueprint, because they felt that their plan stood for the best needs of the community. The POSTR Board received the 5/25/22 Revised RFVHC Safety Report, and it was sent to the Town Council and then to the Planning Commissioners. We ask, did all the members of all these groups read the Horse Council's recommendations? The reason the Town Manager says the changes cannot be made to the current plan is because of budget.

**In our opinion, the Town Park / Rodeo budget can be protected by asking knowledgeable local people with practical lifetime experiences to help finish the plan.**

The Priefert Company designs and sells rodeo arenas. They designed a beautiful, expensive rodeo arena in hopes of selling their product to the TOSV. Priefert is not considered "an equine expert". Their design does not address necessary equestrian parking nor the essential warm up area for contestants. The configuration of Priefert's design can be scaled down by local rodeo contestant experts, who compete weekly and who's only goal is to make Snowmass Rodeo excellent. It is not too late to use their expertise.

The revised plans need additions, for example the EMT entry gate, gated access for the "Leslie Thomas Large Horse Rescue Ambulance", water truck and arena maintenance tractors, run-out space for the barrel racers, the correct number of stock pens, properly situated livestock gates, rough stock chutes, a comprehensive return ally and correctly situated curbing for function. **The designers and the builders do not have these details. These are necessary components for the rodeo blueprint.**

**Our recommendation is to make necessary safety changes needed to the rodeo design model, which should become a collaboration between Connect One Design and SWHA Board, aided by the rodeo contestants, while using the revised RFVHC Rodeo Safety Report as a guide. (Please see the attached 7.11.2022 letter from the SWHA Board sent to the Town Park owners, TOSV Town Council, POSTR & the Planning Commissioners supporting the RFVHC Revised Safety Rodeo Report.)**

If the current Town Park design plans are left as is, the plan will diminish the stature of the rodeo, and the rodeo grounds will become an unsafe liability for all involved.

Adding a new soccer field and perhaps other playing fields may be better placed in open pasture areas elsewhere, behind and near the existing Recreation Facility and Town Park. Would it be a better plan to locate numerous playing fields and maintenance buildings in open field locations in the vicinity of the TOSV Recreation Department?

If Snowmass town residents really knew that the Snowmass Rodeo is being “squeezed” and the local town residents, rodeo competitors and rodeo enthusiasts are being disenfranchised, many would be heartbroken, and some would be outraged.

It is up to you, the TOSV Town Council as the owners, representing the community, to make this Town Park / Rodeo plan correct with your vote on regulations. Please do the right thing and give the rodeo the space necessary to mitigate liability and assist the objective of making the rodeo thrive.

Respectfully Submitted,

Holly McLain – RFVHC Communication Chairman  
for the RFVHC Board of Directors

Attachments:

7.11.2022 - SWHA Letter - page 5

Why Horses Need To Warm Up as Athletes by writer Jec Ballou – pages 6 – 7

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*The Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization*

7.11.2022

## SNOWMASS WESTERN HERITAGE ASSOCIATION

A Colorado Non-Profit Corporation

Dear TOSV Town Council, Planning Commission Members, RFVHC and TOSV staff:

SWHA supports RFVHC's recommendations for improving the Rodeo portion of the Town Park Master Plan. The Plan for the Rodeo and facilities, as proposed, is incomplete and requires safety measures for contestants and their animals such as adequate warm area for the horses, clear access by local EMT services (ambulance) and adequate space for guests to move about to enjoy the venue.

The Master Plan presented to Town Council on June 28, 2022, is the first plan laid out in detail. Prior to this, Rodeo layout plans were less detailed and changed often. (Please compare the 2-09-22 plans with 6-08-22 plans) SWHA's rushed review of and approval of the less detailed Rodeo layout at a Town Council Meeting intended to review an option for a multi-purpose venue in March did not adequately take into consideration the issues raised by the RFVHC.

With TOSV and SWHA preparing to enter new Lease negotiations, SWHA hopes to lay the groundwork for mutually agreeable terms for a successful Rodeo well into the future. Ensuring the safety of the contestants and their animals along with our guests will be a threshold issue. Paving any portion of the rodeo arena for potential parking is not a safe option.

As a nonprofit, SWHA reserves funds, not allocated to maintaining the rodeo arena, towards causes that preserve the western heritage in our valley. SWHA supports TOSV's plan to improve the entrance to Snowmass Village but reminds the elected officials that SWHA is not the driving force behind the current design. SWHA is willing and able to continue the operation of the Rodeo as it currently exists if the design process needs more time. In either case, SWHA requests that TOSV be responsible for the damage to the rodeo arena by use of third parties approved by TOSV and not a cost born by SWHA.

Finally, SWHA is looking for the stability of a long-term lease in time to begin preparing for next season, tentatively scheduled to begin June 21, 2023.

We are always available to meet with the Town Council to discuss further.

Sincerely,

SWHA BOARD

## WHY HORSES NEED TO WARM- UP AS ATHLETES

BY WRITER Jec Ballou:

First, let's clarify the distinction between loosening up and warming up. These are two different activities; you need to do both before your workout or competition. The overall goal of warming up is to increase oxygen delivery and blood circulation to the horse's skeletal muscles to prevent early accumulation of metabolic wastes such as lactic acid in the tissues.

In addition to causing early fatigue, lactic acid buildup also prohibits the horse from benefiting from the workout because it changes the muscles' pH levels, which controls their ability to contract and relax. To counter this, and to receive the benefit of exercising the muscles, you want to stimulate enough oxygen and blood flow to the horse's muscles to peak them for performance.

**Each day, when you first mount up, you should spend 8-10 minutes allowing your horse to walk around in a relaxed posture without any restrictive rein contact. Some choose to do this portion in-hand, others like to hack around their properties. This gentle activity allows the horse's joint fluids to begin moving and lubricating.**

Studies have shown that it can take several minutes of slow movement for joint fluids to circulate fully for horses that live in mostly confined accommodations. There is not yet oxygen, blood flow, and fuel necessary to support the contraction-relaxation cycle that muscle fibers function with; asking muscles to engage immediately when the horse comes from his stall before these elements circulate would be essentially like choking them.

In a resting state, only 15 percent of circulating blood is delivered to the horse's muscles, traveling instead to his organs and digestive system. During exercise, however, up to 85 percent of his blood circulates to his muscles. One of the goals of loosening up is to allow this shift to happen. Once you have things moving inside the horse's body, it is time to begin the brisk activity of warming up.

Cold and un-fueled muscle fibers, tendons, and ligaments are susceptible to over-stretching injuries. Also, if there is tension in an antagonistic muscle group, suppling movements will cause inefficient use of the horse's body and contribute to side-dominance. It is best, physiologically, to spend the

first five minutes of this phase with active forward movement in either trot or canter. Which gait you choose depends on each individual horse. Some are more balanced in the trot, others prefer to canter. The key here is to maintain an active gait with the goal of stimulating the skeletal muscles enough to force blood flow to them. This does not happen at a leisurely pace.

After 5 to 10 minutes of active movement, the skeletal muscles are warm enough to begin suppling exercises. These can include various sized circles, leg-yielding, turns. As this phase of warming up continues, progressively increase intensity of muscle output and suppling by using smaller circles and more difficult lateral movements. Be sure to make things more strenuous progressively.

As you proceed from this stage, your warmup exercises should lead you directly into your planned workout for the day. This is to say that your warmup should flow seamlessly into your schooling session; you should not take a break after your warm up. At this point, the horse's muscles are able to contract more powerfully, which enhances the quality of his performance and ensures a better training session. All exercises performed will now have a greater strengthening and suppling benefit.