

## Wildlife. Do animals matter?

There are heroes and there are zeroes. We find plenty of heroes in proclaiming our 'values' and too many zeroes in living them. Our electeds can do better than this. For instance, town council's budding love affair with the Sagebrush Apartments could be a death sentence for local mule deer.

Of course, we say we love wildlife. Our Comp Plan proudly proclaims "preserving and protecting the area's ecosystem is the core of our community character." But wildlife is now being overlooked in the rush to fast track development.

It's the 'Bigger and Grander' disease; more, always more. Local politicians often talk a good game while campaigning, but once in office it's pedal to the metal. They become enamored with density.

Human density and wildlife are on a collision course. The lot on Flat Creek between Dollar Tree and Exxon where the apartments are to go is now vacant land. The deer herd that lives across Broadway and up the hill needs water, and they often need to cross Broadway to get to Flat Creek.

That's why there are so many road-kills in that exact location. Most of the winter a large electronic traffic sign flashes 'caution' at that spot. Its purpose is to make drivers aware and help the deer get safely across the busy roadway.

Last week's News&Guide showed the sketch plan for all to see. If built, Sagebrush

Apartments would block Flat Creek access for the deer.

Those animals have been here for thousands of years; we're the newcomers. Do we have the right to exterminate them? A decade or two back, folks wouldn't dream of doing that, but this town council is different. The 'Bigger and Grander' disease can do that to you.

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Our new Mayor ran on a "less talk, more action" slogan. He won by just 38 votes. If he'd run on a 'mule deer extermination' slogan he wouldn't be Mayor. Our electeds ought to take a

second look at what they're about to do. Will they be heroes or zeroes?

There are other options for that parcel. It's a great spot for a park on Flat Creek. Perhaps the well-known owner would let it go for what he paid.

Maybe town could pay that for the park. It would be a win-win for everyone. Town would then actually have spent money on what they say is priority #1: our wildlife and ecosystem.

"Wildlife, along with natural and scenic resources... are at the core of our heritage, culture, and economy." That's a quote from the first paragraph of the Comp Plan. That's who we claim to be.

If we're who we say we are, we need to coexist with those mule deer, not kill them. Let's be heroes instead of zeroes.