

Munds Park Equipment Barn Committee Final Report Out

The Munds Park Equipment Barn Committee was created in July 2020 and included thirteen volunteer-homeowners in Munds Park. The Committee was chartered with finding a community-driven solution in locating a potential Public Works equipment barn for Munds Park that would support safe and effective snow removal operations in the community.

Our Committee operated within the Covid-19 public health emergency dynamics, utilizing technology to hold virtual meetings. Not having face-to-face meetings amongst our committee members and in-person discussions with homeowners were challenging. However, our Committee was able to work through a transparent, open, and responsive process and recommend options for the Equipment Barn's future placement.

The Committee was created in response to the potential placement of the Equipment Barn on Hillside, directly adjacent to homes. The conceptual placement of the Equipment Barn at Hillside without a large-scale communication from Public Works, fueled by conflicting Social Media campaigns, created a lack of trust in the Public Works Team. Misinformation, perceived fears of property devaluations, environmental risk contributed to divisions in the community.

The Committee, working with Public Works staff, made it a priority to consider facts about the Equipment Barn, the need, scope, budget, and benefits. The Committee employed several tools to communicate with the larger Munds Park community.

- 1) A Munds Park Barn County webpage was created as the central location for information and the work of the Committee.
- 2) Committee meetings were held through ZOOM and were open to residents, streamed live on YouTube, and posted on the webpage. The meeting highlights, questions, and answers were also posted on the webpage.
- 3) An email account was created for residents to share their concerns and to provide their input.
- 4) The local Newspaper and the Munds Park Today website were used to keep residents in our community informed.

Despite our multiple communication avenues and outreach, the Committee received input and feedback from several engaged residents. We believe that only 10 percent of residents engaged with us in the deliberation process.

In pursuit of our charter, and early in the process, the Committee received testimony from subject matter experts with Coconino County Public Works and the Forest Service about the need and processes to build an Equipment Barn in Munds Park.

The Public Works Department shared the need for the Barn were public and employee safety concerns and stewardship of public funds, not a regulatory requirement. The onset of the COVID-19 has changed the financial picture in Public Works, and the Equipment Barn Project is on hold for the foreseeable future. The Forest Service shared their permitting process for allowing special use permits for local public agencies in the forest. In their testimony, the Forest Service shared the value of input from residents in the permitting process as a factor to permitting use. The Committee also received feedback on Equipment Barn effectiveness from the Sherriff's Office, Pinewood Fire Chief, and Flagstaff Unified School District.

Several residents provided feedback to the Committee through direct communications with our members. Many residents felt the service levels were acceptable; however, the Committee, through a vote, confirmed that an Equipment Barn would be an asset in the community.

Based on input and information from residents, County, and Forest Service, the Committee eliminated any potential sites on the forest and next to homes. Thus, narrowing the possible placement to eight locations. The eight locations present both opportunities and challenges. These sites were then evaluated on different criteria such as safety, costs, accessibility, community viewsheds, etc.

The Committee prioritized the areas into three groups. The attached Matrix shows the different locations.

1. The first group are sites west of I-17 (A, B and C) and near the southbound rest stop. These locations are not next to homes, do not require travel on I-17, are potentially within the budget and could possibly be accessed from the rest area. Special use permit is required from the Forest Service to develop any of these sites. The sites are located next to forest road FR9469S which leads to Munds Ranch road. Munds Ranch road leads directly into Munds Park's Pinewood Blvd. However, the challenge with these sites is access to Munds Ranch road. Establishing access requires crossing private property, which needs both landowner and legal approvals. The landowner has since expressed his disapproval on equipment crossing his property.
2. The second group of sites (D, E, and F) is undeveloped private property locations. These sites are located within the Munds Park community but have a substantial lease/capital cost making them less viable options. This is especially true as economic activity remains uncertain.
3. The third group of potential sites (G and H) is existing locations where the Public Works Team currently stages equipment. The Little Antelope - ADOT site is the area where equipment is staged. The County operates the green waste and transfer station at Willard Springs. Both these sites require commutes on I-17 and do not fully address the public and employee safety concerns.

After careful deliberation and not finding an ideal solution, the Committee believes that the sites west of the I-17 southbound rest stop present the best for placement of a Public Works Equipment Barn. There is an acknowledgment that access issues need to be resolved with the current landowner. The Committee also recommends that Public Works engages early with the Munds Park community on any future Equipment Barn placement plans.

Simultaneously, as plans for a potential Barn site are deliberated, the Committee recommends that the Public Works work with the Pinewood Sanitary District to find an interim solution for staging equipment on the Sanitary District property. This mid-term solution will reduce any I-17 public and employee safety risks.

The Committee would like to extend its sincere appreciation to all the Public Works staff who assisted us on this project with their time, expertise, and commitment towards finding a potential solution.

H  Willard Springs

Rest Area Sites (FS)  A B C

Private Parcels west of I-17  D E

FS Parcel near APS substation  F

Munds Park  Private Parcel Fairway Drive Site

 Antelope Yard  G