Save the Dells

Amber Fields, Chairman

Prescott City Council Special Study Session

12/12/19

Save the Dells' goal is to permanently preserve the remaining undeveloped portions of the Granite Dells (the Dells) as part of a publicly accessible Granite Dells Regional Park. Our goals reflect the majority wishes of the Prescott community and the stated objectives of Prescott's General Plan and Open Space Master Plan. These park lands should be preserved in their natural state as much as possible, while still allowing activities that have minimal impact such as hiking, biking, rock climbing, and horse riding.

Our initial objective is to achieve a fair annexation deal with Arizona Eco Development (AED) that would protect as public open space approximately 500 acres currently proposed for development, including the iconic Point of Rocks, the Peavine and Iron King Trails, and an ecologically important riparian area that all interconnect with existing City of Prescott (City) open space. These 500 acres would contribute to the growing open space lands that could form the foundation of a Granite Dells Regional Park.

AED owns over 15,000 acres. The 500 acres we are concerned with is only about 3% of their total land. According to their recently submitted development application, AED wants to annex about 2,500 acres of their property into the City in two separate annexations: "South Annexation" and "North Annexation." It is imperative that these two annexations are processed and considered as one annexation and rezoning transaction. The City of Prescott Land Development Code already requires developers to dedicate 25% of their land for open space, so in total AED is required to dedicate a minimum of 620 acres to open space. We are asking that 500 of the 620 acres be where the public wants it, and that the open space allocation is contiguous functional open space, not simply cul-de-sacs and drainage ditches.

Annexation into Prescott is a privilege, not a right, so annexations should be good for both the developer and the public. For the AED annexation to be good for the public, the developer should dedicate 500 acres of its land as public open space to serve as part of a Granite Dells Regional Park, at no cost to the taxpayer. Since annexation into Prescott would provide the developer with benefits like city water, sewer, roads, and other amenities, annexation will increase the developer's property value by more than $100 million overnight, even after their dedication of the 500 acres as part of a Dells park.

A related issue is that AED has proposed trading land for airport expansion to the City in exchange for City water rights. As the City is well aware, the federal government typically pays 95% of the cost of lands to expand the airport. It therefore makes no sense to trade City water for airport expansion lands. We suggest the annexation agreement could instead include an option for the City to purchase airport expansion lands with federal assistance at appraised value, with possibly a five- to ten-year term.

If the conditions above are accepted, Save the Dells will not oppose the transfer of 300 acre-feet of City water rights to AED, as requested by AED, for use in the proposed South and North Annexations, or on additional AED lands to be annexed and rezoned. AED has other options besides annexation into Prescott: it has the option of developing in the County or applying for annexation into Prescott Valley. Neither option would be as beneficial to the developer as what Save the Dells is proposing. We think the best outcome for the public is annexation into the City of Prescott with dedication of the 500 acres as a publicly accessible open space.

The Save the Dells outcome respects the private property rights of AED, protects the taxpayers of Prescott, and serves the best interests of the region by sustaining economic benefits such as significant tourism revenue. We believe that the City, with the participation of a Save the Dells representative, should negotiate the annexation exchange and additional Dells land acquisitions in a way that preserves Prescott's most stunning landscape for our entire community in perpetuity. This is our last chance to preserve the iconic rocky Dells, or they will be lost forever. We are confident this win-win solution is one that will be accepted by the vast majority of our citizens - and be appreciated for generations to come.

City Codes require that at least 25% is dedicated as "open space"

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AED Annexations

All AED Lands (15,000+ acres total)

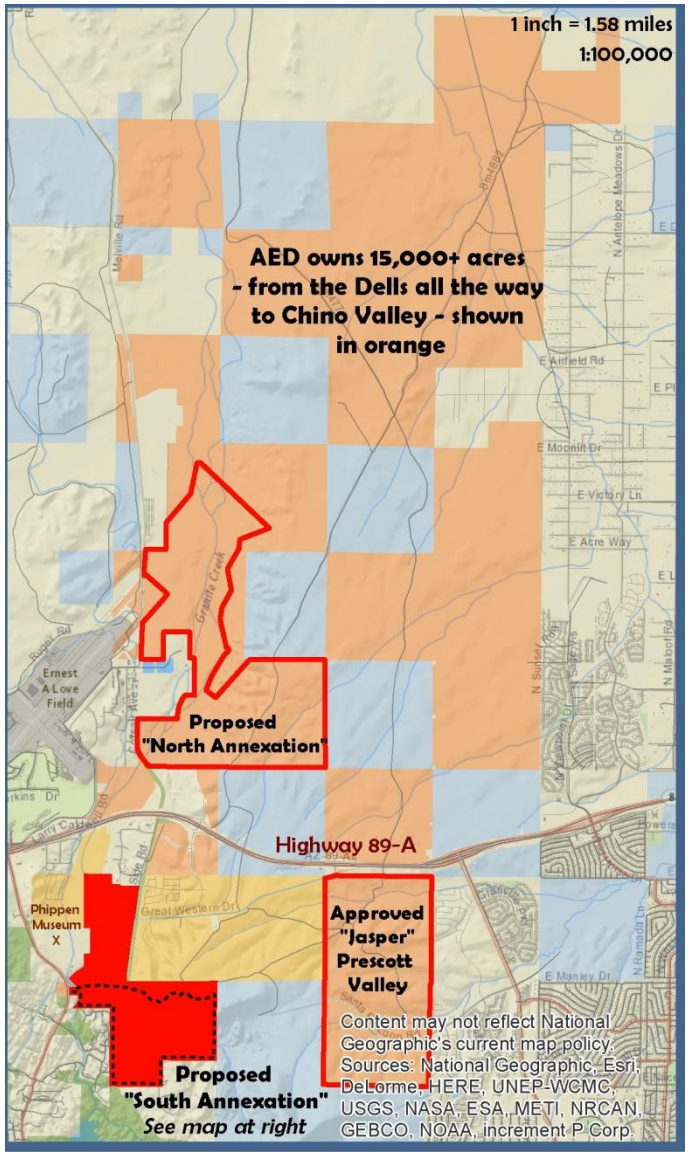
Priority 500 Acres to Save

City of Prescott Open Space

Other Recent Developments

Arizona State Trust Land

Trails



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SAVETHEDELLS.ORG

Save the DELLS

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