

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 5/10/2023 4:29:36 AM

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Comments: May 9, 2023

The situation at the March 23rd meeting at TSV clearly showed the need for a "discussion" - a question and answer between the public and the officials. Significant concerns about confusion around the process and lack of adequate public input resulted in arrangements for another public meeting and extension of the comment period to May 22.

The Advertisement for the May 9 meeting was: "Carson National Forest will hold a second public event to discuss the draft environmental assessment for resort projects proposed by Taos Ski Valley, Inc. The event will be an open house where attendees can ask specialists questions to help inform their comments before submission."

What the public found tonight on arrival at the Sagebrush was a large conference room with booths representing various participants in this process. As I circulated, I did not find the State Engineer available to talk about water rights, the NEPA booth was staffed by the consulting firm SE Group (that is paid by the project proponent to prepare the Environmental Assessment), and most of the remaining booths were Taos Ski Valley Inc. or Carson National Forest Service employees with glossy brochures giving their spiels in the privacy of their booth space espousing the virtues of the proposed gondola and other projects.

Clearly this was a bait and switch - expect a discussion and receive an open house. The dictionary defines "discussion" as a consideration of a subject by a group; an earnest conversation. The intention was obviously that this was not to happen. Fortunately, strong willed and compassionate people pulled out a PA and proceeded to make a discussion (of sorts) happen.

In my opinion, this "meeting" was mostly a failure. There was no discussion between the public and officials to clarify details of the process and to have a healthy debate about the purpose and need of the proposed projects and their potential impacts. I even watched as some snickered in the background as impassioned statements were made by people potentially affected by the proposed projects.

We need to be able to ask the proponents of the projects questions about purpose and need. We need to be able to ask the Forest Service about their assessment of the impacts and how they are advocating for the public in the process. We don't need third-party consultants (with conflicts of interest) answering the questions.

Let's please try again. Hold another meeting with an honest debate and delay the comment period accordingly.