

Randy Garrison Interview

Democratic Perspective

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Democratic Perspective welcomes Randy Garrison, District 3 representative of the Yavapai County Board of Supervisors. We dive into the controversy surrounding the proposed El Rojo Grande Ranch development project of 600 manufactured homes, planned for an environmentally sensitive area near Sedona, Arizona. Planned by ELS, one of the largest developers of these types of projects, El Rojo Grande has generated opposition from the Sedona City Council and numerous local groups.

Mike Cosentino: We've got some serious business here this morning, at least it certainly is developing into a huge issue, isn't it Steve?

Steve Williamson: This is probably the hottest issue I've seen in a while in Sedona, and Sedonans are really and truly up in arms, and it's going to get more and more intense. So, we're going to be talking to Supervisor Randy Garrison, who has been on the show before, and we had a pretty good interview with him about about County politics.

Mike Cosentino: I guess we don't have to talk about him like he's not here... Good morning Randy. So, how's Randy Garrison this morning?

Randy Garrison: Great. How are you all doing today?

Mike Cosentino: Very good. Did you hear a little of the promo? It seems like everybody Steve knows is really bothered by this El Rojo Grande development.

Randy Garrison: Sure, it's getting a lot of attention.

Steve Williamson: Sedona is sort of up and arms, and it's going to get more up in arms. So, it's an important issue for us to talk about.

Randy Garrison: Sure.

Mike Cosentino: What are you hearing at your end Randy?

Randy Garrison: It's definitely a matter of interest to the community at the moment, and not just the community, but the region in general. So, I can't pretty much go anywhere right now without somebody asking questions about it, and we're getting lots of public comment. So that's good.

Mike Cosentino: Yes, let's talk about public comment. When is our next opportunity?

Randy Garrison: So, the Planning and Zoning Commission... let me look that up real quick... The Planning and Zoning Commission will meet on [December] 20th, which is Thursday. They'll have their first session. And after that session, on the 17th of January, they will be having...

Steve Williamson: Sedonans tend to be more involved in politics than most people.

Randy Garrison: What was that?

Mike Cosentino: Yes... Right now we are having some technical issues. Steve is having some problems, so if he just starts speaking out, that's because he can't hear you... Let's talk about density. I guess.

Randy Garrison: Well, let's go back... I wanted to go through the process.

Mike Cosentino: Oh please!

Randy Garrison: They're meeting this week... The Commission will be the Planning and Zoning Commission, which is the first step of our process... They'll be meeting on Thursday... and public comment is given at that point... or can be given... and the public can see the discussions the board [Commission] members have amongst themselves... and the developer... and our Community Development staff.

And then on [January] 17th, they'll come back for their second meeting... possibly to make a recommendation, or to look at any changes that are made to the proposal, in the meantime.

And then on [February] 7th we're going to have a Board of Supervisors work session with Community Development, to discuss the Planning and Zoning Commission's recommendations, if there is one at that point.

And then on [February] 20th, it looks like it'll be being brought forward to the Board for final action, if the process is still on track at that point. So, we won't actually see this, as a Board, until the end of February. Okay. So, we're a long ways out, from the board's perspective.

Mike Cosentino: I see... and that's good.

Steve Williamson: Sorry to interrupt you Randy, but my earphones weren't working. So, I'm sitting here listening to glorious silence, while Mike is putting out all the good information out of the air.

Randy Garrison: Well, I want to make sure we got the timeline out, because it's been missprinted in the paper twice now - that somehow the board is going to be hearing this in the next... well... either this week or in the coming week, while the board won't be hearing this until at least the 20th of February.

Mike Cosentino: We're talking to Randy Garrison, Board of Supervisors from our district. Randy... I'm sorry. Go over that time line one more time, please.

Randy Garrison: So, it will start [December] 20th, which is Thursday. That'll be before the Planning and Zoning Commission... their first discussion of this item. And then on [January] 17th, they'll be having a follow-up discussion on this item, and possibly making the recommendations at that point... That's January 17th. And then February 7th, there is supposed to be a Board of Supervisors work session with the Community Development Department, to discuss this project. And then February 20th is the earliest that it would be slated to come before the Board of Supervisors. So, we're two months plus out, before the board will actually see this.

Steve Williamson: Good. Well, that's good information to know Randy. Tell us a bit about the Board of Supervisors... Oh, incidentally, I did a Google search on the Yavapai Board of Supervisors, and Chip Davis's name comes up as a district 3 Supervisor. So, you need to talk...

Randy Garrison: Good old Google... on 20 years of History. It's a little hard to replace him. He had big shoes, and he was really busy in my district. And so it's taken me... but we're working hard on trying to make our own place, and push him out of Google a little bit. But if he's been around for a while...

Steve Williamson: On the internet he's still the supervisor, that's the thing. Alright, let's get serious. This is going to, as I said when I interrupted you, it is going to be a very big issue in Sedona. I live in Sedona. and the force against this thing is just building from about 10 different directions - the City Council has opposed it. I would say... to say that Sedona is going to be up in arms about this development is kind of an understatement, if you know Sedona.

So how do you deal with that aspect of it... Political access to... People are going to be extremely angry if this goes through.

Randy Garrison: Well. I think... You know we're at the very beginning of having a conversation about this. So, I think we're a long ways out from any decisions being made. The press and other sources are now trying to state that decisions have been made, and [that] I've made my mind up and, if anything, I've been trying to be very visible and very proactive in going out listening to different aspects of the community.

I attended the City Council meeting. I spent two hours in their discussions on this project. I've been before the Chamber board, and listened to their discussions about this. I've been reaching out to pretty much any group that I can, to sit down and hear what the concerns are, so that we can go into this, and I can be a little more prepared to make a decision.

But, you know, this is... I'll tell you then... I can't speak for the board and, once again, this won't be coming before us for 2 months now. So, we're a long ways from making any

decisions. We're still collecting the information. I'm still waiting for our system to start working.

But you know, when we make a decision like this... and I can tell you there's over 20 such developments that are in the pipeline right now for the next two years in the Yavapai County. That's one of the problems with having an economy that's kicking... We were dead for so long, and behind the curve, so to say, on the national average. We took us a long time to catch up, and now that we're catching up, everything is hitting the fan at the same time. So, you know, we're under a pretty intense economic development push right now, and development is right at the front of that. You can't go anywhere without seeing houses coming up, out of the ground, and these larger tracts of land attract a lot of attention, and people have ideas on how to develop it. And now we're moving forward with that process, and that all seems to be hitting at the same time, because of the way our economy works.

But, when it comes to me, and how we're going to be looking at this decision, and the use of this land, and how any land develops in the County, the very first thing I look at is our own codes and ethics. So, we have a Verde Valley Regional Land Use Plan that's on the County website. You can go through and read that. That was put together back in, I think, 2006... and it was kind of a community effort. There was a lot of individuals who participated in that... looked at the Verde Valley, and how we can look at our land being developed here. Continue to create the atmosphere and the environment that we have moved here and enjoy. And then, on top of that, we have the Yavapai County Comprehensive Plan, which is more of a government guidance document. So, it speaks on how we want to look at the county on a whole... not just the Verde Valley.

And then we have our Planning and Zoning Commission, which, as I said, will be starting their week... this Thursday. You know that's a group of highly trained and very intellectual individuals, and we put a lot of trust... and I have a lot of respect in them to do their job, and be looking at this from the County's angle, and the rules and regulations... and how this development, or any other development, will fit into what the county see as being needed and necessary.

So, you know, that's the county angle for this, and then... You know for me, I have to look at the nearest, and probably most impacted, communities. And in this case, that would be the city of Sedona. So, I go in, and I'm looking at their Community Plan. I want to see how this fits, or does not fit in, with how they envision themselves, and where they want to be, and what they want to be. And then I've got to look at their Land Development Code, which has just been recently rewritten... and I believe they approved recently... they've been spending about two years redeveloping that Development Code. And then they have their Planning and Zoning Commission on top of that. So, I go through and I look at how they've been making their decisions, and what they used to for guidance on how they want to see development happen within the boundaries of their community.

And while this development isn't within those boundaries. It is right next to their community, and it is viewed as part of their community. So, obviously we don't want to do anything that wouldn't be seen as being a good neighbor to the community. That would be probably the highest impact from this development.

And then the third part of this is me... and I have to go back in... I have to think about all the work we're doing with looking at Workforce housing. I have to look at development... Development is happening whether it's this piece, or it's in the other piece, and if this development wasn't to happen - this Rojo Grande project - that's still a 172 acre parcel that will be developed at some point in time. So how do we develop that, and get the highest and best use of that land that provides positive outcomes for the communities that will be affected. And Sedona will probably be the highest impacted community. But this development... or the development of this property, will impact the entire Verde Valley. You know, one of the things we have to watch is this district... my district, which spans from the other side of Mingus up to Perkinsville, all the way down to the Village of Oak Creek and Sedona, and everything in between.

My district is 75% public land. That leaves 25% developable land. Sedona is now over 80% developed out. We're running out of opportunities to develop property. So, as we move forward, and these developments come in, we're going to be... the stakes get a little higher all the time, because we're running out of land that can be developed. So, we want to make sure whatever we do with that land really does create, not only a positive benefit today, but becomes something that we're proud of, as time rolls forward, and we can look back in 10, 20, 30 years from now and say, that was a good decision.

Well, that's it. As you said, this is big. The community it's going to impact the most is Sedona. On the Sedona Community Development Plan, this is called the Western Gateway. It has a whole section... that part of the Sedona boundaries is called the Western Gateway, which I think is just a wonderful...

Steve Williamson: It's an extremely important area to Sedona, because it's sort of the entrance to Sedona. It's right by the current development, and the projected development. The area is particularly beautiful folks. If you don't know it, Dry Creek runs through there. It's a wildlife Corridor. I hiked it many times. It's particularly beautiful. Even though you start out, say, under the bridge on 89, you're in a remote area that has no roads, really, until you get either way north and east, or way south. There's no paved highways through there. It's a very rugged place to hike, and very open, and very important to people involved in hiking and sports in Sedona. And Dry Creek is one of our arteries of water, wildlife, and everything else. Topography in Sedona... It's extremely important to many people. To some people, I think, don't matter.

I think Randy, what I hear is you're asking the question. How can we develop more land and how can we get more development? I think what you're going to run against in Sedona... and you're going to know better than I do... is the feeling that we don't want this kind of development. We really don't want a huge amount of development. Nobody

in Sedona is going to support 600 homes right on the edge of town, in this very sensitive area... or maybe they will...

Randy Garrison: Well, I think you're hearing me wrong. I continue to try and get out and open this conversation, and the informative, and give people the way I'm looking at it, and the way the county looks at it, and the way our different commissions and the communities around us look at this. Development is coming whether you like it or not. So, it's how do we develop what is left of the land that we have that creates the highest outcome for the future.

So just because... I'm not trying to be pro-development. I'm just being realistic. We have development coming. So, whether it's this developer that comes in with their Rojo Grande Project, or they walk away and you have another group right behind them... These open Parcels of land are going to be developed. Sedona themselves owns one of the larger Parcels in the county, which is another two and a half miles to the west, southwest of the Rojo Grande project. That's where their sewer plant is, and there have been numerous discussions on how that land will develop. As time goes forward, and the infill becomes more and more... like I said, Sedona themselves are over 80% filled... we're going to see these these larger parcels be viewed more and more as ways to continue to bring in more housing. We have our work... As far as I'm concerned, this is the most beautiful place on Earth, and people want to be here and... I want to be here, and whatever we do as we move forward... I want to make sure we leave, not only a beautiful place for my family, but for everybody else that likes to live here as well.

Steve Williamson: This is one of the things... in Sedona people like the fact that it's built out... that it won't grow anymore... That it has a sort of steady state. It has 20% to grow, or whatever it is. People like that. There are no large developments such of this within the Sedona City limits. There are no... However good they are... There are no Del Webb developments and stuff in Sedona. All the houses are individually built by different builders.

Can we talk a little bit about the company that wants to develop it?

Mike Cosentino: Yeah, the Democratic Perspective research department...

Randy Garrison: I can't talk about... because I really don't have that much knowledge.

Steve Williamson: Yeah, that was my question Randy. Do you have... Do you know about the history of Equity Lifestyle Properties or ELS and their history, specifically in Sedona Shadows where they've raised the rate at four times the rate of inflation, and have actually forced homeowners...

Randy Garrison: Once again, I can't tell you those things. I can't speak to them. What I know is they're one of the largest developers of these types of living areas in the world. They have, I believe, about 241 nationwide, or worldwide, and about 40 or so right here in the State of Arizona. I've driven through all three developments that are next to this property. I've talked to people who live in all three of them and, you know, we get good

and bad, but as far as knowing the business model... further into how they do business and all that. I can't talk to that because I really haven't... that's not really where we're at at this point... with me.

I'm just sitting back, trying to figure out from the community what they feel... is there an appropriate development of this land, should it develop.

Steve Williamson: Randy? Is there a point in approving or disapproving this project... where the history of the company trying to develop land will come into play? Because it's become important to people of Sedona, and its reputation is very bad here. So is that something that you calculate, or are you doing it on more... I guess you call it objective, broader decision making.

Randy Garrison: I would say... uh... how do I answer that... Let me go here... It's premature for me to get involved in the business ethics, or the business practices of this company. Like I said, this doesn't even go to Planning and Zoning till Thursday. I don't know at what point in time this will move past them, and actually come to the Board of Supervisors. So, if it does... then... at that point... I think it's February 7th... is the first time we're going to be in front of the Community Development Department.

That'll be probably about the time I actually start digging into the business practices of this company. But at this point in time, I don't have a plan in front of me. So, for me to start digging into their business... It really is fairly premature.

Steve Williamson: I understand that. I appreciate your work in this issue...

Mike Cosentino: Can we name those three communities that are... Sedona Shadows was one of them.

Randy Garrison: Sedona Shadows, Sedona Pines, and Sedona... oh man, the one on top...

Mike Cosentino: Okay... I know Sedona Shadows... Been out there... Been out to Sedona Pines... Where do we go? You're a County supervisor, and you have a whole lot of people upset about a proposal that you really don't have the details on yet. Right? You don't really... you have not done... The County has not done the research... And not put it where it's... in that since you're saying it's premature.

Randy Garrison: Well, I can't say the County has. And our Community Development Department obviously is neck deep in this right now, and all that information is being compiled and disseminated to our Planning and Zoning Commission. So, that's the first step. They're the ones who are going to be looking at this from the rules angle, and how does this fit with, not only our Comprehensive Plan, but the Verde Valley Regional Land Use Plan, as well as all our zoning and land use ordinances. So, they're going to be looking into the specifics of this.

I'm a long ways out yet it. That process has to move forward. They're going to be asking the questions. They may be asking the developer to come in and make modifications or changes. They may come back and flat-out deny this type of a land application, but they have to go through the process first. That's the way this works. It won't come before the board, and before me, and I won't have to take a vested interest in this process until we get past them... actually make a decision, because there's so much that can change between now and that day. Getting any further into it at this point would be way premature for me.

Steve Williamson: I think that's a good point Randy, and we understand that there's a process that has to go to... But that process is going to run into an awful lot of angry folks shortly. I know that you know that, but I wonder if the rest of the county understands how Sedona feels about the project - fair or not. I mean there's a... I've seen Sedona get its back up, and get like this before, and as somebody who's been in town now 15 years and watched the process, I can tell you this is going to be a biggie here. There's all these websites out already. There's letters from pretty much everybody politically active in Sedona, opposing the project. The City council has opposed it. So, the County Supervisors process which you've got to stick with - we understand that you have to stick with - is going to hit a kind of, what would you call it, Mike... Not a bulldozer...

Mike Cosentino: Well, no, there's certainly going to be some attendance which the County Supervisors and the... certainly encourage...

We're talking to Randy Garrison, who is Yavapai County Supervisor. One vote of five, I might mention. This morning on Democratic Perspective

Randy, it is true that... and we certainly appreciate you, kind of getting in front of this, and appearing on Democratic Perspective this morning, even though, as you pointed out... and hopefully listeners will listen to it... and this will be, by the way, this will be podcast, and this will be archived. So, if you're listening and you're missing anything, it'll be up on the VVID website in a couple of days, and you can play it back and get the dates... as many as you want.

But, other people have done the research already, and certainly are responding to the research that the county staff and other people may be doing... and some of it doesn't sound too good. Our crack research Department here at Democratic Perspective... Klaus is going to tell us a little bit about ELS, the company that's...

Klaus: Well, I've ever already said that, at least as Shadows is concerned. I mean, their business practice doesn't seem to be particularly ethical. In fact, the very opposite of that. The question is...

Steve Williamson: I want to go back and talk for a second about, you know... there was a question asked just a second ago about the Board, and how the Board will look at this.

Klaus: Yeah, I wanted to ask a question...

Randy Garrison: You know, I'm just one of five individuals that will be looking at this, should it actually make it through the Planning and Zoning process. One of the things I think that's important to understand, like I said... There's about 20 projects, 20 plus projects, coming through the pipelines right now, through the greater Yavapai County area. Everybody... even though we're elected to represent the entire County - we're about 235,000 people at this point - one of the largest land masses in the United States, as far as counties go... the size of Israel... the size of New Jersey. That's a huge amount of land that we have to take into consideration.

But, each individual Board member will be chiming in on this project, as well as all the other ones. But I guess for me, I was elected by the local constituency. And when I look at these projects, I have to keep a broad look at... is this the best thing for Yavapai County... and how are we going to deal with all these needs, and wants, and the growth issues of our County, as more and more people want to come here.

But for me, it becomes much more personal, you know. I'm 5th generation Verde Valley. I grew up here. I watched this develop. I've watched this land fill, and I've watched all the issues that growth and development have brought with them, and I still choose to live here because I still think it's the prettiest, best place on Earth to be. And I love my communities, and I love my district. And so absolutely, what Sedona thinks, and the Sedona Council, and the Sedona staff... how they look at this development. It will matter to me. Our Community Development Department... what we do there. They're going to be making sure we don't do anything that's harmful for the community in the long run. But, it's going to be my job to really speak for, and to, the people of this community, to find out what they do and don't want. You know, like I said, one of the problems that we're under is land is going to be developed whether we like it or not. So how do we develop what we have left - because there's very little left - in a meaningful manner...

Mike Cosentino: A lot of people agree with you, and I agree with you, and I look at that... I look at a map of Sedona. I see Forest Service on three sides to Sedona. I see a highway between Sedona and Cottonwood, and I see an opening for development. If you're going to develop something... the area we're speaking of, on the highway from Sedona to Cottonwood, makes the most sense. I don't need a PhD in development to see that it makes sense to develop the cities that way.

However, people have already done a mass amount of opposition research... including us. So, we are looking for ELS, in the coming County process, through Planning and Zoning... through the Board of Supervisors. We're looking for ELS to answer some questions about their business practices. Is that safe to say Klaus?

Steve Williamson: Yes, we really appreciate you being with us Randy. We know this is a controversial issue... District 3... You represent this area. There's five districts, right? But you're representing the district where the development is taking place.

Randy Garrison: Yes sir.

Steve Williamson: And we're your voters, right? So, for guys who... in some ways... I don't know about Mike and Klaus... I hate to see these controversies break out like this, but on the other hand, there's nothing we can do about it...

Mike Cosentino: Well, as long as they remain civil... but let's talk about some of the things that people are mad about.

Klaus: No, I wanted to ask a different question actually. What, historically Randy... the decision of the Planning and Zoning Commission... how much of an influence does that have on the final vote of the Supervisors? Have you ever overridden them, or have you never overridden them, or how has that worked historically?

Randy Garrison: The Board [Planning and Zoning Commission] is made up of Commissioners that are appointed to represent each individual District. So, I have people on there that I have put their names forward as being representative of my beliefs, and what I believe are educated, and understanding the values of these communities... And each other Supervisor has done the same thing. So, this is a group of, what I call, highly trained, highly intellectual people who do this. And they will be carrying into all of the different details of this proposal, as it goes through the process.

And so, when they make a decision, and it comes back to the Board of Supervisors to make a final determination, it's not something that any one of the Supervisors takes lightly, because we have put that group in place to do this job, and if we don't trust their work... don't trust the decision that they've made... then it really is of little value to us to have that Commission. And I can tell you I value them highly.

So, does that mean if they vote for it, or against it, that the supervisors will follow suit? Not necessarily. We recently had a process go through with a permit that was applied for in the Village of Oak Creek, to do with the Outlet, and the Commission came back unanimous in support of that, and we still had one Supervisor vote against the proposal.

So, it does happen. I won't say it happens very often, or it's very likely... But it does happen. You know, when you're standing up in front of the crowd, and you're having to make a vote, and make a decision... there's a lot of things that can affect how you do that, and we're all individuals, and we all have our own thoughts and beliefs at the end of the day, and we'll make that decision based on those.

But for me, I value their work very highly, and and I'm looking forward to them getting into the weeds on this proposal, so we can get out some more information on it, and then see where it goes from there.

Mike Cosentino: Well, as you pointed out, some of what we wanted to talk about this morning on Democratic Perspective is a little premature, because of the County process. But, certainly there are, as Steve mentioned, lots of people in Sedona that have done lots of research already. There's a least one website, and parts of others that are dedicated to opposing the El Rojo Grande development on the west side of Sedona. I

have to admit, I've never been on the property myself, but I think there's certainly been a lot of people who have.

The Western Gateway, as the Sedona community plan calls it... it will be interesting to see over the next couple months how the western Gateway in the Sedona community plan matches up, or disagrees with, the Yavapai County Comprehensive Plan, and to see where development ends up.

As we've said, it's difficult to be opposed to... It's always about jobs... We've been talking for 31 minutes now about a development, and we haven't said a word about jobs, and we haven't said a word about private property rights. People own property, and bring developments to those government bodies that make the decisions... they have certain rights and responsibilities. And it's the jobs of the Commission's that we just talked about... Planning and Zoning and ultimately the Board of Supervisors... to make sure they've done their jobs.

Steve Williamson: And we want to thank you being with us... we understand you have to run pretty soon. But it's good to have a solid and calm discussion of this this issue, and maybe we can have you on again in January or something... or February... as things begin to develop, and we understand where this thing is going.

Mike Cosentino: Before you go Randy. I believe that this is going to turn on... Why I think the legal part of this, or at least the... As I've started to talk about earlier... And that's density. You guys, meaning the Planning and Zoning, and the Board of Supervisors... They're coming to you with a zoning change. They're saying we want these 600 homes... 60 RV spots. And so the complaint... or at least the discussion... the rational discussion hopefully... could be around density. Am I correct?

Randy Garrison: Oh density's definitely part of the discussion, which goes back to other factors, you know traffic... we've got to know... there's a lot of things that will play into the Planning and Zoning commission's discussions... Traffic Water and Sewer amongst those, and - while it isn't necessarily something that the board will look at specifically, when it looks at how it does or doesn't move forward with approval or not of this project - it definitely is impactful to me, because we have the highest tourist traffic in my district of any of the five districts. So, there's more impacts here in ways that other board supervisors don't necessarily deal with in their community if they develop.

So, there's a lot of impacts that are coming. Jobs is huge. There's a severe lack of Workforce housing. Right now, the last study, which is about a year-and-a-half old at this point, says we're lacking about 1800 housing units for our Workforce currently. And yet we continue to embed more hotels and and more businesses into our community that do nothing but add to that Workforce need. So, it's getting worse. It's not getting better. And as AirB&B comes in, and removes what is left of any Workforce housing in our community, it becomes even more impactful.

So, jobs and workforce are definitely going to be huge issues. Traffic... traffic is never going to get better here. It's only going to get worse. We're stuck with a transportation system that is woefully locked into the corridors that we currently have, which are mostly managed by ADOT.

And that's one thing I wanted to bring up... We got really lucky last year... or last week. We were notified that we just got awarded a 25-million-dollar Federal build grant, to work on a new Corridor. So, for this district, and for Yavapai County we... just in the Verde Valley we're close to 30 million dollars in federal grants and state grants this year, for working on our transportation system - which is huge. That would be huge for the county... For the Verde Valley its massive. So, we're continuing to push forward, and try and figure out how to deal with the impacts, as we have them now. But we also have to look at these impacts as they move forward, and traffic is going to be one of them.

You can't begin to look at development in the State of Arizona... let alone the Verde Valley or Yavapai County... without thinking about water. Water is always going to be on the table, and have to be a matter of concern.

And then, on top of that, we have sewer. We live in an environmentally sensitive area. And this one, Rojo Grande, is kind of at the pinnacle of that so... as we do development, that will inevitably become... How do we deal with the additions of traffic, and water use, and sewer and mitigate all those concerns... and still, at the end of the day, provide a positive meaningful impact for our community, in the way the land does eventually develop.

Mike Cosentino: Well the traffic issues... the 25-million-dollar grant is great... But, just to be clear, it's going to be shared between Cottonwood, Sedona, and other Verde Valley communities and, certainly, some people felt... I've already... Believe it or not, I've already heard some discussion about this grant in the community, and some people who say "Well 25 million is great, but 25 million shared among all those communities may not..."

Randy Garrison: No, no, no... no, no, no. That's not true. This grant was put forward specifically for what we're calling the Verde Connect Project, which I label as the Beaver Head Flat extension. So, we are in the middle of a process right now of developing a corridor that will run between Cornville Road and Highway 260, somewhere between Cottonwood and I-17. That's a 14-mile span... or section of Verde River... that has no bridge over it. So, this project, and that grant, are specifically to build a bridge over Verde River, and the Camp Verde area.

Mike Cosentino: That second bridge over there. That's great. I was driving out the other day down Hogan Lane and looking across it. Yeah, that's okay. So, it's specific for that... That's important. Thank you very much.

We want to mention, the traffic Sedona just came off of... that's one of the reasons this is getting such a reaction, I think, from the community. They just came off the recent

election, where traffic was such a huge issue. So, the traffic at the Western Gateway seems to be another... as you already mentioned, a huge point... something to consider in all of this.

Steve Williamson: It's a sensitive issue too in West Sedona, because most of us, when we go to Phoenix... if you live in West Sedona, we go out through 89A down through Cottonwood. So, this road would improve the speed with which you could get down to Phoenix. And that's one reason, Randy, that people are so concerned about congestion, because this is our last uncongested road... the last road that you could get in your car and drive up to Sedona on. And so, it's a sensitive issue that way.

Randy Garrison: You can't go in a community in Verde Valley that isn't impacted by traffic right now. It's here, and it's just going to get worse. And part of that is because we just have... because of our Topography... a severe lack of usable corridors to be able to put more roads into. So, the roads that we have, and the roads that have been developed, are just going to be impacted a little higher all the time.

Klaus: Randy, as a resident of Camp Verde, do you have any idea where that bridge is going to be?

Randy Garrison: No idea. So, we're actually having a meeting today. We started the process in January to move forward with this study. We've been out twice now for public meetings, and we've met with different entities, and the Councils throughout the Verde Valley, to discuss the plan. We've been taking public comment for about the last six months, and we're now at the point of compiling all that data, and their concerns, and their views, and their opinions, and their thoughts, and proposals that they put forward.

We'll be reducing those to hopefully no more than three or four ideas, or proposals, on where this corridor would be able to go. One thing we have to look at... We have to look at the archaeological aspects of all this land that we're going to be crossing. Most of it is Forest Service land. So, we have to look at the archaeological... We have to look at private property. We have to look at environmental. We have to look at the wildlife. And we've got to figure out how to get across the river.

So, there's a lot of work that's going into creating these... what we hope will be no more than three or four proposals. And then, once we narrow that batch down, we'll be going out to the public one more time with that list... a very short list of corridor ideas. And we'll see what the public thinks of those proposals and, should we move forward, we'll hopefully get it down to one proposal sometime by June, and go out to public comment one more time. So, everybody can see it, and chime in, and if we can get consensus amongst the communities and the board to move forward, then we'll start with engineering and design.

Mike Cosentino: Randy, we talked a lot this morning. We got a lot done, but we'd like to invite you back, because we're sure there's going to be more. You can come back, right?

Randy Garrison: Oh, yes, sir. Always anxious to talk about Yavapai County and the Verde Valley specifically... So yes... Just let me know... I'd be more than happy.