

We, the residents of Sedona, seem to have a hard time playing in the same sandbox.

Whether we are influenced by the vortex energy of the red rocks; have too much time on our hands; are overly biased for or against business or environmental interests; or are just plain opinionated and cantankerous, there is no issue too small to argue about in Sedona.

We argue about the roundabouts, the National Scenic Area, the alternate route, pedestrian safety and lights on Highway 89A, Barbara Antonsen Memorial Park, the Sedona Cultural Park, time-shares, airport noise, affordable housing and on and on.

I appreciate the fact that people in this community are passionate about the issues. There is no doubt in my mind that everyone who has been involved with a cause believes in their heart they are fighting for "what is best for Sedona."

The question is, if everyone is fighting for "what is best for Sedona," how can we have viewpoints that are often-times diametrically opposed? We need to focus on a vision that we share for Sedona. The health of our business community and stewardship of our environment are mutually dependant. If we are not good stewards of our environment, we will destroy the resource that brings visitors to Sedona. And, if we do not have a healthy business community, we cannot provide the services that keep our city operating. A balance between those interests is critical for our survival.

After all of the debate, dialogue, criticism, cussing and swearing that we go through, somehow we end up with resolutions to issues that represent a compromise for "what is best" for our community. But, must this process be so painful? Why do we end up being polarized on the issues and what can we do about them?

One of the common denominators that I have noticed

in opposing viewpoints is a lack of knowledge or education on the issues. Invariably, when someone calls, e-mails or writes a letter to my office with a strong opinion about a "hot topic," I find that they do not have all of the facts.

Residents should go to multiple sources and get multiple viewpoints. Talk to city staff, the mayor and council members. Do your own independent research. Go to council and commission meetings. If you are going to have an opinion, make it an informed opinion.

The other denominator that is common in opposing factions is the unwillingness to compromise. The definition of compromise is "a settlement of differences between opposing sides in which each side makes concessions."

It seems that our citizens are quick to demonize the opposing viewpoint. When this happens, communications break down, the weapons are drawn and everybody starts taking pot shots at one another. These scenarios are often played out in city council meetings.

Representatives of one side of an issue will "load up" the council chambers with supporters, indicating that they represent the majority viewpoint of our community. During the public testimony, we will hear why we should support that viewpoint, but very seldom do we hear talk of compromise. Why is that? Most of us are reasonable, educated adults. Why do we not allow ourselves to make room for compromise?

We must keep talking, Sedona: Not at each other, but with each other. We must look for our common vision and goals while we talk. Talk with an open mind and a willingness to make room for different viewpoints. Put down your weapons and approach the table. We have a lot of work to do.

Rob Adams is the mayor of Sedona. City Talk is published every week in the Sedona Red Rock News.



City Talk

**ROB
ADAMS**

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Please, stop. We're smarter than this.

Whoa, time out. What is happening in Sedona lately? Controversies have always been the fact in our town, but lately, the amount of invective name-calling, shouting, threatening letters, impolite behavior, ignoring the work of citizen commissions, nasty outbursts and a general lack of civil behavior is the rule, not the exception, when we address the issues.

In my 30-plus years here, things have gone from bad to worse in our methods of solving problems. We all need to stop, take a step back and reconsider what this is doing to us.

People hold opinions for good reason. Their opinions may vary and be in opposition to those held by others, but each point of view has been arrived at honestly and for good reason. No one that I have met in my time here has an intention of wrecking the city. We just see things differently.

So why do we feel that we can act so rudely when those differences arise? The goal in reaching agreement is win-win, but lately we think that it's OK to arrive at win-lose, when in fact, we really end up at lose-lose. When a decision is reached, a major portion of the population should not feel that they were screwed. It only encourages similar outcomes in the future.

We need to enter all instances of negotiation with the intention of arriving at a workable solution for both or all sides. This should be agreed upon at the outset, and then that promise restated every time the participants in the debate gather. We are smart people, but lately that intelligence seems to be masked by anger.

We live in a small town to enjoy that sense of community and neighborliness that is absent in larger cities. We surely won't maintain that feeling if we act like such churlish louts. Please, please, stop. We should be smarter than this.

DIRECTOR,

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