

Camping Alternatives

Nov. 6 BOT Workshop and Meeting

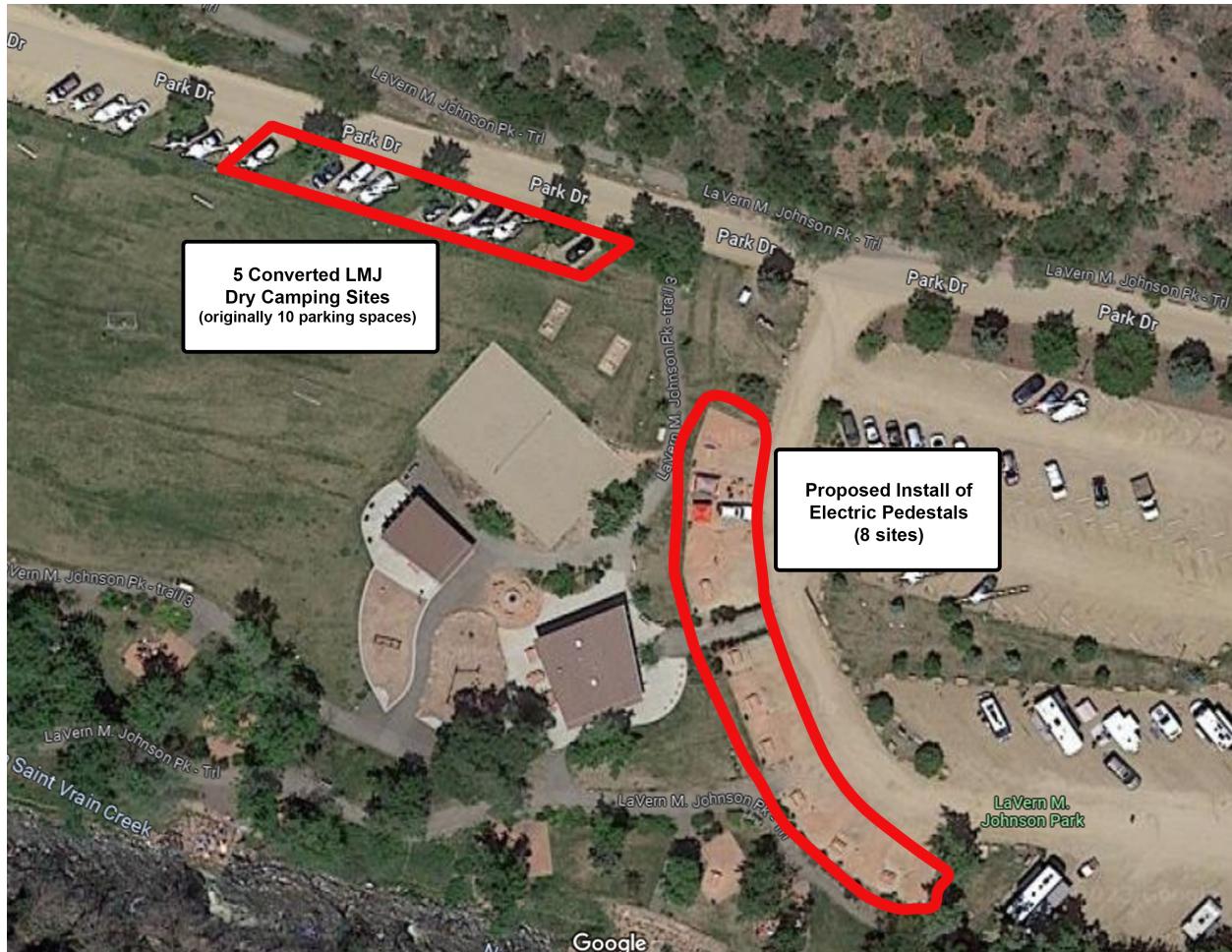
Parks and Public Works Director, Dave Cosgrove

In 2023 the Town of Lyons Board of Trustees asked staff to begin to explore options for camping alternatives for overnight and dry camping, including alternative options that may increase revenue.

In 2021, Parks and Public Works Staff completed the conversion of one picnic site into a tent camping area and the expansion of three new tent camping sites on the East end of LMJ Park. In addition, ten parking spaces were converted into five dry camping sites (one for the camping area and one for vehicle parking) along the rear access road in LMJ Park to better serve increased demands for camping. Those additions brought the total number of tent camping sites in LMJ to twenty (eight of which allow for vehicles to pull in or additional dry camping with self-contained campervans), fifteen RV sites with full hookups, and five additional dry camping sites intended for campervans (available on weekends only).

Parking along the rear access drive was reorganized for peak-season weekends and holidays and reserved parking for dry RV camping, tent campers and loading and unloading for shelter reservations only. It is closed to traffic on weekends and holidays by Park Hosts closing the rear access gate. Park Hosts and gate attendants currently assist with helping to monitor gates and assist campers and those with shelter rentals. The rear access drive is open for public parking during the week and paid parking is facilitated via the rear parking kiosk.

Feedback thus far on the dry camping sites along the rear access in LMJ have not been positive due to the extreme activity in the area during peak season and the heavy adjacent park uses, including the frequent use of the access road by both vehicles and pedestrians on the weekends even with the gate shut. It is difficult to keep the spaces clear of vehicles despite signage, Park Host management and use of cones. Campers themselves often don't pay attention to the detail listed on the reservation site about the site restrictions and uses, which causes confusion and often results in frustration and extra time managing expectations on behalf of staff, many times resulting in refund requests. The weekday parking and off-season parking is also confusing for users.



In 2023, these dry camping spots were utilized for a total of 130 of 370 available user nights (April 1-Sept. 15) at \$45/night for a total of \$5,850. If these spots were converted back into ten regular use parking spaces, potential revenue generation at 100% capacity would be (weekend calculation only)-10 X \$240 (8 hrs. parking X \$3/hr.) X 74 = \$17,760, 50% would be \$8,880.

After many conversations among staff, consulting with Park Hosts in both LMJ and Bohn Parks, and presenting to the Parks and Recreation Commission, staff is offering some potential alternatives to alleviate the issues with the dry camping in LMJ, offer guests in-town alternatives for camping options and increase revenue.

Staff is recommending the existing five dry camping sites along the rear access in LMJ be converted back into ten regular parking spaces and then transitioned to the new St. Varin Trailhead at 2nd Avenue Parking lot and that five more be added for a total of ten to be included at that location.



This would provide a separate location for this style of camping alone, alleviating the issue of that mixed use within LMJ. A table showing projected camping revenues for “10 dry camping spaces with no hookups” at the St. Vrain Trailhead at 2nd Avenue at various capacities is attached for your review. This initial pilot program could be instituted in 2024 with minimal improvements (other than signage and some additional user information) to the sites and minimal impact to the budget. These initial sites could be added to Reserve America, the Town’s current camping reservation on-line service, with detailed descriptions for allowable uses, conditions and restrictions so users are well-aware of the intent of these sites and the area. Photos could also be included. The intent would be to offer self-contained car campers, campervans, and truck campers who may be passing through or visiting the area a place to camp/park for a one-to-three-night stay. No picnicking or grilling would be intended for the immediate area, but would instead be directed to Bohn Park. Staff would work with the Bohn Park Hosts and Boulder County Sheriff to manage and monitor the area. If it were found that the area becomes popular and increases in popularity, staff recommends the consideration of installing electric and making it available to users in future years, along with other improvements similar to the pull-in tent/dry camping sites in LMJ. If these improvements were added, the nightly rates could be increased in this area from \$35/\$40/\$45 per night to

\$45/\$50/\$55 per night. The projected revenues for "10 Spaces with Electric" are attached for your review. Staff is researching costs to install the pedestals, run the conduit and wire and make other needed improvements in this area should the Board want to explore it further. A transformer upgrade may be required at the 2nd Avenue location.

Some of the challenges anticipated with this rollout could consist of increased custodial costs for the 2nd Avenue Restroom Facility, increased management responsibility and possible hours for the Bohn Park Host, increased trash services for the area, potential increased vandalism or other issues requiring enforcement or emergency services, and potential complaints from adjacent property owners. There is a restroom on site and access to water.

The adding of electric pedestals (see attachment) could also be considered at the existing improved pull-in sites at LMJ which would allow for the charging of increased rates by offering these improved services, there are 8 sites at that location. Please see above image of LMJ- "Proposed Install of Electric Pedestals-8 Sites". Staff and Park Hosts frequently get requests for access to power in these sites. The existing electric/transformer at that location is anticipated to handle the load required for the installation of these pedestals.