



Vail Town Hall, Town Council Election – Who’s in, who’s out?

VAIL HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

2021 Vail Election Issue: #6

It’s Time to Vote

October 8, 2021

This is the final report in a [series of six reports that the VHA has issued](#) for the November Town Council election. There are ten candidates. Two are incumbents: Travis Coggin and Brian Stockmar. The rest are: Barry Davis, Kirk Hansen, Kathryn Middleton, Kim Newbury Rediker, Niko Sayag, Pete Seibert Jr., Jonathan Staufer and Jermaine Wates. Leaving the Council will be Dave Chapin and Jenn Bruno, both are term limited. Four members will be elected, with the three receiving the most votes serving four-year terms and the one getting the next most votes serving a two-year term.

This is a by-mail election, and ballots went into the mail today. They should be arriving in your mailboxes in the next few days. October 25th is the last date to register to vote and have a ballot sent by mail. Tuesday, November 2nd is election day. If you live in Vail and are not already a registered voter, you can register on-line at www.GoVoteColorado.gov. [In person registration and polling occurs at designated Eagle County Voter Service and polling centers \(locations linked\)](#)

You have until November 2nd to return your ballot. The convenience of the mail-in ballot makes it very easy to vote this year, and VHA urges that you not only vote but do so soon rather than wait to the last minute.

This will be a complicated ballot. In addition to the Vail Town Council, there are a number of other issues on the ballot, including a proposed increase in Vail's sales tax ([on which the VHA recommends a NO vote](#)). Also on the ballot are candidates for the Eagle County School Board which has recently been a hotbed of controversy, threats and intimidation tactics surrounding COVID.

Elections Have Consequences. All elections are important, but this Town Council election is particularly important. As VHA has reported in this series of election reports, it seems that Vail has drifted away from its original purpose—to be a unique and perhaps a better place, a place that values the environment, aesthetics and outdoor life, a place that protects open spaces and the quality of life of its people and a home in the mountains where these values are not run over rough shod like municipalities that are more traditional.

Instead, for the past several years, a majority of the Council has pursued a growth at any cost approach without regard for the environment or aesthetics. Booth Heights was ramrodded to approval. The Middle Bench of Donovan Park was put on the chopping block. The DRB was twice overruled, so that there will soon be two architectural deserts containing ugly box-like apartment buildings lining I-70. Dissent in the Town Council meetings was stifled through the “three minutes” speaking rule. Unlike its neighbors and contemporaries, Vail stands alone without a Code of Conduct or Conflict of Interest law, allowing Town officials to get away with obvious conflicts. And it appears that a growing number of matters are being discussed and decided in Executive Sessions hidden from public view.

At the same time, Vail lacked a long-term perspective. Growth was pushed with marketing and special events without regard for overcrowding, sustainability or the community's carrying capacity. A study was recently launched but will not be complete for a year, so the barn door remains open at a time when other resort communities have already realized the dangers of overgrowth and endless tourists. There is no Master Plan for the environment or for workforce housing. The Council took a hands-off approach to Short Term Rental's (STR's) and, over the past four years, has lost a net of over 500 workforce housing units, yet the Council refused to put a stop to new STR's. The Open Space Trustees have not met in years and abruptly cancelled the one meeting they scheduled involving the Upper and Middle Bench at Donovan Park. All the while, the quality of life was ignored, and Vail drifted toward becoming just another generic municipality while its ranking as a destination resort slid lower and lower.

Also, Vail Resorts disengaged from the community and launched its Epic Pass program which has packed the mountain. On powder days, lines stretch into the center of town, and many no longer will ski on weekends due to safety concerns. In the meantime, the town was left to deal with the parking, housing and congestion issues.

It Is Time to Act. The VHA does not endorse specific candidates but it does urge that you learn about these candidates. Don't accept glib explanations that a candidate is running because they think it is time to offer themselves or that they think they can make a difference. If a candidate cannot articulate why they are running or what they hope to accomplish, they do not belong on the Council. Don't pick a candidate because you recognize their name. This should not be a popularity contest. Vail needs serious candidates who have a vision for the future; candidates who will give serious thought to issues. What Vail does not need is more knee jerk decisions, more ignoring government bodies, precedent and inconvenient rules and more closed-door meetings.

What We Need. This election is an opportunity to change course. It is a chance to elect Council members who have the ability and commitment to renew Vail values: individuals who are willing to spend the time to understand what Vail is and what is in danger of being lost, individuals who will not pursue growth for growth's

sake but rather pursue smart growth that balances the environment, business and the quality of life, individuals who will stand up and provide equity to all before the Council, individuals who will ensure an open government process and who will enact a Code of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest law that will guarantee legitimacy in government action and individuals who will seek out and demand a proper relationship with Vail Resorts. The days of being ignored and taken for granted should end.

There should be no sidelines in this election. It is really easy for everyone to cast a ballot. Together we can reaffirm Vail values and move forward in a way that benefits all. Vail can and should be the number one destination resort community in the world. VOTE FOR THAT FUTURE.

Also, don't forget the School Board election where many of the same concerns are present. This election could well set the course for education in Vail Valley for years to come. The School Board also needs serious people who will stay the course, not be bullied by hysterical mobs that threaten and try to intimidate to get their way, and who will always put the safety and education of children first.

Please forward to Vail voter's and appropriate parties.

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