

Letters to Vail

Vail Homeowners Association

Vail Town Council Faces Challenges

December 9, 2021

Snow has returned, and the mountain is once again open. As Vail emerges from the COVID pandemic, hopefully never to return, many of the same challenges remain with some having been exacerbated by the effects of the pandemic. While Vail managed the pandemic better than most, it still has environmental, housing and parking problems that cry out for solutions. There are still no housing or environmental master plans. There are still no conflict of interest or code of conduct proscriptions.

Demographic shifts caused by the pandemic, that brought more retirees and cyber commuters to Vail, increased congestion and sustainability and quality of life concerns. Those concerns already existed before the pandemic, but heightened levels of continuous occupancy impact both infrastructure and service needs. Adding to concerns over congestion, sustainability and quality of life was the flood of tourists over the summer. How Vail manages future growth and its tourist economy will be determinative issues going forward.

In the meantime, Vail still lacks a vision for the future. Perhaps that will come as a result of the recently approved sustainability study. If not, a visioning process should be launched as soon as possible. Vail still has no long-range plan for short term rentals. Data is already available and more is soon to follow on the impact of STR's on overall housing policy, but the era of benignly ignoring the issue should be over.

The winter season begins with Epic pass sales year-to-year: as of September 17, up 42%. At the same time, a trend that began with VR's move to Bloomfield continues as Vail slips ever more toward becoming just another resort in VR's portfolio. How VR's seemingly endless pass sales will impact on-mountain safety and town congestion remains to be seen, but those impacts are of vital concern to the Town as Vail once again failed to make the top ten in Ski magazine's annual survey. Vail cannot force VR to engage with the community, but it is not without tools to address its relationship with VR. It may be time to bring those tools into play.

Facing those challenges will be new Council members Pete Seibert, Jr., Barry Davis and Jonathan Staufer, who join Travis Coggin, who is returning for another term. Those four will join Kim Langmaid, Jen Mason and Kevin Foley. Together they will have the responsibility of maintaining the vision of Vail as a special place that, unlike other communities, places greater value on the environment and open space; a place where the quality of life is paramount and citizens would have open and unfettered access to government and a place where government adheres to the highest values. The incoming Council appointed Kim Langmaid, Mayor, and Travis Coggin, Mayor Pro Tem.

As you will have noticed, this letter is a new format from the VHA reports of the past. More letters will follow. They are intended to be shorter, easier to read and digest and, generally, will address single

subjects. It is VHA's hope that these letters will promote more citizen involvement and community discussions of the issues facing the Town. Concerned citizens, engaging in public discussions about current issues, create an opportunity to gain support for important community initiatives. We encourage your input and, from time to time, will feature outreach from community members. It is time we speak with each other about taking the next steps along the road ahead.

Should you wish to follow or participate in this VHA discussion, you are welcome to join-in as a Paid-Subscriber or Member. Contact: vailhomeownersassoc@gmail.com

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