



Gore Creek Drive 8 p.m. 04/16/20

VAIL HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

VailPoint Rezoning Again Postponed

Pursuant to emergency authority due to the coronavirus crisis, the Town Manager has postponed the scheduled April 21 consideration of VailPoint's rezoning application. In doing so, the Manager noted the substantial community interest in this matter and that numerous written comments had already been received which indicated that many may wish to participate at the meeting. That would not have been practical in a remote meeting. Therefore, the hearing has been postponed until a public hearing can safely be conducted at a live, in-person meeting. VHA will continue to monitor this matter and report back when the hearing is rescheduled.

Editors Note, April 23, 2020: Since the original publication of this report, Vail Health has provided additional information concerning patient costs for the treatment of COVID-19 cases. Vail Health is waiving any patient out-of-pocket costs for COVID-19 care, including for those who are uninsured. This means that everyone in our community who needs treatment will be able to get it. Kudos to Vail Health for stepping up to protect the community. We have accordingly revised the text of this report.

VAIL STRONG

A Five Point Plan to Reopen Vail

The Predicament of the Bighorn Sheep

April 17, 2020

A Five-Point Plan to Reopen Vail

Just a month ago, Vail and Colorado took the unprecedented step of shutting down their economies; many other cities and states did likewise. In a matter of days, Vail came to a screeching halt. Its streets are now empty; businesses are for the most part shuttered, and thousands are out of a job. The world has been thrown into chaos and the loss of jobs and economic production have many believing we are facing a global depression unlike anything since the 1930s. Already, over 22 million Americans are out of work, and there is no end in sight.

But this is not just an economic issue; it is, first and foremost, a public health issue. The country and the world have not faced a public health disaster of this magnitude for over 100 years. Eagle county cases have now topped 500, and while the actual number of cases is not known due to a lack of testing, it is probably in the 2,500 to 4,500 range. It appears that Eagle County cases may have “peaked” (Colorado may still be weeks away from “peaking”), but this is not going to be a “V” recovery, and we still have a long way to go to get to zero cases. Only China (if its reporting can be believed), Singapore and Hong Kong have gotten to zero cases, and in all three, when they “re-opened” their economies, cases surged again.

There are, presently, no effective treatments for the virus (although with luck that may change in the coming months), and it will not be conquered until a vaccine has been developed and it has been distributed throughout the population which is at least a year away. While some have been touting “herd immunity” as a possible solution, developing the necessary antibodies require population-wide infection, and we are rightly doing everything possible to prevent that from happening. The only solution we have now is to mitigate the spread by social distancing, and while there is growing evidence that it works, it comes at a huge cost.

That cost – massive economic collapse – is causing a growing chorus of demands for the economy to be “re-opened.” Washington is pushing for a pre-May “reopening” of at least part of the country and has issued “guidelines.” But without adequate testing and stopping community spread, there can be no safe re-opening. And since there has yet to be effective community testing, we do not know how many have the disease now or had it in the past, and there is no way to contain the inevitable outbreaks that will occur. Then there are the problems of overcoming the economic chaos and follow-on psychological trauma.

Re-opening for Vail is going to be even more difficult. Because Vail’s economy is largely dependent on tourism, to effectively re-open, Vail not only faces all the problems of the rest of the country but it will need visitors to return, and that means people will need to feel comfortable about travelling, have the means and methods to travel and, most importantly, feel safe about coming to Vail.

It seems clear that people are not presently comfortable travelling. Airlines are currently operating at 10% of capacity; gasoline prices have tumbled due to lack of demand, and it is beginning to look like the summer vacation season is going to collapse (the cruise industry, for example, is now under a mandatory 100 day shutdown). The economic collapse is also going to mean that many will not have the wherewithal to afford a

Vail vacation, and fear of the unknown is going to be a significant factor. No matter how it is cut, there will be significant barriers to tourism, so Vail is not going to simply bounce back. More probable is that Vail's economic recovery is at least a year or more away. At least that appears to be the view of Vail Resorts which is predicting adverse impacts into the first quarter of 2021 (i.e., through the entire 2021 ski season).

And it is not just a matter of what happens in the TOV. Vail cannot effectively re-open without its down valley workforce and that requires public transportation. Currently, the TOV bus service is on hold, and ECO Transit is only providing reduced service for essential business workers. The valley is so interconnected that public health measures must be county-wide, or the risk of a "second wave" infection will be high.

So, what can Vail do to ensure that its recovery is as smooth and fast as possible? That will entail giving people confidence that Vail will be a safe place for them and their families to visit. That calls for bold and decisive leadership to take the necessary steps to achieve that goal. Communities that adopt a "wait-and-see" attitude will be ill prepared to recover and will suffer the consequences. This is not going to be easy, but the VHA believes that at least five things need to be done. We offer them as a five-point "Vail Strong" plan.

Point One: Financial Security. However this crisis plays out, keeping the Town financially secure is critically important. Instead of hoping for some kind of a summer season, Vail needs to take ownership of this crisis and prepare for a recovery that is not in all probability even going to begin until late November when the mountain hopefully reopens. The TOV needs to recognize this reality and take immediate steps to ensure it is financially secure, beginning with, [as we explained last week](#), adopting a crisis budget for the balance of 2020.

And it is not just a matter of the 2020 budget. Vail's economy is not going to simply snap back. Even if the mountain reopens in November, there is no reason to believe that Town revenues will be anything near pre-coronavirus levels. And since the Town gets almost 60% of its revenue during the four months of November through March, in 2021 the Town could again be facing large deficits from norms. That means crisis budgeting will also be necessary for 2021, something that the Town should be planning for now.

Point Two: Worker Security. At the same time, so that there will be workers to re-open Vail whenever that is possible, the TOV needs to take immediate steps to protect front-line workers. Three things are needed: (1) for the food security of workers, the Coronavirus Relief Fund should be increased by at least another \$500K; (2) for housing security, the Vail Local Housing Authority should be re-tasked to pause current initiatives and start an additional \$500K rent relief program, and (3) a similar amount should be allocated for income security in the form of a "WorkCore" relief program. Summer projects should be identified to employ workers who have been let go due to the crisis, so that the TOV becomes the employer of last resort. That would not only help the workforce but it would also ensure that, on re-opening, Vail will be able to put its best face forward. All three of these steps should be funded from the Town's reserves; the reserves are more than adequate to cover those programs, and if ever there was a need for some "rainy day" funding, it is now.

The suggested levels for these programs would add an additional \$1.5M to the TOV budget. That might seem inconsistent with crisis budgeting which VHA has recommended, but the two go hand in glove. The TOV should adopt a crisis budget for general operations but add to it the emergency spending for worker security.

Point Three: A Measured Re-opening. When community spread has been stopped and we can switch to a containment regime, businesses can be authorized to start re-opening. Determining when that is should be a function of data and science, not politically driven, no matter how loud the clamor is for an earlier re-opening. We are, currently, in a shoulder season so that not much is being lost by continuing the clamp down on public activity for all of May and into June.

Intuitively, it would seem that for the Town of Vail, the decision about when to re-open would be the province of the Vail government since it affects the health, safety and well-being of the community, but as already noted, re-opening has to be a valley-wide proposition. To do that effectively will require input from all stakeholders and coordination with the Eagle Valley Public Health Department. Since Vail is most dependent on re-opening being done right, the TOV should lead the process with firm and decisive leadership. VHA suggests that a Task Force should be created to manage county-wide processes and bring public transportation fully back on line.

As far as the actual re-opening of businesses, that should be a phased-in process. Businesses that have little or no public interface should be allowed to restart first. Owners of such businesses can control risks by temperature screening their workers* at the beginning of each day and social distancing in the work place. Those should be required procedures. At the same time, Town public transportation will need to be re-started and procedures implemented—such as screening of passengers, requiring face coverings on all passengers and limits on the number of riders--so workers can get to their places of employment. Avon and Eagle Counties have already adopted some of those procedures for its buses.

The covering of the mouth and nose by everyone in public places will be a critical part of disease prevention. Normally, that is done by wearing face masks, but in a ski town neck gaiters can service the purpose. For the summer months when neck gaiters can be uncomfortable, the TOV should take immediate steps to secure a large supply of masks to be distributed to all in Vail. They can be placed at selected locations, on all TOV buses, and starting in June, the Guest Hosts should be deployed with them to hand out to all in the Town.

Recreation trails are already beginning to re-open as snow melts. These need to be monitored to ensure that social distancing is being practiced on both the trails and in trailhead parking lots. Parking lots have already been a problem in Eagle, forcing several to be closed. For biking and jogging trails, separation for jogging and biking will require increased distance due to the potential for slipstream dispersal.

If the first phase of business re-opening works, then retail businesses could re-open but with limits: for example, temperature screening of workers and customers, required face coverings and customers limits of 1/100 sq. ft of space. Some of these steps are already working in essential businesses that are open.

Restaurants, bars and public gatherings—like church services, schools and sporting events—should be the last to re-open and that should not happen until community spread has been eliminated. This places a heavy burden on those businesses and activities, but if Vail is going to be a safe place for citizens and guests, that is a necessary restriction.

Point Four: Staying Safe. Community and guest safety cannot be compromised. Until there is effective vaccination of the entire population, Vail should continue to enforce a strict regime of social distancing, wearing masks or neck gaiters in public places, and wherever possible, temperature screening at all building ingresses. There should be contact tracing of any new cases and mandatory quarantine of all who test positive. This should be made a matter of Town policy by the adoption of a health crisis ordinance so that as time goes by complacency does not lead in the wrong direction. Vail's vision should be to make it the safest place in the world.

* Temperature readings could be taken with infrared no-contact thermometers by scanning foreheads. Based on CDC guidance, entrance should require a forehead reading of less than 100°. To guard against false positives, after 15 minutes people registering higher temperatures should be given a retest option. Anyone registering a temperature higher than 100° should be denied entrance and referred to health authorities for virus testing.

Point Five: Tell the World What Vail is Doing. Vail should also issue a series of monthly “Reports From Vail,” utilizing all of its marketing platforms to tell the world what it is doing to protect the Town and its workers, to plan for a safe re-opening and the steps being taken so that guest safety will not be compromised. The Report should cover not just coronavirus matters but other steps the TOV is taking to preserve its status as a top-tier international resort. For example, the TOV should inform about the steps it is taking, notwithstanding the crisis, to protect the natural environment (see below re: protecting bighorn sheep). In addition, the Report should cover not just what the TOV is doing but also what others in the community are doing to keep the community safe. For example, if Vail Health steps up to guarantee that everyone with the virus gets treated (see below) that should be an integral part of the report. People are hungry for information, and by keeping them informed and letting them know what is being done, the Town can build confidence that Vail will be a safe place to visit and create excitement and anticipation about the Town’s re-opening and the 2021 ski season.

Some might say this plan is going too far and will present the wrong image. Just the opposite. It would clearly state to everyone that Vail is making every effort to make the community safe for both its residents and visitors alike and that guests can once again come to Vail with confidence that they will have an enjoyable and safe experience. Some of what we recommend may already be underway behind the scenes, but to the extent it is not, now is the time to act. Failing to act and just allowing the doors to be thrown open could trigger a resurgence of the virus that will require shutting down again (as is already happening in parts of Asia and Europe). That would be devastating and take years to overcome.

Vail Health Stepped Up in a Big Way.



Progress on Vail Health East Wing Expansion

Kudos to Vail Health for the way that it has stepped up to guarantee that everyone who contracts COVIN-19 can get treatment. Vail Health is providing free coronavirus testing and it is waiving any patient out-of-pocket costs for COVID-19 care. This means that everyone in our community who needs treatment will be able to get it. And an immense “thank you” to all

the medical personnel manning the battle lines at the hospital.

What Has Happened to the Big Horn Sheep



Action Still Needed to Protect the Big Horn Sheep.

There is mixed news concerning the bighorn sheep. A spring census has not yet been conducted so the effects of this past winter are not known, but since this was not a harsh winter, it is not anticipated that there would be any significant loss due to winter conditions. However, three sheep (one ram and two ewes) were killed in recent months in vehicle collisions, and an additional ram was killed through a hunting license. As an emergency matter to protect the sheep, a 3,000 ft. temporary fence has been erected along Frontage Road. The fence will be up for three months, and the results will be studied to determine if a permanent fence should be erected. Part of the consideration will have to be that this area is one of the two remaining migration corridors left in the Town and closing it off permanently will have serious impacts on other species.

The TOV also plans to continue with clearing and pruning work, similar to what was done last summer, but large scale, area-wide habitat improvement is still at least a year away. This is because an EIS study first needs to be done. That study, which is being funded by the TOV, is ready to be launched, but given the current financial crisis, it is not yet clear whether that funding will be impacted. As part of the Vail recovery plan, it would make great sense to maintain that funding so that the sheep can play a prominent part of the recovery efforts. Informing potential guests that protection of the natural environment has not waned will help assure that Vail is working hard to get back to normal.

To further protect the sheep, the TOV should close all trails in the area on Town property and urge the USFS to also close the trails on its land. This would not involve closing Booth Falls or the East Gore Creek trails but would involve closing any branch-off trails leading into the foraging area. Closing trails in the area would protect the sheep from being spooked into fleeing which interrupts feeding and causes stress. Many do not understand how fragile this herd is and that it would not take much to push them to extinction.

The VHA will continue to monitor developments concerning the sheep and report as warranted. If these are matters that concern you, the VHA urges that you make your concerns known to the [Town Council](#) and [Manager](#).

VHA has been requested to circulate the [Gore Valley Citizen Alliance attached status report re:](#) A law suit filed against the Town of Vail for not adequately addressing open space and wildlife preservation issues in the approval of the Booth Heights housing proposal near the East Vail Interchange.

This Report is typical of VHA reports that deal with a wide variety of community issues. If you value our work, we invite you to join VHA or become a subscriber to our reports. Your support will ensure that the VHA can continue to bring such matters to the community's attention and, by doing so, make a difference for the good and the future of our community. Please stay safe and healthy.

VHA welcomes your participation and support.

For further membership or subscriber information, please send an email to vailhomeownersassoc@gmail.com and specify if your interest is as a member or subscriber.

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