



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

# VAIL HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

## 2021 Vail Election Issue:

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### Vail’s Future

September 7, 2021

This is the second in a series of reports that the VHA will issue leading up to the November Town Council election. The field of candidates is set, 10 in all. Two are incumbents: Travis Coggin and [Brian Stockmar](#). The others are Barry Davis, [Kirk Hansen](#), Kathryn Middleton, [Kim Newbury Rediker](#), Niko Sayag, Pete Seibert Jr., [Jonathan Staufer](#) and Jermaine Wates. Resumes and invited letters of Purpose and Intent are linked to the responding candidates above. Candidate written submissions are due prior to the beginning of voting.

**Mail Balloting – Voting makes a big difference in the outcome:** The election will begin on October 8 when ballots go in the mail to all registered voters. If you live in Vail and are not already a registered voter, you can register on-line at: [www.GoVoteColorado.gov](http://www.GoVoteColorado.gov). [In person registration and polling - Eagle County Voter Service and polling centers](#)

**Vail's Future:** The Town of Vail was founded on certain bedrock principles, first of which is that “Vail is unique in that it places greater emphasis on aesthetic, environmental, promotional and recreational concerns than are traditional in most municipal governments.” It was intended that those concerns should be implemented through progressive government to protect and enhance the quality of life for the people of Vail.

Yet, in significant ways, it appears that Vail has lost sight of this fundamental value. Vail continues to promote more tourism to bring more people to support business growth, resulting in record crowds flooding Vail that threaten to overwhelm community capacity. Employee housing trumps the environment (Booth Heights) and aesthetics (Solar Vail and the Residences at Main Vail). Open space is continually under threat of being commandeered for housing projects, while the Open Space Trustees (the Town Manager, Scott Robson, Council Member Langmaid and PEC Chair, Ludwig Kurz) haven't had a public meeting in years. While Vail has a plan to achieve 1,000 new workforce housing units by 2027, there is no plan for how that is to be accomplished.

At the same time, Vail is changing. Many visitors, part-time residents and those fleeing urban sprawl have relocated to the valley. Demographers have been predicting this for years, but shutdowns and business closures during the pandemic have accelerated that migration. While some may return to their former lives, a substantial number will remain, altering the resident population and increasing the need for private and governmental services. Instead of a resort community, Vail is quickly becoming an international community that happens to have a resort.

The VHA believes that Vail needs forward thinking individuals for the Town Council. This will be especially so when the results of the new Destination Stewardship study become available. That study, which is just getting underway, will be a year-long examination of how to balance Vail's economic development and quality of life. At the same time, a Short-Term Rentals study is being conducted to take a comprehensive look at the impact of STRs on the economy, neighborhood compatibility, town services and workforce housing. To date, even though the community strongly favored regulation of STRs (51% “strongly support[ed]”), the Town has taken a “hands-off” approach to STRs. While many other mountain resort communities actively regulated STRs, imposing caps on the number of STRs allowed, zoning restrictions on where they could be located, land use limitations and substantial licensing fees, Vail imposed only minimum requirements and only a \$150 fee. As a result, thousands of rental units went on the STR market.

Available data already indicates there was a severe impact on workforce housing. Of the current stock of STRs, at least 1,000 units with almost 2,800 beds are in properties which appear could have been long-term workforce housing. While Vail looked the other way, instead of gaining workforce housing with the current 2027 Housing Plan, counting all the properties acquired or to be built in the near term, the Town has actually lost as much as 500 units between 2017 (when the 2027 Housing Plan was put in place) and the present. The VHA strongly suggests that what is needed is a comprehensive master plan for Vail worker housing. It should include an accurate count of current workforce housing, an examination of how current policies for that housing are impacting the workforce, the impact of STRs, a realistic appraisal of future needs and a plan for how to proceed to meet those needs. That has never been done, and until it is, Vail is just flying in the dark.

The VHA believes that it is also past time to reconsider the Vail business model. It is highly questionable whether that model—based on continued expansion and cheap labor—is any longer valid. With exception of a revised West Vail under the new Master Plan and the Ever Vail property, Vail is now essentially built out, leaving little room for further expansion. At the same time, present day workers are no longer willing to work for less than a living wage.

Many in the business community believe that if Vail would just build more employee housing there would be an abundance of workers for local businesses, but the causes of present worker shortages are much more complex. Post-pandemic a new worker attitude is emerging. Worker attitudes were already changing before the pandemic, but the economic shutdown brought on by the pandemic has resulted in a new employee norm. Gone are the days when employees are willing to work multiple jobs at less than living wages to score some free skiing. To fill and maintain staffs, businesses are going to have to reassess how workers are paid and treated.

Business interests have long dominated much of the Town Council's agenda. The coming election is an opportunity to reinvigorate the Council. It is an opportunity to elect forward thinking leadership to guide Vail into the future.

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## Survey

We want to hear what you, our readers, have to say about the issues you believe are important in the upcoming election. Please taken a moment to answer the following five questions. Your responses are confidential and will be used to analyze reader sentiment concerning the below questions. [Link to VHA Survey.](#)

### Questions:

**Yes/No – Does the Town of Vail need to rebalance economic development and the quality of life?**

**Yes/No – Should the Town develop a Master Plan for Workforce Housing?**

**Yes/No - Should the TOV of Vail call a 60 – 90 day halt to the consideration of development permits?**

**Yes/No – Should the TOV call an immediate halt of parking on the Frontage Roads?**

**Yes/No – Should the TOV finalize the condemnation of the Booth Height land that contains the Big Horn Sheep Habitat in East Vail ?**

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If these are issues that concerns you, we invite you to join as a Member of VHA or become a Paid Subscriber to our reports. Readers are requested to [submit and circulate an informed and well-tempered commentary suitable for public distribution](#). Our most valuable tool in influencing decision makers is through the proactive engagement of our informed readers. Your support will ensure that our reports can continue to bring important matters to the community's attention and, by doing so, make a difference for the good and the future of our community. It is you, our members and Report readers, who sustain our efforts with financial and vocal support.

Subscribers desiring to become a Paid Subscriber may do so. To apply for VHA Membership, register as a Report Subscriber or Paid Subscriber can make a payment by check or digital transfer by forwarding your contact information to [vailhomeownersassoc@gmail.com](mailto:vailhomeownersassoc@gmail.com).

**Please forward to Vail voter's and appropriate parties.**

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