



A Christmas season dawns in Vail Village.

VAIL HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

Season's Greetings

December 21, 2020

The VHA wishes you the best of holiday cheer and good tidings for the New Year. The lifts are running, and there is snow on the mountain. Locals and visitors alike are gearing up to enjoy the best of winter in the Vail Valley. It is VHA's hope that this holiday season brings resurgence in economic vitality that will carry on into the New Year.

2021 is going to be a challenging year. Many of the issues from 2020 remain unresolved, and the pandemic continues to rage out of control across the country. The local infection rate continues at a dangerously high level, but Vail remains in the "orange" precaution level. While vaccines have arrived in Vail, according to the Colorado Vaccine Distribution Plan, vaccines for the general public will not be available until next summer. However the pandemic unfolds, it seems clear that Vail will continue to suffer negative effects for most of 2021 and perhaps even beyond.

In an effort to gain some relief for local businesses, the TOV has sought permission to implement a [5-star variance program](#) that would impose higher safety standards in return for greater capacity allowances. There are indications that program may be authorized in the coming days. That will be good news for the Vail business community.



Is 12/12/20 South Frontage Road congestion parking related to changes in bus rider commuting habits due to CV19?

Parking on the South Frontage Road:

Vail Resorts has imposed an on-mountain reservation system to manage the number of people on the mountain, but it will not disclose the capacities that it is allowing. That is troubling since crowds are a source of virus transmission, and Frontage Road parking (156 cars on 12/12/20) seems to indicate that large numbers are being allowed to access the mountain. While social distancing is being enforced at the base, anecdotal reports indicate that there is little or no enforcement at the on-mountain lifts.

While there is hope in the form of new vaccines, by all accounts the impact of those vaccines will not be felt on a best-case scenario until sometime next summer at the earliest and then only if the vast majority readily agree to be vaccinated. Until then, the only effective way to combat the virus is through mask wearing and social distancing. While that has improved recently, pandemic fatigue is a constant threat. In the meantime, [Pitkin County has announced that it is requiring a negative COVID test of all visitors](#), as it also struggles to control local transmission. What will be required in Vail as the effects of the holidays and more winter visitors take place remains to be seen.

Hope always springs eternal, and in that spirit, the VHA offers this look at issues that will need to or should be addressed in 2021.

Booth Heights Land Swap. Prevention of the Booth Heights development still needs to be resolved. While it is understandable that delays have occurred because of the COVID pandemic, this is a matter that needs to be brought to conclusion. The TOV has continued to move forward and is on track to relocate the Children's

Garden of Learning, so that the Lot 3 site will be ready for development by the fall of 2021. However, Vail Resorts' 44% net loss for the first quarter casts doubt on VR's ability to launch a development project in the near-term.

Environmental Issues. We believe that environmental issues will continue to take center place as the New Year unfolds. The environmental studies necessary to bighorn sheep habitat restoration continue; under the present timetable there could be implemented by the spring of 2022. There is also a possibility that there could be a prescribed burn of a small portion of the site in the spring of 2021. VHA will continue to monitor developments in that process throughout 2021.



In 2010, there was an international design competition for a Vail Pass overpass. Thirty-six teams entered designs, and from those submissions a final design was chosen. Above is the winning design.

An area of particular concern is the absence of a comprehensive environmental master plan to address both management of the natural environment and wildlife sustainability. Such a plan should build on the plans that have been adopted for the restoration of Gore Creek and the enhancement of bighorn sheep habitat. The plan should address recreational use, overuse and misuse of the local trail system. It should also address the loss of wildlife connectivity across I-70 which is vital to maintain population viability. That becomes of particular concern as plans move forward to install permanent wildlife fencing along I-70 within the Town.

In recent years, there has been growing awareness of the importance of wildlife connectivity, and a number of major projects have been launched. The plans for the widening of I-70 on Vail pass includes a number of wildlife under and over passes, and the 2016 CDOT State Highway 9 wildlife safety improvement project was a huge success. Recently, a wildlife overpass was announced for highway 160 near Durango. That project is funded through a private/public partnership in which \$2.5 million of the total cost of \$11.6 million is coming from private sources.



Wildlife animals are using the recently constructed Interstate wildlife overpass in Utah

More recently, in [2018, the Utah DOT completed an overpass over I-80](#). [It appears that topographically the Utah overpass has similarities to the suggested location in East Vail](#).

A Sustainability Reset. Vail’s long-term prospects are directly tied to how well it manages its assets and resources to meet current needs while ensuring there will be adequate resources and assets for future generations. With the Town now essentially built out, there is a need to reassess Town goals and objectives. This is a matter that the [VHA has been urging for some time](#). With many aspects of Town activities now scaled back or on hold, this presents an ideal time to reexamine Town priorities and to create a plan for moving forward once the pandemic has been contained. To date, the Town’s sustainability plans have been aimed at reducing climate impacts. There have been no efforts to address community carrying capacity (the last assessment was twenty-two years ago in 1998), congestion or wildlife management. These are all matters that

the TOV should address in the coming year. Yes, this would require some commitment of TOV personnel and resources, but it would be time and capital well invested.

Donavan Park Middle Bench. This year, open space protection received a major setback when the TOV's Open Space Trustees refused to grant a hearing to consider recommending "Designated Open Space" protection for the Donovan Park Middle Bench. The VHA intends to continue to try to find ways to revive consideration of the Middle Bench for protected designation status.

Enactment of a Comprehensive Conflict of Interest Provision. Another setback this year was the failure of the Town Council to consider enacting a strong Town ethics code with a comprehensive conflict of interest provision. This remains a high priority matter for the VHA.

An Affordable Housing Master Plan. While the TOV adopted a ten-year plan in 2017 to achieve 1,000 affordable housing units, the plan did not contain concrete action steps to achieve that goal. This week the Town Council directed the Housing Authority to begin the process to explore whether approximately one-third of the West Middle Creek parcel should be rezoned from [Natural Area Preservation \(NAP\) open space](#) to allow for housing to be built there. This property was the subject of a [TOV 9/13/18 feasibility study](#) when it was under consideration as a possible swap site for the Booth Heights development. That will be a complex, controversial process that will play out in 2021.

Rather than proceed in a piecemeal fashion, the [VHA has urged that there should be a formalized Affordable Housing Master Plan to guide development for the foreseeable future.](#) That plan should also make it clear that the Middle Bench of Donovan Park will not be sought to be converted to affordable housing.

Undoubtedly, other issues will arise which will need to be addressed. As always, the VHA will advocate for the protection of open space, the environment and the quality of life.

All of this will play out in the context of a Town Council election. Four seats will be up. Two are currently occupied by incumbents, Travis Coggins and Brian Stockmar, who are eligible for re-election. Dave Chapin and Jen Bruno are term-limited, so their seats will be vacant. The VHA will once again look to inform members and the community of the key issues in the race and the various candidates' views on those subjects. And, throughout the year, the VHA intends to continue to provide regular and timely reports, position initiatives and updates on matters of community interest.

As this report illustrates, the VHA covers a broad range of issues, all aimed at protecting the quality of life and ensuring good governance. Our most valuable tool in influencing decision makers is through the proactive engagement of our informed readers. For that reason, your participation magnifies the effectiveness of our message. 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.

It is you, our members and subscribers, who sustain our efforts with financial and vocal 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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