



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

# VAIL HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

## 2021 Vail Election Issue:

(Version 091821)

### The Environment, Open Space and Aesthetics

### September 21, 2021

This is the fourth in a series of reports that the VHA will issue leading up to the November Town Council election. Remember that the field of candidates is now 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 Stauffer](#) and Jermaine Wates. Resumes and invited letters of Purpose and Intent are linked to the candidate’s name above. Candidate written submissions should be due prior to the beginning of mail voting. Candidate responses are updated as received.

**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. [See Sample Ballot](#). 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.

**Has Vail lost focus on the environment, open space and aesthetics?** Vail was founded on a fundamental belief that preservation of the natural environment and abundant open spaces within a community of beauty and good taste were fundamental keystones to Vail's quality of life and that those values should be protected and maintained indefinitely into the future. Those principles were so important that they were enshrined into the Town's Charter. As stated there, "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 that would protect and enhance the quality of life for the people of Vail. Community surveys over the ensuing years have reaffirmed those foundational principles.

Yet, over the past few years, it seems like Vail has lost focus on the environment, open space and aesthetics. Environmental concerns were brushed aside in the rush to approve Booth Heights. The Vail Local Housing Authority had its eyes on developing portions of the Vail golf course and converting the Middle Bench of Donovan Park and parts of West Middle Creek open space into housing projects. A developer tried to invade open space at the Kindel House. And the Town's method of ensuring community aesthetics was jettisoned in the rush to build Solar Vail and the Residences at Main Vail.

The approval of Booth Heights portended a huge blow to the environment. Fortunately, no development has yet taken place there, and the fight over Booth Heights prompted habitat restoration for the bighorn sheep. Hope continues that Vail Resorts will reconsider its priorities and abandon its development desires, even dedicating that property to permanent open space. The efforts to invade open space at the Kindel House were beaten back, and VLHA's plans to convert parts of the Vail golf course into housing were nipped in the bud, but the VLHA's plans for the Middle Bench and West Middle Creek open space areas may still remain to be trotted out again after the next election. And the Town will now have two ugly "big box" apartment houses gracing I-70, one perched at the very entrance to Town. The Town Councils involved in those last two decisions were so intent on allowing those structures that they wielded the infamous three-minute rule to prevent members of the DRB and the public from meaningfully speaking out against those projects.

**The Health Environment.** Normally when one thinks about the environment, it is the natural surroundings and the animals who inhabit it. But the pandemic has added a new dimension to the environment, the health of the community. After starting out as one of the nation's "hotspots," Vail has had a better than average experience with the pandemic. In part that was due to Vail Resorts' immediate decision in March 2020 to close the mountain which resulted in a mass exodus of tourists. But when it came to the Town taking action, there seemed to be great concern about doing anything that might drive business away, and a mask mandate was not put into place until November 2020.

The Delta mutation of the virus is now loose, and cases are rising. The new "mu" mutation has now been found in 49 states. Without yet any vaccine, children under 12 and those who refuse to be vaccinated are entirely vulnerable. Recently, Vail reinstated an in-door mask mandate for public buildings as have a number of businesses, most notably Vail Resorts; several venues have gone further and adopted a "vaccinated only" policy. It is anticipated that in the months ahead vaccinated only policies will grow. Barring a miracle, this is another issue that the new Council will have to address.

**What is needed.** The VHA believes that Vail needs a reset to restore the environment, open space preservation and community aesthetics so that they once again receive "greater emphasis" in governing decisions. Under recent administrations, it was an open secret that all a developer had to do to gain project approval from a majority of the Council was to include some employee housing. That would trump all other concerns. As VHA has repeatedly said, Vail does need more workforce housing, but in achieving that goal, there must be a balance with maintaining

the environment, open space and community standards. Vail also needs to be prepared to deal with the rising threat from a renewed pandemic. The ski season and an influx of tourists is just two months away.

The coming election could not be more important to Vail's future. It is an opportunity to restore community values and standards across a broad range of issues and to elect forward thinking leaders to grapple with those issues. As the VHA series of recent election reports makes clear, the new Town Council will have to deal with a number of issues that could set the course for the community for years ahead. That's why the VHA believes that now, more than ever, it's time for all voters to become informed and then vote for the candidates most able and equipped to launch Vail into its rightful 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 take a moment to answer the following questions. Your responses are confidential and will be used to analyze reader sentiment concerning the below questions. ([Link to survey](#))

### Questions:

**Yes/No: Should the TOV be required to follow the equivalent design guidelines that are commonly required of all other Vail property owners?**

**Yes/No: Should the Town of Vail uphold aesthetic and environmental design compatibility standards among adjacent and neighboring properties for new development?**

**Yes/No: Should the Vail Town Council have overruled the DRB recommendation for the Solar Vail and Residence at Main Vail resident housing projects?**

**Yes/No: Should it be possible to call for a public vote to uphold or deny a Town Council decision overriding a recommendation by the Planning and Environmental Commission or the Design Review Board?**

**Yes/No: Should the Donovan Park Meadow Lands, a.k.a. the upper and middle benches, remain as they are today, an undeveloped wildlife preservation area?**

**Yes/No: Should fencing be erected, which blends with the natural surroundings, to direct migrating wildlife around and through the community within designated corridors unmolested by human contact?**

**Yes/No: Should Vail become a "vaccinated only" community?**

**Yes/No: Should privately owned covenant protected recreational open space be acquired by the Town of Vail as public protected open space?**

**Yes/No: Has the TOV placed too much emphasis on providing subsidized housing for the recreational work force at the expense of other pressing community needs?**

**Yes/No: Do you consider yourself an informed voter about Vail issues?**

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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).

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