



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

VAIL HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

2021 Vail Election Issue:

(Version 091221)

September 13, 2021

Vail’s Infrastructure

This is the third 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.

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. [In person registration and polling - Eagle County Voter Service and polling centers](#)

Are there too many cars? Parking has long been a major problem in Vail, resulting in (except during the height of the pandemic) a growing use of Frontage Road for “overflow” parking, thereby, creating a mounting public safety issue. There are two significant drivers of the parking problem: workforce needs and tourist impacts. Each has its own causes and potential solutions. How Vail’s leaders deal with this issue will have a major influence on Vail’s future.

Unofficial observation was that there were many vehicles parked on the Frontage Road during the pandemic in spite of limited mountain and other access. The parking was driven by people who didn’t want to ride the buses who choose to drive to town instead.

Regional Transportation. One of the first issues facing the new Vail Town Council will be how to deal with the growing need for more adequate public transportation in Eagle County. Vail already has an incredibly well-run town-wide bus service. It is efficient, clean, free and safe, and it has been rewarded with some of the highest ridership (and accolades) of any transit system anywhere in the United States. Town of Vail Transit continues to improve that system, with the first four of its electric buses going into service this year and construction underway of a solar farm to charge them. But that system only serves Vail’s residents and visitors, and transportation issues extend far beyond Vail’s municipal limits.

County-wide transportation needs have outgrown the current ECO transit system and that directly impacts both workforce availability, parking needs, as well as climate issues. It seems apparent that there is a need for a regional transportation system that can more efficiently provide transportation that would lower the need for car transport and parking, reduce greenhouse gases and help address workforce challenges. Steps are already underway. A non-binding Memorandum of Understanding has been drafted to develop a regional transportation system that would bring together local Eagle County governments in a united effort to improve mobility throughout Eagle River Valley communities. It has been adopted by Vail and Avon; others are expected to follow. Private and non-profit partners will also likely be involved. The MOU proposes the formation of an RTA Formation Committee, an RTA Technical Committee and an RTA Community Stakeholders Committee. Vail, Avon and Eagle County have each contributed \$10,000 to fund the initial work. The concept is to have a plan ready for submission to voters in the 2022 election. It is already contemplated that approval will involve a tax increase to fund the authority.

The new Vail Council will have to deal with a multitude of issues related to this endeavor. In addition to Vail-oriented issues, there will also be the scope of the authority, the degree to which Vail has a say in its operation and the equity of the proposed tax increases. Careful consideration will have to be given to creating a system that efficiently serves workers by identifying the best possible routes and times of service and taxes on an equitable basis to support that system.

Why is the Eagle-Vail airport included in the RTA? The RTA Memorandum of Understanding that Vail adopted also contemplates that the RTA will be a funding source for the Eagle Air Alliance and to provide subsidies to secure more flights to Eagle County Regional Airport. Since Vail taxpayers are going to be called on to provide funding for the RTA, the Council should also examine why the Eagle-Vail airport is included in the RTA. Many of those arriving at the airport go on to other destinations, mainly Aspen.

Why should Vail taxpayers be called on to fund an operation that benefits Aspen? Even if all those new passengers were coming to Vail, why should Vail residents be taxed to bring more tourists to Vail? A sustainability study is underway. Is this not a time to pause such considerations and examine Vail’s future? Until the sustainability study is completed, why accept a Regional Transportation Plan that will tax Vail citizens, to fund the Eagle-Vail airport and subsidize more flights that bring even more people here.

It is doubtful that tourists coming to the Eagle-Vail airport will take a bus to town, if that is part of the assumption of the MOU. Fly-Vail customer are not likely to ride the bus and schlep luggage around. Perhaps a handful of employees would take a bus to work at the airport but certainly not enough to warrant taxpayers to support this part of the MOU. Marketing and subsidizing flights to the airport do not belong in this MOU. It is mixing topics and needs.

These will be far-reaching decisions that will have a long-term effect on Vail's future. All the more reason why the new Council members need to be well experience, knowledgeable and forward thinking.

Parking. For years, it has been the common belief that Vail needs more parking. That was driven in part by the frequent overflow parking on Frontage Road. But on closer examination that might not be so, especially if there were better public transportation and the Town's current parking inventory were managed efficiently. The Town of Vail currently operates 2369 parking spaces in the Vail Village, Lionshead, and Sandstone parking garages, a further 249 spaces at Ford Park and approximately 100 at Donovan Park. Private garages provide further capacity, the largest of which are located at Solaris and Cascade Village. Solaris alone has an excess capacity of 130 spaces which was required as part of the public benefit portion of the Special Development District for its development. Yet, with no overall parking plan, as soon as the Village and Lionshead structures fill up, parking is opened up on Frontage Road, and a number of the otherwise available parking spaces sit empty, creating the potential for a public safety catastrophe.

The new Town Council should address what is the actual need for parking and how to efficiently manage the Town's current parking inventory. An effective RTA can reduce the need for parking by workers/employees in Town. Beyond that, it is now technologically feasible to establish real-time monitoring of all public and private parking and, with appropriate real-time signage, direct drivers to available spaces. It is past time for Vail to develop a comprehensive management plan for parking that covers both public and private parking. While this has been suggested in the past by VHA and others, to date nothing has been done. With such a system, parking could be managed to utilize all available inventory, and parking on Frontage Road would only be necessary in true parking emergencies. With parking requirement reductions from an operational RTA and a real-time parking management plan for all parking in Town, it may be that Vail already has more than adequate parking. That is especially so with many now questioning the overcrowding that has resulted from ever increasing tourism.

Roadways and Pedestrian Walkways. Vail is about to receive a new roundabout on South Frontage Road next to the municipal building. However, there are still a number of roadway and pedestrian walkway improvements that are needed throughout Vail. Public Works prepared a list of those projects in 2017. VHA has sought an update of that list, but nothing has been received as of the time of this report. Nonetheless, adjusting the 2017 list for projects completed, there are still about \$75 million in projects remaining and that is based on 2017 dollars. As Vail commits to \$41 million in new debt bonding for other infrastructure (\$16 million for the Public Works bus maintenance facility and \$25 million for the Residences at Main Vail), its ability to long-term finance other projects at favorable rates will diminish. The new Town Council will need to take a comprehensive, long-term view of the Town's needs and, rather than deal with requests on an ad hoc basis (as Councils have been doing), develop instead an overall plan for capital infrastructure improvements for Vail's future.

Other Infrastructure. People tend to think of infrastructure as roads and bridges, but it is actually the total of the physical improvements necessary to enable a community to function safely and efficiency. In that sense, parking is vital infrastructure, especially for a resort community. In the same way, workforce housing is also vital infrastructure. That is why the VHA has advocated for a Housing Master Plan to address Vail's needs and how those needs will be met. While Vail has a 2017 Housing Plan, that plan only has goals, not the means to meet those goals, and it lacks any comprehensive analysis of Vail's housing policies. That lead to Vail losing a net of at least 500 housing units over the last three years as Short Term Rental's (STR's) dried up workforce housing

stock. This is why, in the coming election, it is so important that Vail elect Council members with the ability and commitment to understand the consequences of action (or the lack thereof) and the foresight to think ahead to the future.

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 four questions. Your responses are confidential and will be used to analyze reader sentiment concerning the below questions. ([Link to Survey](#))

Questions:

Yes/No: Should Vail Transit continue to operate with a separate Eagle County's public transit system (ECO)?

Yes/No: Should the Eagle County ECO transit system be linked to Aspen/Roaring Fork Valley transit system (RAFTA)?

Yes/No: Should a proposed Eagle County transportation tax be used to subsidized commercial air service to the Eagle County Airport?

Yes/No: Should the Town of Vail fire prevention and emergency rescue function be consolidated with a regional Emergency Services Authority?

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.

Post Office Box 238 Vail, Colorado 81658
Telephone: (970) 827-5680 E-mail: vha@vail.net Web Site: www.vailhomeowners.com
Inquiries: [Member](#) [Paid-Subscriber](#) [Subscriber](#)

Copywrite: 09/12/2021

<http://www.vailhomeowners.com/VHA-ElectionRepts3-091221-CA.pdf>