

'The Blob' that ate Jackson

Could a remake of the classic sci-fi movie "The Blob" be playing out at Snow King? In the original version, the Blob is defeated and the people keep their town.

In the remake, it looks like Snow King's insatiable appetite for more and more commercial entitlement has it oozing and schmoozing its way to a hostile takeover of a residential community.

New owners of our beloved Town Hill have for years now been nickel-and-diming the Town Council for evermore development at the base of Snow King, and Town's been saying yes to their demands.

But Snow King's ownership has never shown their overall plans to anyone, and they've never made a hard commitment to save Town Hill.

Their 17-year-old master plan makes no mention of summit amenities they're now requesting: an observatory, a four-star restaurant, and a wedding and convention center.

And they want to expand their ski boundaries to the east and south, add new and updated lifts, including a high-speed quad chairlift and a gondola with a loading area smack on home plate of the ball field in Phil Baux Park. They'd like multiple zip-lines and a downhill mountain bike raceway, too.

They've already been granted a lot. Because they endlessly cry 'poor,' Town has said 'yes' to a roller coaster, a treetop ropes course, a new mini-golf course, a maze, a new base restaurant, a "magic carpet" kids tow, a bungee trampoline, and a warming hut—all approved and built since Max Chapman took ownership of the mountain.

But is Town Hill really being saved? Town officials

didn't get a 'hard' commitment in exchange for all the development rights they've granted. It seems the answer is no.

Maybe we need new negotiators? Snow King has been allowed to turn Wyoming's first ski hill into an amusement park without delivering a bond to save the ski hill. It gets worse.

Are they really saving the ski hill?

Further Disney-fication of the resort awaits Forest Service approval—a virtual guarantee given the "Ski Area Recreational Opportunity Enhancement Act" of 2011 and new USFS guidelines established in 2014, both of which promote summer activity at ski resorts on public land.

Maybe the new owners aren't really after ski hill sustainability? Maybe it's just a clever "pump-and-dump" commercial entitlement strategy? Town officials may just be ceding privatized profits to a developer, at times with the tax-paying public's own investment dollars?

Two days ago, the Blob took another bite of Jackson. After being denied a loud and inappropriate snowmobile racing event on Town owned property during a quiet Holiday weekend, they whined about not getting their way.

They convinced the snowmobiling community it was being discriminated against. And they rallied valley business interests to petition town leaders about a lost-revenue opportunity.

On a revote, the Blob won, again... and the townspeople lost.

So far the Blob is getting rich at community expense, without improving the ski hill. Town officials need to play a better hand.