

The other side of the story...

Parking meters in the Old West?

Front page news like last week's "Muldoon studies Aspen's parking fix" is evidence the "Last of the Old West" needs defending. Without certain nonprofit advocate groups making quality of life an issue there would be no opposition to Town's rush to massive growth.

Jackson's Mayor wants to bring paid parking to downtown Jackson. He got his idea from Aspen—a mountain resort town so wrought with its own out-of-control problems it's often cited by smaller communities as an example of what NOT to do. We should not be looking to failed communities like Aspen or Vail for leadership.

But our electeds seem to be on a never-ending push to remake Jackson Hole into the Nouveau West while its citizens just want to keep the town they have now.

Newsflash, Mr. Mayor, you are not the first one to talk about adding parking meters downtown. It's been discussed. It's been shot down. Paid parking ruins local retail business; every time. And it costs far more to implement than the revenue it brings.

Perhaps the biggest reason paid parking never gets any traction in Jackson is because it is such a symbolic demonstration that we've become too big. Some say we crossed that bridge a decade ago.

Jackson officially became a 'city' some time back, but it was mostly so it could pay its elected leaders more money. At the same time, Jackson insists on branding itself as a "Town" in order to market quaint small town character.

That bit of lip service sums up the mentality of

our government leaders. Big city ideas, small town marketing. But you can't pretend to be a livable community. Locals know the difference.

Locals value quality of life over a 24/7 Disneyland; they want a livable town to call home. They want their electeds to focus on local issues before they tackle high-minded pursuits like committing to the Paris Climate Accord, seeking sanctuary city status, or buying more buses no one rides.

Why are we trying to become Aspen or Vail?

The Mayor admitted a paid parking program would require creating a new parking department. Ha! If there is anything local government is good at it's creating more employees, department heads and directors, and adding to the payroll.

Our electeds keep drifting off into obtuse discussions while the essential work of office is incomplete. We need to accomplish long overdue environmental protections like the Natural Resource Overlay regulations.

Electeds are too focused on growing. We've managed to get a Housing Action Plan finished and are already wrapping up a follow on to that called Engage 2017. We managed to finish an Integrated Transit Plan, finalize a parking study, and complete land development regulations for the district in town where electeds want to build the most density.

But we haven't had time to complete a wildlife study or take a hard look at what this place might look like in 20 years. Electeds always avoid looking at the impacts of growth.

We need to focus on how we stay a town where character counts. Locals know growth doesn't equal winning.