



ADOPTED NATIVE SON

COUNCILMAN ANDY BEERMAN BRINGS A LOCALS-FIRST APPROACH TO GOVERNING PARK CITY

Park City Municipal Corporation: What brought you to Park City?

Andy Beerman: After I graduated from college in 1991, I worked full-time as a NOLS (National Outdoor Leadership School) guide. I bounced between Alaska, Washington, and Wyoming, and often flew in and out of Salt Lake City to visit college friends living in the area. I liked it here so much that I moved to Salt Lake City permanently in 1993 then up to Park City a year-and-a-half later to take a job with White Pine Touring. In 1999, Thea and I traveled around the West to check out other western towns, but we came back to Park City and decided it was home. So we got married and put down roots and started our business.

PCMC: You and your wife are the proprietors of Treasure Mountain Inn at the top of Main Street.

AB: Yes, Thea and I were both employees of the hotel, which at the time was a family-owned business. It's actually a condo-owned hotel, so—after a few economic dips—we were able to buy a thirty-percent interest in it and create our own management company to run the entire building.

PCMC: Being on Main Street gives you a front-row seat to all of the changes that have occurred downtown and in the surrounding areas. What have you observed?

AB: Main Street is definitely the heart and soul of the town, and it's also our canary in the coalmine: the health of the street reflects the health of the community because it's always been the gathering point. The street has been going through changes recently—many of them concerning—which is part of what spurred me to get involved in politics. Bigger players are coming into town, the economic forces are raising rents and pushing out the smaller mom-and-pop shops. Unfortunately, some of these changes are inevitable: no matter what we do, the economics are stronger than our efforts. But the saving grace of Old Town is its historic nature, which will remain even if it goes a little more corporate, becomes a little more franchised. We'll still have that wonderful historic character and the surrounding natural environment that gives Main Street its charm. And galleries and restaurants will still thrive in this particular economy. It will stay local but be a little different.

“MAIN STREET IS PARK CITY’S CANARY IN THE COALMINE.”



PCMC: How did you become involved in local politics?

AB: It was a slow but steady process. In the 2000s, I decided to become more involved with Treasure Mountain's HOA. As chair, I proposed and carried out a governing vision for the property to the owners—a plan that we could all unite behind to improve and beautify the property. Once we'd finished this project, I realized that was just the start, and I turned my attention to making sure the entire street remained vibrant. I joined the board of what was then called the Main Street Merchants Association and what's now called Historic Park City Alliance. Serving on this board made me realize just how closely the health of Main Street is connected to the health of the broader community, so I started attending City Council meetings.



PCMC: What did you lobby for while you served on the Main Street Merchants Association?

AB: One of the first things I concentrated on was improving our relationship with the city. Several issues constantly created flash points between the two organizations: events, event-management, parking, gathering spaces, and just better overall coordination. But before the merchants association could make a strong case to the city, we needed to organize ourselves first. The turnaround started with a six-session

visioning effort, out of which came a series of position papers, which helped the group buy in to a broader vision for the street. We also brought on Alison Kuhlow as executive director, who's done an outstanding job bringing everyone in line. Focusing on the big issues is so much more exciting and important than day-to-day issues like where my trashcan should be located, and having a vision really energized the group. Now we were able to approach the city as one entity, which made us all a lot stronger. This process gave me a lot of hope, and also showed me the power of the public process. It's what ultimately encouraged me to run for office.

PCMC: Would you agree that you take a "locals-first" approach to governing?

AB: Yes, being a longtime resident and local business owner, I have a good sense of what's important to Parkites.

And running three campaigns in four years certainly helped: during each one I walked the town and knocked on almost every door. I got a lot of feedback and developed a deeper understanding of what matters to folks. Early on, I think I was too focused on the future of the town and grander ideas. I've learned to be more present and more empathetic with community needs, and perhaps a bit more indulgent of nostalgia.

PCMC: What are the residents' top issues?



AB: For one thing, residents want to see action, or at least responsiveness. Take two recent but very different issues: off-leash dogs and climate change. In both cases, the residents directly approached Council and demanded decisive action. We did just that, and the reaction from the public was very positive. Constituents are sometimes frustrated by the slow, deliberate pace of government, even though that's how it was set up. So when we are able to be responsive, they really appreciate it.

Another issue I hear over and over again is the bugaboo of growth—or variations on the theme, like fear of loss of community. Vail's presence in town has gotten a lot of attention, for obvious reasons, but I would call them an accelerant. The problem is bigger than any one entity: we've created a wonderful place that attracts more and more people, which diminishes the intimate feel it once had. Before Vail, the problem was embodied in the Montage, and before that the St. Regis, even Deer Valley at one point. There's always a boogeyman, but it comes back to the issue that everyone wants to live here, everyone wants to do business here.

PCMC: What are appropriate policy solutions?

AB: I take this very literally. When I hear from people that they want to keep our town small, the silver bullet in my mind is open space. The

only way to truly prevent growth is to purchase open space and create buffers around town. Reducing the speed of growth will also address most of the other issues—traffic, and the like. Once you identify what really matters to people, you just need to fight like hell for those issues.

PCMC: So what really matters to folks?

AB: Historic character, sense of community, community gathering places, a connection with the natural environment.

PCMC: You mentioned your faith in the public process. What else makes you optimistic?

AB: The fact that we're blessed enough to live here gives me optimism. We live other people's vacations, so we can't be too gloomy. I'm also very inspired by just how much our community cares. Their passion makes me take my job more seriously and makes me realize just how important it is that you get decisions right. This passion really came through during the energy discussions, and even more inspiring was that an entirely different demographic—the millennial generation—was engaged. It's their future, and they want us to take climate change seriously.

PCMC: When you take stock of your council tenure to-date, what makes you most proud?

AB: When I joined Council in 2012, my big issues were open space, regional collaboration, transportation, and the environment. It's been exciting for me to see these issues move to the forefront of City Council today. We also have a good working relationship with the County, and we're collaborating on or talking about all of the big issues: transportation, open space, Mountain Accord. We're definitely stronger when we work together.