

What the candidates didn't say

What struck me most in this fall's mayor and town council electoral races was not the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates, for in true Crested Butte fashion, they were all honorable individuals who care deeply about the town and would work hard for its betterment. Instead, I felt troubled with assertions that there are no burning issues. What was not said in the campaign is perhaps more significant to this town's future than what was said.

Quality of life...that odd intangible that everyone wants to protect, which we must strive to not compromise...what is it? Is it having good tennis courts and a nordic ski track? A loving, caring community? Open spaces around town? What would harm it? For what should we compromise it?

A special character, a unique place...we believe Crested Butte is that. But how are we special? What makes us different? How important to our future is that and how do we maintain it?

These were the kind of questions the C&P had in mind when we asked every candidate at our election forum to comment on the costs of growth and when the trade-off becomes too high. Not one candidate answered to our satisfaction. We suspect that is because there has been so little discussion in town of these basic questions.

We've been able to get by on generalities because the economy has kept us on a natural balance between growth and preservation for a few years. We've grown complacent. But generalities won't be enough when the pulls toward Aspenization increase; we should be talking specifics now in anticipation.

Where will or should we be in ten years? In 25? Some may reply that such vision is elusive or may even be worthless discussion. I believe such talk is crucial to our everyday decision-making. Without clear vision we stumble along the usual paths of ski resort guided mainly by the whims of the tourism market and the na-

tional economy. Maybe that is what the public here wants. If so, let's say so. If not, we need to think hard about it.

Consider that the word beauty appeared only once in candidates' statements in the newspaper and forum. Is not beauty a paramount reason to live here? Is anything in our current course a threat to beauty?

I've heard analyses of the election which assert it was a popularity contest, or an affirmation of the status quo, or a contest of personal styles and political skills. Each has some evidence, but not enough to convince me. The secret ballot makes voting decisions inscrutable.

I've heard no one analyze the election result as an expression of opinions on issues. Even our newspaper publisher would not vote that way. His emphasis on character and integrity is a decent way to decide on a vote. Such personal qualities, though, may have little value without deeper, clearer guiding vision of who we are and what we want to be.

--G.S.