

THE VOTERS' MESSAGE (THE BLUE LINE)



November 3, 2011

By Nick Lenssen

It doesn't take a PhD to understand the outcome of Tuesday's City Council vote, despite the Daily Camera's (11-3-11) efforts to explain the election through a national anti-incumbency lens. I believe City of Boulder voters were simply voting with two main issues in mind, and those resulted in incumbents George Karakehian and Ken Wilson receiving fewer votes than two newcomers to the Council.

The first issue the Camera correctly identifies: both Karakehian and Wilson opposed measures 2B and 2C, with Wilson's campaign materials even toeing the line with Xcel's and other opponents' scare-mongering arguments.

However, the Camera fails to identify a second, perhaps more important issue that led to Karakehian and Wilson receiving fewer votes than Suzanne Jones, Liza Morzel, and Tim Plass: Open Space use policy. Both Karakehian and Wilson voted to support building a mountain bike trail on Anemone Hill in October, whereas Morzel opposed it and was reelected with the second highest number of votes. Karakehian and Wilson were also two of four candidates supported by the Boulder Outdoor Coalition (BOC), which "advocate[s] stewardship, access and appreciation of public lands," per their web site. "Access" is their key word, in case there's any confusion. The BOC's other two endorsed candidates failed to win seats on the council.

I believe that Boulderites support stewardship, access, and appreciation of Open Space, but we also recognize that we have something special, particularly in the West TSA that shouldn't be seen merely as another playground.

For mountain biking specifically, Boulder has developed off-road biking opportunities on three sides of town, what with the new Valmont bike park and the recently opened trails in the Dowdy Draw area (which I use regularly and will note are suffering from ever-widening trails from bikers and hikers traveling the edges). The West TSA, however, remains the equivalent of Boulder's national park, an area of special attention for preservation, and more of a space for nature and of spiritual retreat than a playground. I suspect many other voters in Tuesday's election support this view, and voted accordingly. So consider Tuesday's results not as an anti-incumbency reaction, but one instead of thoughtful consideration of what values our community should hold going forward.

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