

OPINION

Flawed development still much better than alternatives

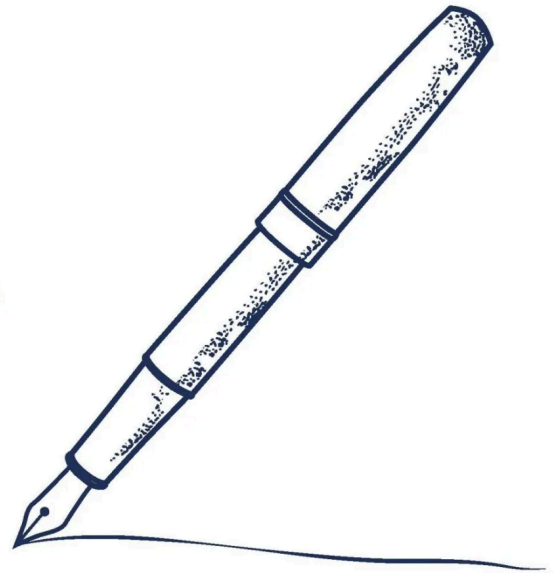
A first step toward resolving Kimball Junction congestion, too



by **Bill Ciraco**

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GUEST EDITORIAL

First a disclaimer. I am not writing in my role as a city councilor or on behalf of the Park City Council. I am, like many of you, also a resident of Summit County who feels a deep obligation to think about how we shape our future.

Times change; people don't. In my college days you could predict the daily appearance of a letter to the editor in the school paper that started off, "I am shocked and appalled ..." The current cause du jour is the recent approval of a vastly evolved development proposal for property owned by Dakota Pacific in Kimball Junction, and the effort to overturn it California style, by referendum.

There are many people who will agree Dakota Pacific has done a number of things wrong. Let's review those faults.

First, this being Utah, they have committed the cardinal sin of being from the "valley." People here in Summit County love their teams, and folks from the valley are perceived to be not on the team. This may explain why they might incorporate as their own municipality.

Then they had the temerity to propose what is likely the most well-thought-out development proposal that Kimball Junction has seen since the time when the only thing between Parley's Pass and Tollgate Canyon was the Kimball Stage Stop.

Next, they chose the ground-breaking path to seek a change of zoning/entitlement for the property. This is something no developer or landowner has ever done. This violates the time-tested mantra of "build what you bought." I mean it is not like Park City took a former rail yard that was zoned commercial, changed the code and created the Engine House workforce housing project. Clearly that could not happen under "build what you bought."

Last but not least, Dakota Pacific let it be known that they have some allies in the state Legislature that could help light a fire under UDOT to address the issues at Kimball Junction that Dakota Pacific has not caused. You know, all that traffic that was created by projects that are far less thoughtful than what is currently approved.



Park City Councilor Bill Ciraco

All of this has led to a Covid-like outbreak of ULDS (Utah Legislature Derangement Syndrome). I am not here to tell those who are afflicted that you are wrong, or that you should support your county council, which along with staff spent thousands of hours working to get you a better outcome. A vastly better outcome.

Sure, those of you who dusted off the red shirt a couple of times deserve some of the credit. But your planning commission, planning department, county managers and council who have somehow negotiated one of the most restrictive, and protective, development agreements that you will likely ever see deserve the lion's share.

Are there major issues in our region? Yes. Can we do more to address them? Yes. Kimball Junction is broken and this project is the first step in beginning to address it.

Prior to the negotiation and evolution there was no transit parking proposed for Kimball Junction to support the \$75 million-\$100 million Bus Rapid Transit Plan. I don't think I can support that kind of investment without the dedicated parking capture we are now getting. The transit improvements are a good start and will serve to motivate my jurisdiction to act boldly on our other entry corridor to the east.

I am not telling you to support or not support the project, or referendum. What I am here to say is that every resident of Summit County owes the council a debt of gratitude for the work they have done and the deal they have negotiated. And I say that as someone who has not voted for all of them. Doesn't matter; they represent us all.

I hear you when you say we need bold and drastic change. I have talked about that in detail — even with some of you who are signing the petition on the referendum. In many of those conversations, I often hear, “Oh, we don't need to do that. The problem isn't that bad.” Well, it is that bad and no, this project won't make it worse.

I would ask all of you to be honest with yourself and think about whether we can say “no” to everything and just stick our head in the sand because we don't like it. The only result we get from that is one we will like exponentially less than what we have negotiated now.

Governance California style by referendum is something we should all be wary of.

Bill Ciraco is a member of the Park City Council.