

Hap Peters

Harry “Hap” Peters says he plans to apply the skills he learned in his career and serving with nonprofits and apply it to serving on City Council.

“Now that I’m retired I’d like to contribute to the community,” he said.

First finding Whitefish while vacationing, Peters and his wife have lived just outside Whitefish for 20 years and for the last five inside the city limits after purchasing a home in town. “We’ve really enjoyed living in town and being even more part of the community directly,” Peters said.

Peters retired in January, but previously has lived in many locations in the U.S. and world for his career working in cooperate management positions in the oil industry. He earned his chemistry degree from the College of Wooster in Ohio and his master of business administration in economics and finance from the University of Tulsa.

He has been involved with his church here and previously served on the board of directors for the Habitat for Humanity Flathead Valley. He also serves on the city’s Police Commission.

Peters says he plans, if elected, to apply his experience in management positions to the city budget.

“Personally working in the private sector you learn to make priorities when you have limited resources and what would benefit the company best with what you have,” he said. “You work within what you have and you can’t raise taxes.”

Affordable housing

Peters says affordable housing is an issue that’s challenging for areas beyond just Whitefish. He says it’s important to have housing but it’s not the total responsibility of the city government to handle that, but it can facilitate that.

He does question the effectiveness of the city’s inclusionary zoning housing program that requires

all new residential development to include 20% deed-restricted affordable housing. He says he sees potential pitfalls with the program. “I’m not sure that builders can get there to make that work,” he said. “I do wonder if they will look to game the system by doing smaller projects. Are we limiting builders who want to do developments and thus raising prices more by restricting productivity?” He does see potential in the city’s plan to use its snow lot for housing, noting that the price of land makes providing affordable housing in the Flathead Valley a challenge.

Peters says Whitefish will have to continue to deal with growth that causes changes to the dynamics of the community while still respecting the interests of those that live here. “Whitefish has done a good job of keeping downtown unique, but still allowing for build out,” he said. “It’s about balancing those things that make the community what it is with growth.”

Peters says it’s time to revise the master plan for the city based on where the city is right now and plan for the future while the economy is strong.

“People are visiting and people are retiring here,” he said. “I imagine that it will dissipate somewhat at some point, but that’s the time to think about planning and growth because planning can’t stop.”

Public process

Peters says if residents of Whitefish want to know what is happening with city government the



Growth