# Aquiles La Grave

**1. This fall, Boulder citizens are being asked to approve a $400 million bond issue to pay for backlogged maintenance on rec centers and fire/police facilities. Unaccounted for in this funding source is about a $30 million backlog of deferred maintenance of Open Space and Mountain Park trails. What priority would you place on addressing this backlog and where should the funds come from? Are there policies that should be passed to prevent future trail maintenance backlogs?**

We need to stop creating these backlogs.

Deferred maintenance is deferred responsibility. I would first prioritize the existing backlog by ecological impact, then public safety, asset deterioration, and intensity of use. From there, OSMP should establish and publish a multi-year maintenance schedule funded principally through the revenues already dedicated to Open Space.

The larger reform is preventative. When Boulder acquires an asset, builds infrastructure, or expands a trail system, we should identify its lifecycle cost and how we intend to maintain it before taking on the obligation. Council should receive regular reporting on whether we are keeping pace with those commitments. Open Space is one of the great accomplishments of this community. Stewardship means maintaining what generations of Boulder residents worked to protect.

**2. What level of wildfire mitigation funding should be the responsibility of Open Space and Mountain Parks?**

Limited and directly connected to stewardship of OSMP land.

OSMP absolutely has responsibility for fuels reduction, forest and grassland management, prescribed fire, and other mitigation necessary to responsibly manage its property. But OSMP funding should not become a general-purpose wildfire fund, and it should not be raided to pay for retrofitting private homes or responsibilities properly belonging elsewhere in city government.

Wildfire is a community-wide existential risk. We need to fund it accordingly rather than shifting costs onto Open Space simply because those funds exist.

**3. Given our high risk from wildfires and limited resources, what 2 or 3 measures should Council prioritize in the city's code, staffing and financial resources, and the council bully pulpit ? Who should be responsible and where should the money come from?**

Boulder fundamentally has a home-ignition problem. We can and should continue landscape-scale mitigation, but our greatest opportunity to prevent catastrophic loss is to make structures substantially harder to ignite.

My first priority would therefore be home hardening in our highest-risk areas, with clear standards and a realistic implementation schedule. Second, accelerate science-based fuels work on public lands, particularly around the wildland-urban interface. Third, improve neighborhood evacuation planning and infrastructure where geography creates dangerous constraints.

Funding for private-property resilience should be pursued aggressively through federal and county programs and, where appropriate, climate funding. It should not come from raiding OSMP. Boulder has been a national leader on climate mitigation. Wildfire requires us to apply that same seriousness to climate adaptation. Protecting the city we already have from an existential climate risk is climate leadership.

**4. What is your understanding of the reliability of Boulder’s long term water supply? Do you view it as prudent to carefully match the demand for more development with the ability to provide water into the future? What concerns, if any, do you have about this?**

Yes. Boulder has built a remarkably resilient water system, but climate change requires us to be increasingly rigorous about the assumptions underneath long-term supply.

Development and water availability must therefore be considered together. That includes not only development within the existing city but decisions such as Area III, where changes could create entirely new long-term demands on our watershed and water infrastructure.

Before contemplating significant expansion of development, I want to understand what our watershed can reliably support under increasingly severe climate and drought scenarios, what additional infrastructure would be required, what environmental tradeoffs would result, and who would bear those costs.

Growth cannot be separated from carrying capacity. That does not mean using water as a proxy argument for or against development. It means knowing the answer before making the commitment.

**5. How do you see your responsibility as a council member versus the responsibilities of the City Manager and city staff?**

I believe firmly in Boulder's council-manager system. Nine elected officials govern. A professional City Manager manages. Staff bring expertise, operate departments, and execute Council's direction. The system works when both sides take their responsibilities equally seriously.

A strong Council does not manage departments or direct individual employees. It decides what Boulder is trying to accomplish, establishes priorities before proposals arrive, and requires major initiatives to have an accountable owner, budget, funding source, milestones, dates, and measurable outcomes before voting. Then it holds the City Manager accountable for delivering them.

I think we have created a false choice in Boulder. We complain that staff has too much influence, but become uncomfortable when Council exercises stronger direction because that sounds like micromanagement. Those positions cannot comfortably coexist. The answer to an imbalance between staff and elected leadership is not a weaker Council. It is a Council institutionally confident enough to govern and professional staff empowered to execute.

**6. As a council member, what basic considerations will you apply to your appointments to city Boards and Commissions? And what value would you place on advice to the council from those boards and commissions?**

Boards and commissions need more influence in the actual governing process, not simply more opportunities to comment after decisions have largely taken shape.

Appointments should prioritize competence, independence of thought, relevant lived or professional experience, and the ability to work constructively across disagreement. But if we ask residents to volunteer enormous amounts of time and expertise, Council needs to create a system in which that work can meaningfully affect decisions.

Budgeting is an obvious example. Boards and commissions should participate early enough in the budget cycle to help identify needs, tradeoffs, and priorities before the budget is effectively assembled. That is another reason I support moving toward a two-year budgeting cycle. It creates room for serious community and board participation rather than compressing engagement into an annual scramble.

Council does not have to accept every recommendation. But advice should arrive early enough to matter, and when Council goes another direction, we should explain why.

**7. How do you see the Council's responsibility in setting and reviewing the budget? What changes in process or budget allocations you would actively pursue if you were elected and explain why?**

The budget is where Council proves whether its priorities are real.

I would move Boulder toward a two-year budget cycle. The current annual rhythm consumes enormous institutional capacity and leaves too little time for Council, boards and commissions, and the public to meaningfully evaluate performance before the next budget is already being assembled.

Council should begin the cycle by identifying a small number of measurable outcomes for the following 12 to 24 months. The budget should then align money and organizational capacity around achieving them, rather than beginning with departmental spending and working backward toward priorities. That is the governing rhythm I describe in my Strong Council proposal.

I would also scrutinize administrative growth before reducing resident-facing services. If we are discussing closing pools, deferring maintenance, or asking residents for substantially more money, Council should be able to demonstrate that the existing half-billion-dollar organization is aligned around our highest priorities.

**8. A citizen group has developed a proposal for the city to hire a Performance Auditor (different than a financial auditor) plus a small supporting staff and an Audit Committee that would report to City Council, with funding in the 2027 budget? Do you support this proposal? Would you make it a high priority for 2027?**

I strongly support it, and I would make it a high priority for 2027.

This is actually one of the central reforms in my Strong Council proposal. The organization responsible for delivering results should not also be the only organization responsible for judging whether those results were achieved. Boulder's Charter already anticipates independent Council capacity by allowing Council to appoint an auditor.

A financial auditor asks whether the numbers are accurate. A performance auditor asks the question Council and taxpayers also need answered. Did we get what we intended to buy?

The office should report directly to Council, maintain independent measurement of Council's major objectives, verify reported outcomes, track major projects against approved budgets and schedules, determine whether Council directives were actually implemented, and investigate when results persistently fall short.

Against a city budget exceeding $500 million, a small independent office providing Council and the public with that line of sight is not bureaucracy. It is basic governance infrastructure.

**9. Do you support the $400 million tax measure and associated bond issuance that will total $650 million, known as the Recreation and Safety Bond, to address deferred maintenance of seven city buildings that will be on the ballot in November? Why or why not? For incumbents. Has your position changed, and how?**

I support the projects. I oppose the bond as presently structured.

Boulder absolutely must address deferred maintenance, public-safety facilities, and the future of South Boulder Recreation Center. But asking voters to authorize $400 million in borrowing with total repayment potentially reaching approximately $650 million demands an extraordinary level of specificity and accountability.

We should know what gets built, in what order, who owns each project, what each project costs, where the money goes, when each will be completed, and how Council and the public will know whether we delivered what was promised.

The infrastructure problem is real. My disagreement is with asking Boulder residents for the largest debt increase in city history without first providing the governing structure necessary to responsibly execute it. We do not need a better sales pitch. We need a better system.

**10. How do you view the city's current state of public safety? What 2 or 3 specific things do you think council needs to change?**

I have been consistent about this from the beginning. Boulder cannot ask an understaffed police department to respond citywide and then act surprised when difficult nights pull officers away from downtown.

First, I will not support presenting a budget that fails to fund the Reimagining Policing recommendations and a serious BPD recruitment and retention program. Wages, schedules, lateral hiring, and retention require actual investment.

Second, fund a full-time downtown presence. Downtown should not routinely lose patrol coverage because officers are being pulled into calls elsewhere in the city.

Third, publish a funded implementation plan for Reimagining Policing and Clutch and report publicly every quarter. For every recommendation, residents should be able to see its cost, funding status, implementation status, and effectiveness. If Council decides not to implement something, it should say so publicly rather than allowing recommendations to disappear onto a shelf.

That last point is bigger than policing. Council approved significant recommendations from both efforts, but there has been little regular public accounting of what was implemented, what was not, why, and whether any of it worked. That is a governing failure.

**11. What is your view of the issues facing downtown and what would you advocate to address these issues?**

For twenty years Boulder has treated the Flatirons as its economic development department. We assumed the mountains would do the recruiting and retaining, and that whatever costs we imposed on local businesses they would absorb.

That assumption has run out of road.

Downtown businesses face high taxes and fees, rising labor and occupancy costs, difficult permitting, aging infrastructure, significant office vacancy, and persistent concerns about safety and cleanliness. We need to get people back downtown.

That begins with aggressive Title 9 reform, cutting both the cost and clock of permitting, publicly quantifying Boulder's tax and cost differential, examining a commercial vacancy mechanism, creating incentives that bring workers and customers downtown, and seriously evaluating tools such as two-hour free parking.

The DDA process also exposed a governance problem regardless of whether one supported the final proposal. The city asked the business community to invest years of work developing a solution, allowed the process to advance, and then encountered objections at the final vote that were foreseeable much earlier. We spent civic goodwill unnecessarily.

I would not begin by resurrecting the same proposal. I would begin by defining the specific problems downtown needs solved, negotiating the objections before something reaches a final vote, and building a narrower solution around outcomes the community can support. Economic vitality requires partnership with local businesses, not simply another structure imposed upon them.

**12. What would you advocate for to address the huge number of in-commuters driving in to Boulder to access their jobs?**

The enormous number of people commuting into Boulder is both a transportation problem and a housing problem.

We need much stronger regional transit, employer-supported transit programs, first-and-last-mile connections, protected bicycle infrastructure, and strategically located park-and-ride capacity. Large employers, CU, Boulder County, RTD, and the city should be working from a common mode-shift strategy rather than independent programs.

But housing policy is also transportation policy. Every person who works here but cannot reasonably live here creates transportation demand somewhere else.

We will always have commuters. The objective should be to make driving alone less necessary by making the alternatives substantially better.

**13. What is your view of the role of Mayor versus the role of the council members? What changes would you propose to improve the role of the Mayor without going beyond the limitations in the Charter?**

I believe in a strong Council, not a strong mayor.

Boulder voters deliberately chose the council-manager system. Nine elected officials govern. A professional City Manager executes their direction. Nothing about directly electing a Mayor changes that basic structure.

But directly electing the Mayor does create a particular responsibility. The Mayor chairs the Council Agenda Committee and has an important role in organizing Council's work. I would use that authority to make CAC a genuine readiness gate. Before a major initiative reaches Council, we should know the intended outcome, owner, budget, funding source, milestones, dates, measures, and what happens if it falls behind.

The Mayor should also build coalitions among all nine members, keep Council focused on the outcomes it collectively adopted, and ensure those results remain visible to the public.

Boulder does not need to concentrate more power in one person. It needs to make its governing body more capable. The Mayor should be accountable for helping nine independently elected people function as a strong governing institution.

**14. What is your view of the relationship between the City Manager and the Mayor?**

The relationship should be close, candid, professional, and very clear about roles.

The City Manager is the chief executive of the organization. The Mayor does not manage departments, direct employees, or substitute political judgment for professional expertise. The Mayor's job is to help Council give the Manager something far more useful than nine streams of individual requests.

Council should establish a small number of measurable outcomes. The Manager should organize the institution to achieve them. The Mayor should help maintain alignment among Council, ensure progress returns for public review, and make sure problems are surfaced rather than buried.

Then accountability becomes concrete. Council and the Manager agree on citywide objectives and key results, and the Manager's performance evaluation rests substantially on whether the organization made measurable progress against them.

That is the balance I want. Nine elected officials setting direction. One professional City Manager accountable for execution. Independent measurement verifying the results. And a Mayor responsible for helping the whole governing system actually work.