



SPECIAL EVENTS: CELEBRATING COMMUNITY & CREATING ECONOMIC VITALITY SAFELY AND EFFECTIVELY

An Interview with Jason Glidden, Economic Development
Program Manager

Park City Municipal Corporation: As the economic development program manager you have the responsibility of managing the city's special events. How many events are permitted each year?

Jason Glidden: In 2014 we permitted 72 single events, many of which are multi-day events. The single largest event is the Sundance Film Festival, but other anchor events are the Kimball Arts Festival, Tour of Utah, Park Silly Sunday Market, and the Fourth of July Celebration.

PCMC: How have the events grown over the past several years?

JG: The period from 2000 to 2012 saw a significant uptick in the number and range of events. The number has plateaued since then, but many of the events themselves continue to grow in popularity—and therefore attendance—each year.

PCMC: What are current numbers of attendance for the biggest events?

JG: This past year, Sundance had 60,000 attendees, the Kimball Arts Festival had 40,000, the Fourth of July Celebration had 30,000, and Park Silly had about 10,000 attendees every Sunday. The Tour of Utah has been smaller in years past but has also steadily grown. Last year's number was 5,000.

PCMC: Where do special events fit within the city's broader mission and charter?

JG: A few years ago the city staff and council made a conscious decision to nest special events within the Economic Development Group. This is an acknowledgement that special events are a significant driver of the local economy. We have been very successful at helping diversify Park City's economy during the summer months, and our area is becoming almost as well known as a summer destination as it is a winter one. Special events are a key part of this.

PCMC: How do you evaluate new applicants?

JG: Any new events need to be vetted to make sure we can accommodate them in terms of dates and available resources. Our job, as directed by city council, is to mitigate negative impacts caused by events. All of our decisions go back to the question of safety, first and foremost. We are always trying to keep the big picture in mind.

Current code states that we can reject an applicant if it impacts an already existing event. But we just received direction from council to change the code so that we can evaluate events based on the economic and community benefits. We are planning to create a score sheet so that we can create an equitable evaluation process.

PCMC: City Council also just formed a new committee called the Special Events Advisory Committee (SEAC). What is its charter and purpose?

JG: As I mentioned, safety is the key driver of all of our event management. But as our events continue to grow in both number and scope, we realized collectively that we may be reaching capacity. SEAC will help the city identify thresholds for events, as well as better manage and reduce impacts, especially to individual neighborhoods.

PCMC: Why do you think Park City has become such a draw for events?

JG: Broadly speaking, events lend themselves to resort communities, but the Park City name in particular has become a recognizable and high-value brand. We have a great deal of recreation events due to our world-class athletic and training facilities, as well as our excellent and well managed trails system.

We also have proven to have some staying power: the largest events have been around for awhile. And events besides Sundance are receiving national recognition. The Park City Food and Wine Classic, for example, was ranked the fourth-best culinary event by USA Today. Similarly, the Park Silly Sunday Market is a highly ranked outdoor market.

PCMC: How did you arrive where you are today?

JG: I've been working for the city for eight years; my first position was as marketing coordinator at the ice arena. After a few years, I was given the opportunity to become manager of the ice facility. While at the ice arena, I was exposed to the events that occur at both at the arena itself and in the larger Quinn's Junction area. About three years ago—as events continued to grow—the city realized that they needed to take a more direct and centralized approach to permitting and managing events for the city as a whole. So I brought my experience at the ice arena to this position. Luckily I have a great team to support me in this centralized role, especially the city's two special events coordinators Tommy Youngblood and Jenny Diersen. They do most of the heavy lifting when it comes to coordinating the planning and execution of events in Park City. There is no way we would be successful without all the time and effort they put into events.

PCMC: You also wear several other hats in the city.

JG: Yes, I serve as a backup Public Information Officer, or PIO, which means I am the central point of contact for communicating to the public during an emergency or important event. I served as PIO, for example, during the recent bear sightings and the collapse of the Daly West Mine. Both were important events, and we wanted to make sure the public stayed abreast of their respective developments.

PCMC: And you also play an active role in helping implement some of the city's professional development programs.

JG: Yes, I'm one of the facilitators for two internal training programs: OWN It PC, the city's accountability training, and the new-employee orientation. My presentation focuses on our organizational culture, which includes our shared values and our emphasis on strategic planning for success. In addition, I'm a trained facilitator for the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®, which is a great tool to help teach people about how their personality type influences how they take in information, what type of information they trust, how they make decisions with this information, and how they orient themselves to the world around them. The course also helps people learn how they can work well with different types of personalities.

PCMC: How do you think these and other training programs contribute to the success of the entire organization?

JG: I think that the best managers are teachers: they are there to provide the right tools to allow their colleagues to do their jobs and grow both personally and professionally. It is important for the city to bring the decision making to where the information is. By this I mean that we need team members to be involved in the decision-making process. This requires employees at all levels to understand the "road map" or strategic plan for the city in order to be successful.

PCMC: How do you stay busy when you are not staying busy at work?

I'm married and have two children—a four-year-old daughter and an eight-year-old son. We love doing things together outdoors as a family. Two of my favorite hobbies are ice hockey and fly fishing. We also love spending time in Montana, but, of course, Park City is home.

If you are considering Park City for your event, visit PCMC's special events page to learn all about the process, permits, and people who can help: <http://www.parkcity.org/index.aspx?page=224>