

PARK CITY MUNICIPAL COMMUNITY NEWS INTERVIEW

HOW DID PARK CITY FARE IN THE 2016 UTAH LEGISLATIVE SESSION?

ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER MATT DIAS, THE CITY'S LEGISLATIVE LIAISON, PROVIDES A ROUNDUP OF IMPORTANT BILLS AND TRENDS



Park City Municipal Corporation: *Most of the headlines from the legislative session were about its surprising progressive drift. How did you see it?*

Matt Dias: It's certainly something to take note of. As a fairly conservative Western state, repealing the death penalty, legalizing marijuana for medical purposes, and expanding Medicaid were all given a very lengthy discussion. Medical marijuana, for example, even made it through the Senate before stalling in the house. Two years ago, I would have thought none of these issues had a chance, so the fact that they got some traction is significant. Folks should understand that it's relatively uncommon for controversial bills to be passed the first year they are proposed: typically they go through a vetting process that includes technical analysis and testimony in committee and by other affected parties. I expect these issues to come back next year for further discussion.

PCMC: *Aside from these political hot buttons, which bills did you see most affecting Park City?*

MD: There was an effort this year to shift some power and sovereignty—in small ways—away from cities and municipalities in terms of land use. This is concerning and runs counter to our preference for local control. Bills to regulate activities like beekeeping, chicken coops, and falconry (which are normally regulated by a city's land-management code) were brought forth. By themselves, they aren't much to worry about, but the "death by a thousand cuts" approach can undermine a city's land-use authority. The most troubling bill would have precluded us from regulating nightly rentals. This would have a huge impact on our community because of the sheer volume of rentals in city limits.

PCMC: *Why were nightly rentals targeted?*

MD: One representative, Representative Knotwell (District 52), is very supportive of emerging sharing-economy companies such as VRBO, FlipKey, Airbnb, and Uber. For example, he wants to regulate at the state level to ensure their viability. Park City, however, is actually very supportive of nightly rentals, and we are a good example of a jurisdiction that strikes a good balance, especially in ensuring life-safety factors are accounted for. Rep. Knotwell very graciously

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met with us, and we made our case directly to him.

PCMC: *What's the next step for this bill?*

BG: It was sent to the interim session, so we will work with representatives from other cities and towns to help people understand the unintended consequences. Bills of this sort are normally evaluated by the Land Use Task Force (LOTF). Attorney Mark Harrington is a member, and we think the clearinghouse approach—to allow LOTF to review it—is the best way to vet the issue.

PCMC: *What other bills or trends could impact Park City?*

MD: The allocation formula for Proposition 1 (a county-levied sales tax that funds transportation projects) was amended. As originally written, the revenue is shared equally among transit agencies, cities, and county. Now the city and county must decide how to divvy up the transit portion. We have a good relationship with Summit County, especially regarding transit, so we did not actively lobby one way or the other. One nice thing is that the definition of “transportation projects” is pretty broad. This can include bike lanes, walkways, roundabouts, anything that typically falls under a “complete street” definition. This will give us flexibility to be more creative in designing transit and transportation solutions if the county chooses to impose the new tax.



PCMC: *Any others that would have directly affected Park City?*

MD: We had mixed results on renewable energy bills. An effort by Rocky Mountain Power to reduce solar incentives and change the rate

structure for net-metering was somewhat successful. Partnering with Utah Clean Energy and others, we did everything we could stop the bill to prevent negative changes to the solar and renewable-energy efforts.

PCMC: *How is the Park City delegation received in the legislature?*

MD: Over the years, Park City has made a concerted effort to build strong relationships with the Executive and Legislative branches. Leadership Park City, for example, takes a field trip to the Capitol on opening day of the Legislative Session, and we usually meet with the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and other Leadership, as well as with our State Senator (Kevin Van Tassel) and Representative (Kraig Powell). And this commitment starts at the top: our mayor, Council members, and city manager go out of their way to maintain strong ties with our lawmakers. They want people in the Capitol to understand the value Park City creates for the state, and they know there is no substitute for face time. This value, by the way, goes far beyond our monetary impact: while it's easy to talk about tax revenues, Park City also provide a strong international brand that pays great dividends for the entire state.

PCMC: *How would you sum up the 2015 session?*

BG: All in all, pretty quiet. This is not atypical for an election year. I would guess that next year will be a bit more active. There's also been a lot of turnover among the representatives—I think there will be ten new members next year—and that always creates some excitement.

