



MANAGING THE COMPLEX

PUBLIC UTILITIES DIRECTOR CLINT MCAFFEE DISCUSSES HOW HIS DEPARTMENT BALANCES REGULATORY AND PUBLIC CHALLENGES

Park City Municipal Corporation: When did you arrive in town?

Clint McAfee: I moved to Park City in 1997 with two of my buddies in an RV. None of us really knew what we were going to do with our lives, but I got a job making snow at Park City Mountain Resort, having no idea it would be the first step toward a career in water. (Snowmaking is really just a big water system with pumps and pipes that needs to be operated and managed.)

A year later I started going to school at the University of Utah. I started off as a business major, but didn't like it so I switched to civil engineering. Meanwhile I kept working as a snowmaker at PCMR, which helped me get my first engineering job at Stantec Consulting before graduating college. It was a tough job environment at the time, and many of my classmates couldn't find work. But Stantec was doing some resort work near Big Sky, Montana, that included designing a new snowmaking system. With Stantec, and then later with Carollo Engineers, I worked on challenging water system projects around the West for almost a decade until I was hired as the

Water Engineer by Park City Municipal in 2010. This was a bit of an adjustment: after working in the consulting world, I needed to learn how to navigate the public sector. Learning how to be a proper steward of both the system and public funds was probably the steepest part of my learning curve.

PCMC: You're now the director of Public Utilities, so your job—actually, the whole department—has evolved over time.

CM: Yes, the changes really reflect the city's shifting priorities and challenges.

“I WORKED ON WATER PROJECTS ACROSS THE WEST BEFORE JOINING PARK CITY.”

When I joined the city, the Water Department was mainly focused on water supply. It wasn't generally recognized that we had a water quality challenge even though we'd been living with our mining legacy in other ways. In early 2012 we completed the Rockport importation and treatment system, a \$50-million project that took decades to complete, and was a huge milestone in stabilizing our water supply. But about the same time—late 2010—we had a major water quality upset. This was truly a wakeup call for everyone in the city.

PCMC: What did you take away from the challenge?

CM: We had an extremely intelligent, dedicated, and hardworking water team, but we were asking them to do too much and needed to make some organizational changes. I took a hard look at how the department was structured and how it should be organized to excel at our highest priorities: water quality, asset management, energy management, and operations, not to mention non-public health issues like leadership and development and improving our customer service. This change was hard, and I lost more nights of sleep than I ever thought I would.

PCMC: What was your vision?

CM: I moved the department away from the jack-of-all-trades approach and toward specialized divisions, which allowed our team to play to their individual strengths and let us collectively increase the depth and breadth of our knowledge. I also brought in a few strategic hires to head up some of the new divisions (three of which are Roger McClain, Jason Christensen and Michelle De Haan), and also elevated some of the internal positions. This organizational development and clarification is an ongoing process: we are constantly analyzing our priorities and managing resources to provide the best service to the public we can.

PCMC: Public Utilities is more than just the Water Department, though.

CM: That's right, that's a change that happened a few years ago. We now have three divisions: Water, Stormwater, and Streets & Lighting. They overlap a lot in terms of equipment and skillsets and often work in the same space: the right-of-way, roadways, and open-water conveyance systems. If we have to access the underground infrastructure, we go through the road. And the Streets Department also helps maintain our ditch system, which

channels stormwater and water for stream flow and downstream agricultural use.

PCMC: With such a water-focused background, what was the transition like into Streets and Lighting?

CM: The Streets division is outstanding, and they

contribute more to this community than anyone will ever realize. They are extremely proficient in what they do and really understand the unique demands that come with being a world-class destination. Between snowplowing in the winter, year-round event support, pavement management, lighting and wayfinding, and general cleanup and maintenance of the city's infrastructure, they are critical to the quality of life here and to Park City's success. Their competency and the leadership of Troy Dayley made the transition a walk in the park.

PCMC: You actually now need to meet a higher threshold of compliance under the Clean Water Act.





CM: Yes, we have two major challenges to meet compliance: mining-influenced water discharges to the streams and our recent classification as an MS4—a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System. We're now required to substantially reduce the amount of pollutants going into the creeks from the Judge and Spiro Tunnels and the built environment. The city has a stormwater-management program in place, but it's very reactionary due to lack of resources. This new program will improve water quality in a meaningful way, tying right back to one of the city's core values of environmental stewardship. Treating Judge and Spiro will also further improve drinking water for the city.

PCMC: What kinds of pollutants end up in the streams?

CM: Heavy metals, minerals, salts, nutrients, debris, and other contaminants such as oil. They can be very damaging to the environment.

PCMC: What makes up the city's stormwater system?

CM: Anything that captures and channels rainwater, groundwater, and snowmelt, so that includes all of our curbs and gutters and catch basins, about 100 miles of pipe, the ditches around town, the wetlands at the edge of town,

and Silver Creek and McLeod Creek. A large part of this program will be increasing maintenance on the entire system and increased requirements and enforcement on new development.

PCMC: Some residents and businesses are asking why you aren't funding the stormwater mandate from the city's general fund.

CM: Well, that would mean de-prioritizing other projects and initiatives, so we decided that the mandate should be funded by ratepayers based on their level of impact. I think it goes back to our shared responsibility. Keeping our streams clean benefits all of us—and we have an additional obligation because we are at the top of the watershed: everything we put into the water system literally flows downstream to other communities.

PCMC: How is the stormwater fee calculated?

CM: It's based on a property's amount of square footage that is covered by an impervious surface, so driveways, roofs, and sidewalks. We're phasing in the fee over three years, which will give everyone—but especially the bigger businesses with larger impermeable square footage—time to plan for it in their budgeting. This phasing period will also give us time to implement the other piece of the program: a set of low-impact development incentives. Low-impact development measures slow, collect, and filter pollutants from that first flush and stop them from entering the creek.

PCMC: Another new priority (in addition to the MS4 mandate) is City's Council's ambitious new energy-reduction goal. The Water Department accounts for upwards of 60 percent of the city's energy, so you're obviously a big part of achieving this goal.



CM: Yes, it's very important, and our challenge is figuring out how to contribute to the goal while meeting our regulatory requirements. It takes a lot of energy—and a lot of infrastructure—to maintain water quality and pump water uphill. We have a good strategy and are working on a Water and Energy Conservation Program that could significantly reduce the energy required to deliver water. We plan to look first at optimizing our water-delivery system and building efficiency, and then moving to local renewable projects such as micro-hydro and solar. We are also looking at how we can develop leadership and knowledge programs for our entire team so everyone understands and hopefully buys into the mission.

PCMC: You are also implementing an energy-surcharge fee to pay for the carbon-reduction goal. Describe how it's structured.

CM: The most energy-intensive part of our entire system is the infrastructure required to pump water uphill. The energy surcharge fee is structured so that the higher up the mountain you live, the more you pay. We'll use this fee to balance that extra cost and fund energy-reduction projects like micro-hydro. This increases equity for our ratepayers and helps reduce energy overall.

The federal, state, and city mandates may be the impetus for restructuring our department and developing these new programs, but in the end, we're also improving the natural environment and fighting climate change. It's a delicate balance to meet these various mandates, but with smart people on our team and the community's support, we will be able to achieve our collective goals.

PCMC: When you're not helping safeguard Park City's water and environment, what do you like to do for fun?

CM: My wife and I try to enjoy what Park City has to offer as much as possible. We are frequent users of the vast trail system in the area in the summer and winter and try to ski as much as possible in the winter. We are expecting a baby boy this fall, our first, and are looking forward to beginning a new journey.

To learn more about the Public Utilities Department, visit <http://www.parkcity.org/departments/public-utilities>.

