



# EMPLOYING A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO ALIGN THE CITY'S NEEDS WITH AVAILABLE RESOURCES

*An Interview with PCMC's new Community Development Director, Anne Laurent*

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**Park City Municipal Corporation:** You've been with the city for about a month. What are your first impressions of the place?

**Anne Laurent:** Park City's such a great place: that's a big part of why my family and I made the move. People are so engaged and want to do good things for the community. It's also the perfect combination of small-town living and access to everyday amenities.

**PCMC:** What are your impressions of the position and your colleagues?

**AL:** I'm slowly meeting everyone and getting up to speed on the issues, and I've definitely enjoyed hearing everyone's perspective. I like to take in information from a broad range of people and synthesize it before I start to problem-solve.

**PCMC:** During this initial information-gathering phase, what has stood out?

**AL:** So much is going on in the city (and we are all working on so many projects) that some of our goals and initiatives are coming into conflict with each other. The first thing to do is acknowledge that we are sometimes working at cross-purposes so that we can realign.

**PCMC:** You have two broad constituents—external (Park City residents) and internal (your fellow staff). What are your overarching goals for both?

**AL:** I want to create an easy, consistent, transparent process for all construction projects. Anyone wanting to build in Park City should be able to know what to expect and have all of the important information upfront before they begin.

In terms of working with staff, I think the key is creating clear communication channels and protocols. Some of these solutions will be organizational, and some will be technology-based. I've been evaluating software platforms that operate as one ecosystem and include all of the steps involved in permitting. As with any software solution, the key to success is the intake process: getting the information in the system so that everyone has access to it at their fingertips. Once we've deployed the program internally, I would like to roll out an end-user interface, so that our external constituents can access the information themselves—either remotely or at terminals stationed in front of the Building Department. I've even thought about creating an accompanying "how-to" video to walk folks through the steps. I want to make the information available at anyone and everyone's fingertips.

**PCMC:** Community development director positions are common in towns and cities across the country. What makes you excited about working for this Park City in particular? How do you feel you can make a difference here?

**AL:** Perhaps most importantly, I'm just here to be an ear to the ground for the community: to listen to concerns and help manage expectations to minimize surprise and disappointment.

At a strategic level, I'm diving right in to process improvement, starting with procuring and implementing the permit-software program. In addition, I've been asked to support special projects for the departments I work most closely with—namely Building, Engineering, Planning, and Transportation Planning. This will be a great way for me to get to know all of the departments and their respective challenges.

I also want to help strengthen the internal leadership team so that everyone (including the other managers) feels supported and has the resources they need. We're all constantly doing more with less, but I'd like to ultimately leave a legacy of systems that allow us to work thoughtfully and proactively. And I should mention that I'm currently pursuing a master's degree in public administration through the University of Colorado Denver. This program gives me an even broader perspective and set of skills to help analyze issues and challenges. It helps me better balance the technical, financial, and political feasibility of proposed solutions. Much of my position is dedicated to balancing long-range planning efforts with more urgent needs, so that we don't lose sight of the big picture. As an organization, we need to understand how we want to approach long-range planning—in every sector of city services. There's more work to be done with aligning long-term planning visions with the implementation of specific projects.

My colleague Bruce Erickson is implementing one idea for tackling this issue. He has started to appoint a planner as a topical specialist (e.g., housing, transportation) during each long-range planning process. The Planning Department will be translating each plan's goal into code, so bringing them in early could engender a more holistic outcome. We always want to be cognizant of aligning the tools with the vision.

**PCMC:** Change is difficult in any organization. How do you help ensure smooth transitions to new ways of working?

**AL:** The most important thing is just to get to know the city and the people. I'm very consciously trying to tackle problems from a Park City-perspective, as opposed to applying generic solutions. I try to listen a lot—to develop a comfort level so that we can then talk about the hard issues collaboratively and productively. I want to encourage a culture of listening so that compromise and problem-solving aren't so difficult. If everyone gets some portion of what they want, they're going to be more satisfied than if there were no solution. In my book, differences are welcomed as long as everyone is willing to work toward a common solution.

**PCMC:** What do you hope to accomplish in your first year?

**AL:** I would like to see the land-management code updated to better support the general plan and our overall goals, and I also want to more closely align the various long-range plans. Generally, I want to get out in front of the immediate demands, and I think updating the technology and our internal processes will really support this.

**PCMC:** And after that?

**AL:** I want to be an integral part of Park City's success and create an environment that supports retention and high-quality work. My family and I made the choice to move here with a long-term time horizon in mind: we want to see our children graduate from high school here, and possibly even have them move back after college! I plan to become very invested in the community.

**PCMC:** Has your family joined you from Los Alamos?

**AL:** They'll be moving at the end of the semester. Today (November 6) is actually my sixteenth wedding anniversary, and because we couldn't celebrate in person, I gave a donation to LivePC/GivePC in my anniversary's honor. My husband and two children are very excited to make the move. We all love skiing and hiking, and my daughter Frances, who is 12, plays tennis. She also loves music, so she's especially looking forward to the outdoor summer concerts. My son, Maxim, who is 11, loves everything outdoors, including mountain biking and skateboarding.

**PCMC:** Well, it sounds like you landed in the right place. And we are all very happy to have you join our family!