

PARK CITY MUNICIPAL COMMUNITY NEWS INTERVIEW



WE'RE ALL TOGETHER
IN THIS

BOB WHEATON & BILL ROCK ON HOW THEIR RESORTS AND THE CITY ALL WORK AS ONE

Park City Municipal Corporation: *Our three entities—the two resorts and the city government—are part of one ecosystem. How do the two of you work together?*

Bill Rock: Bob has been an incredible partner, and I'd like to thank him personally. He's been very helpful in introducing us to the Park City community, at both the personal and company levels. This is what makes Utah skiing really special: everybody sees the big picture and understands that when we all do well we all do well. Bob has been a fantastic proponent of this, and it's been great working together.

Bob Wheaton: Well, thanks Bill. I agree. It's been easy for me—for us—because one good thing about the ski industry is it's a pretty small deal. Everybody knows everybody, so you can get to know people over time and watch their progress. Bill and I have known each other for years through the industry, so, like I said, it's been easy for me.

PCMC: *How about working with the city?*

Wheaton: I've never been in another ski resort community that functions nearly as well as Park

City, in terms of the relationships among the municipality and the resorts.

Rock: Our guests come to Park City as a destination because it's a complete experience.



There's a reason why our resort's tagline is "There's only one": there's only one Park City. It has all the right ingredients: airport access, Utah snow, Park City Mountain, Deer Valley, Main Street. These are all components of the vacation. Collectively it's the most compelling ski destination in the U.S., as far as I'm concerned. The fact that people can sample two different ski experiences is a huge advantage, and I haven't even mentioned the resorts on the front of the range.

Wheaton It's this very thing that brought my wife and me to Park City 36

years ago. Park City is great, and it's kind of the epicenter: Snowbird, Alta, Brighton, and Solitude are all close by, as are Snowbasin and Powder Mountain.

Bill, I haven't told you this story before, but one of the highlights of my previous ski season was bringing Solitude online. One day I rode the lift





at Solitude with three guys who were visiting for a long weekend. They had skied the day before at Park City Mountain, and they could not stop talking about the terrain. They said, and this is almost an exact quote, “There is no way that we could have skied every lift but we tried to hit all of the areas.” I asked if they were able to make it back to their car, and they said, “Oh no, there was not enough time to do that.” They had parked at Canyons, but ended up on the Park City side. So they said they took the bus back and it was great. This is just a great example of integration and cooperation of everyone involved. If those guys had had a great time on the mountain but a crummy time getting back to their car, it would have spoiled their entire day. And I might add they had a great day at Solitude.

PCMC: *What do you think, then, about the ONE Wasatch concept?*

Rock: I think it’s a great idea. When we linked our two resorts, we essentially made the first connection. We’ve seen firsthand what a connection can do and how people respond to it.

Wheaton: I agree. And the resorts in each of the two canyons on the front of the range—Brighton and Solitude and Alta and Snowbird—are already connected. So it’s really just a matter of canyon-to-canyon at this point.

PCMC: *Could Deer Valley and Park City Mountain be easily connected?*

Wheaton: Yes, and that’s not by accident.

PCMC: *How did that come about?*

Wheaton: It was the same year that Empire and McConkies went in. Phil Jones was my counterpart at PCMR, and Billy Gray was their heavy-equipment operator. Chuck English was—still is—our director of mountain operations. The four of us spent a lot of time up on that ridge (where the two resorts abut) because we did not want to design ourselves out of the possibility of connecting in the future. This is why all those lifts are laid out the way they are. Once we put in Empire Canyon (or Empire Express) and PCMR put in McConkies, we actually had to adjust the property lines a little bit so that we could put the lifts where they really belonged, from a mountain-user standpoint. We designed it so that—with half a day and a decent-sized dozer—we’d be connected. It goes back to the whole idea of cooperation—it didn’t just start with Bill and me.

PCMC: *How did your resorts do this past season, numbers-wise?*

Rock: Park City Mountain had double-digit growth, double-digit skier day growth.

PCMC: *What about Deer Valley.*

Wheaton: Same deal.

PCMC: *That’s pretty impressive. To what do you attribute it?*

Rock: The return of good snow conditions certainly helped. We also spent \$50-million over the summer to create the largest resort in the

country. I think that message resonated around the world, and people wanted to come check it out.

Wheaton: I just want to pick up on something Bill said that's kind of ironic: the return of "good" snow conditions. We ought to keep in mind that this past year's snow was average. Average is not something either resort strives for, but when it comes to snow conditions...

Rock: We'll take it.

Wheaton: When we're talking about snow conditions, average is just fine.



PCMC: *Do you each have a personal highlight from the past season?*

Rock: Mine was cutting the ribbon on all the improvements, particularly the gondola. That day was really special. Our whole team took a lot of pride in it, and it was a fun day.

Wheaton: I have two highlights—one at each end of the spectrum. The first was the amount of powder days that we had and just the great ski season overall. The other was the windstorm during President's Day week. Thousands of trees were down—from one end of the resort to the other, across ski runs and everywhere else. My highlight was watching the staff focus on guest service, and observing the cooperation and integration among all the departments. We were able to fire some of those lifts back up by 2:00 pm. It was incredible to watch—it really was.

PCMC: *The City has recognized three critical priorities of the community: housing, transportation, and energy (reduction, renewables, and net-zero carbon emissions). How do these align with your resorts' goals and operations?*

Wheaton: These are three of our highest goals as well. And we need to recognize that the best solution for any of them is a collective one—

between Summit County, Park City, Park City Mountain, and Deer Valley. If the community can unify behind them, we can make a hell of a difference.

Rock: We've rolled out several company-wide initiatives that align with the city's priorities. Housing is, for sure, front and center in our planning. We have very limited employee housing, and we've pledged \$30-million across our mountain communities for potential housing projects. We're in the process of

identifying partners here in Park City to help us effectively deploy the money.

And we're already working closely with the city and county on transportation. The resorts' parking staff and city transportation staff did things they'd never done before this past season to collectively address the issues. And I think it made a huge difference. We've also developed solutions specific for our employees—remote parking, shuttles, transit, you name it.

In terms of energy reduction, we set a company-wide reduction goal of 10 percent, which we met in 2011, so we launched another program called the Next Ten. We're focusing on everything from fuel use to making our infrastructure more efficient.

PCMC: *Summit Community Power Works, a local nonprofit, has made a big push to have businesses and residents switch out their light bulbs for LEDs. Are you doing this in your operations?*

Rock: Yes, we've done pretty aggressive LED switch-outs. We also launched a program supporting SCPW and their goal of meeting the Georgetown Energy Prize. We partnered with Rocky Mountain Power to provide each employee with four free LEDs. We're also helping fund smart thermostats: between



the manufacturer rebate and our rebate, our employees can purchase them for less than half-price.

Wheaton: The LED switch is a great program. The bulbs cost money upfront, but with all of the incentives through Rocky Mountain Power, they become affordable. And that's not even considering the labor savings—especially for businesses with larger facilities. In bigger buildings, it's not just a matter of standing on the floor and reaching up to change a bulb. You often need a ladder or lift, so doing it once and forgetting about it for 20 years is attractive. And the energy savings are immediately noticeable and trackable: that's what makes them a prudent investment.

PCMC: *Your single biggest use of energy is probably snowmaking, but this is essential to the customer experience.*

Rock: Absolutely. One of the things our guests look forward to is consistency, especially with conditions. The good news is that snowmaking technology has gotten very efficient, so a key part of our energy-reduction plan is upgrading our equipment to keep pace with the state-of-the-art technology. Bob's the real expert on this.

Wheaton: Snowmaking technology has just boomed, especially in the last five years, so new equipment will be our single biggest capital investment this summer.

PCMC: *How has the technology improved?*

Wheaton: Both inputs—gallons of water and kilowatts—have gone down, which means the guns can create more cubic feet of snow with the same amount of energy. Beyond that, pumping efficiencies and compressed air technology in the guns themselves have also come such a long way. And the engineering has improved so much that the water particle actually explodes: you get more cubic feet of snow per particle of water. This means you get a bigger snowflake, which means better ski conditions. The more efficient guns are a sound business decision, but they are also the right thing to do for the environment.



PCMC: *Some people worry that snowmaking wastes water.*

Rock: This is a common misconception: it actually keeps the water in the watershed longer, releasing it back

over an extended period of time.

Wheaton: It essentially acts like a reservoir. Folks should also remember that we are making snow before the occupancy rates in town spike, so it isn't as if we're diverting water that would otherwise be used to do dishes or wash laundry.

PCMC: *Are you planning to relax in these few short weeks before things ramp up for summer?*

Wheaton: We're both going to Nashville next month for the NSAA—National Ski Areas Association Conference. Shelbyville, which is the center of the Tennessee walking horse community, is only about an hour away. My wife and I are going tack on a few days to go horse shopping.

Rock: And I think I'll tour the Jack Daniels Distillery while I'm there.

PCMC: *Horses and whiskey—two things Tennessee and Park City are both famous for. I can't let you leave without asking what your favorite locals runs are.*

Rock: Now that we've combined, people tend to gravitate toward the center of the resort, but I like skiing off Condor—it's fantastic. And with the Mother Lode lift being fast now, people are realizing that all that terrain under there had been under-appreciated. It's really good skiing. It's been especially fun for me as a newcomer, but I think everyone can rediscover some runs that may have been hard to access.

Wheaton: For me, it depends on the day. On a powder day, I like Red Cloud lift. And, as far as groomers go, Stein's Way.

PCMC: *Well, you can't go wrong on either mountain.*