

WOMEN IN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

– HISTORY FOR UTAH, SALT LAKE COUNTY, AND MILLCREEK CITY –

Justin Banks, B.Sc.

Department of City and Metropolitan Planning, College of Architecture + Planning
University of Utah

Bruce W. Parker, AICP

Adjunct Professor, Department of City and Metropolitan Planning
College of Architecture + Planning
University of Utah

and

Principal, Planning and Development Services, LLC, Salt Lake City

ABSTRACT.

At the November 8, 2016 General Election voters in Millcreek City, Utah's newest City, elected a City Council that is majority women. This reality was set at the June 28, 2016 Primary Election when the top two vote getters in three of the City's four Council Districts were women. To have Millcreek City's first City Council with 75% of Council Districts held by women is a precedent setting and exciting event for Millcreek City and Utah. The authors are not aware of any other Utah municipality when the first City Council was majority women. No other municipality in Salt Lake County will have a majority female City Council in 2017. Millcreek City has set an important precedent for women in local government that must be recognized. A City Council in Utah that is majority women is an important public statement. Observers will now be interested to watch what the priorities of Millcreek City's first City Council will be. The lead set by Millcreek City's majority women City Council may encourage other women to become involved in Utah politics, at all levels.

Key words: *women, women majority, city council, precedent, historic, government.*

INTRODUCTION.

Salt Lake County's Millcreek Township is now in its final couple of months. Residents are voting in November, 2016 to select the elected officials for Utah's and Salt Lake County's

newest municipality; Millcreek City.^{1,2}

The challenges of starting a new city are significant. Millcreek residents however appear ready to face the challenges of a new city with enthusiasm. Nearly 40 residents filed as candidates to be Millcreek City's first mayor and councilmembers for the City's four council districts.

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This article is being written before the 2016 general election results are known. However, the results of the primary election have created the reality that women will hold three of the four council seats on Millcreek City's first City Council. This reality is occurring since the two top vote getters in the primary elections in three of the four council districts were women. The first City Council with a majority of women members is unprecedented in Salt Lake County and Utah. The authors are not aware of any other Utah municipality where the first Council had majority women membership. In 2017, no other municipality in Salt Lake County will have a majority female City Council. In the context of this historic moment for Millcreek City, and Utah, it is appropriate to consider the research on women in government. For this discussion it is also appropriate to consider Mayors and City Councils for municipalities located in Salt Lake County (Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1 identifies the percentage of Mayors, while Table 2 shows women City/Town councilmembers for all municipalities within Salt Lake County in 2016. Of the 16 existing municipalities three have female mayors; Midvale City, Salt Lake City, and South Salt Lake City (Table 1).

¹ The actual name of Utah's and Salt Lake County's newest city could be Millcreek City or some other variation, however for the purpose of this article it will be referred to as Millcreek City.

² Voting will close November 8, 2016. Mail-and absentee voting commenced earlier.

Table 1
MAYORS FOR SALT LAKE COUNTY MUNICIPALITIES IN 2016³

| POSITION | TOTAL |
|------------------------|-------|
| Total Number of Mayors | 16 |
| Women Mayors | 3 |
| Percent Women Mayors | 19% |

There are 86 total City Councilmembers for all municipalities in Salt Lake County; 22 are held by women, or 26%, in 2016 (Table 2). Table 3 identifies the number of City Council positions held by women in 2016. Table 3 clearly shows that Millcreek City will have the highest percentage of women Councilmembers in 2017.

Table 2
WOMEN COUNCILMEMBERS FOR SALT LAKE COUNTY MUNICIPALITIES, 2016

| POSITION | TOTAL |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Total Number Councilmembers | 86 |
| Women Councilmembers | 22 |
| Percent Women Councilmembers | 26% |

³ Excludes the new Millcreek City.

Table 1 considers only the mayors of each municipality in Salt Lake County in 2016 (not including Millcreek City). If Millcreek City were included the percent women mayors would fall to 17.6%. Similarly, if Millcreek City were included in Table 2 the number of total city council positions would increase to 90 and the total number of women councilmembers to 25. The percent women councilmembers will be 27.8% in 2017 with the inclusion of Millcreek City.

Table 3
SALT LAKE COUNTY MUNICIPAL COUNCILS AND WOMEN

| MUNICIPALITY | TOTAL COUNCIL MEMBERS | TOTAL COUNCILWOMEN | PERCENT COUNCILWOMEN |
|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Alta | 4 | 1 | 25 |
| Bluffdale | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Cottonwood Heights | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Draper | 5 | 2 | 40 |
| Herriman | 4 | 2 | 50 |
| Holladay | 5 | 2 | 40 |
| Midvale | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Millcreek | 4 | 3 | 75 |
| Murray | 5 | 1 | 20 |
| Riverton | 5 | 1 | 20 |
| Salt Lake City | 7 | 2 | 28.8 |
| Sandy | 7 | 3 | 42.9 |
| South Jordan | 5 | 1 | 20 |
| South Salt Lake | 7 | 3 | 42.9 |
| Taylorsville | 5 | 2 | 40 |
| West Jordan | 6 | 1 | 16.7 |
| West Valley | 6 | 1 | 16.7 |

For all Salt Lake County municipalities (including Millcreek City) Table 4 presents the total population estimate and the total number of City Councilmembers. Table 4 displays a “representative ratio” of population to Councilmembers. To calculate this ratio, all Councilmember positions were considered, and not recognizing if the councilmember was elected by District or as an At-Large member. Using the 2015 population estimates, Salt Lake City had the highest ratio of constituents to Councilmembers at 27,575 residents per councilmember (22,575:1). Alta Town had the lowest. West Valley City had a representation ratio of 22,700:1.

The July 1, 2015 Millcreek City population estimate was 62,700 persons. With four City Councilmembers the first Millcreek City council will have a citizen representation ratio of around 15,675 residents per Councilmember. It is expected that Millcreek City will have the fourth highest representation ratio of all Salt Lake County municipalities.

Table 4
MUNICIPAL REPRESENTATIVE RATIOS, 2015

| MUNICIPALITY | 2015 POPULATION ESTIMATES | TOTAL COUNCIL MEMBERS (District & At-Large) | REPRESENTATIVE RATIO (Population:Councilmember) ⁴ |
|--------------------|---------------------------|---|--|
| Alta | 390 | 4 | 98 |
| Bluffdale | 10,931 | 5 | 2,186 |
| Cottonwood Heights | 34,343 | 4 | 8,586 |
| Draper | 46,774 | 5 | 9,355 |
| Herriman | 30,835 | 4 | 7,709 |
| Holladay | 30,854 | 5 | 6,171 |
| Midvale | 32,613 | 5 | 6,523 |
| Millcreek | 62,700 ⁵ | 4 | 15,675 |
| Murray | 49,250 | 5 | 9,850 |
| Riverton | 41,900 | 5 | 8,380 |
| Salt Lake City | 192,672 | 7 | 27,525 |
| Sandy | 93,613 | 7 | 13,373 |
| South Jordan | 66,648 | 5 | 13,330 |
| South Salt Lake | 24,788 | 7 | 3,541 |
| Taylorsville | 60,514 | 5 | 12,103 |
| West Jordan | 111,946 | 6 | 18,658 |
| West Valley | 136,208 | 6 | 22,701 |

WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT.

Several authors have written that women in government face more challenges than men. Women running for elected positions tend to have increased difficulties securing funding for campaigns, and usually receiving less campaign contributions than men. This makes it particularly challenging for reelection. According to research by Lawless and Fox in 2004 and 2005 voters do believe that women face bias when running for public office.

Other studies have identified the “assertiveness dilemma.” Women in leadership face

⁴ To calculate the Representative Ratio all city councilmember positions were considered completely ignoring whether the councilmember was elected by District or At-Large.

⁵ The Census Bureau did not provide a population estimate for Millcreek City as it was unincorporated in 2015. The estimated population for Millcreek is based on the best information available.

the challenge of maintaining assertiveness while not being perceived as being overly aggressive. This balance is something men rarely face as assertive behaviors are often valued in men.

The Institute for Women’s Policy research reports women hold 5 of the 29 seats in the Utah State Senate. In the Utah State House of Representatives women occupy 12 of the 75 seats. Some researchers have attributed the under representation of females in the State legislature to the State’s religious history and prevailing culture.

Various studies identify different policy roles played by women and men in local government. Research indicates that local governments with a higher portion of women tend to implement affirmative action measures more often. Women are motivated to take on challenges and address issues men might not tackle including women’s access to housing, or improving community facilities. Women can be enthusiastic about things like social and gender equality and working to bring gender issues and social justice into local focus.

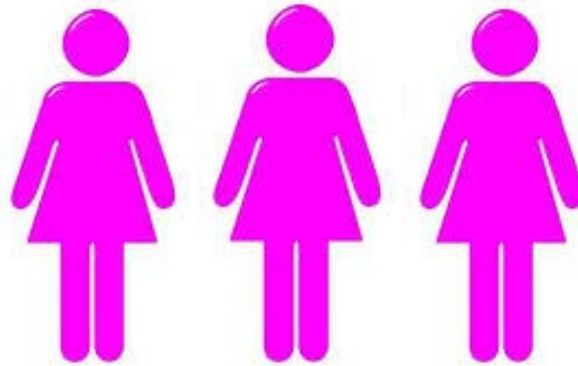
A study by Stanford University and University of Chicago analyzed United States congressional policies, elections, and fiscal budgets from 1984 to 2004. The study found that female US congress members were better at securing federal funding for their home districts. It was also found that women are able to obtain a 7% funding increase over their male counterparts. Women in the US congress tend to sponsor more bills than men, working to accomplish more in the same time.

Often overlooked is women’s roles in creating and maintaining budgets. Women in public office engage with many different minority and women’s groups, and this is thought to foster more inclusive, gender neutral budgets. Such a budget does not target the needs of women exclusively but rather includes differing gender perspectives into the budgeting process, such as daycare and public health and wellness funding. Women’s participation insures both men and women benefit equally from the social policies and other public goods. Jane Jacobs, a widely renowned US planning commentator and observer, also noted important differences in the way men and women approach community planning. Men are more top-down oriented. Women, on the other hand, prioritize issues that are close to home, are more bottom-up and inclusive, and may be more detailed oriented (Gratz, 2011). The presence of

female leadership can also encourage other women to become involved in politics, or other community organizations, making way for additional female participation. Most often female politicians are involved in women’s groups and community organizations that translates into a deeper understanding of the core issues facing a community (Lovely, 2009).

CONCLUSION.

Millcreek City, Utah’s first City Council will have 75% women membership. This is an important public statement to be recognized. A municipal City Council that is majority women is a milestone for Utah. Millcreek City observers will now be interested to see what the legislative priorities of the City’s first City Council will be. What will be the Millcreek City’s legislative focus? What roles will social equity and gender awareness play and how will the first City Council address the myriad of complex community issues that will come before it? The answers to these questions, and others, will begin to emerge during 2017 and the succeeding years.



POSTSCRIPT (November 9, 2016).

The final unofficial election results of the 2016 General Election, provided by the Salt Lake County Clerk’s Office for Millcreek City’s first Mayor and City Council members, identified the following persons as being duly elected to these positions:

Millcreek City Mayor:

Mr. Jeff Silvestrini.

Millcreek City Council:

City Council District #1 – Ms. Silvia Catten.

City Council District #2 – Mr. Dwight Marchant.

City Council District #3 – Ms. Cheri M. Jackson.

City Council District #4 – Ms. Bev Uipi.

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