Overview

Today’s interview with Owen Randall will focus on the city’s Stormwater large capital projects since the 1997 flood. It was not until the 1997 flood that Owen began working on Stormwater projects. That flood was the most devastating and costly disaster in Fort Collins’ history. Five people died, and damage to property and the natural environment in the city was valued at about $200,000,000.

- The flood prompted major new investments in stormwater projects to alleviate flooding in downtown Fort Collins. It also prompted the city to develop its first Stormwater Master Plan in 2004 and to update that plan in 2012. The Stormwater Utility had SW Master Plans back in the early 90’s. They were done on a basin by basin basis.
- The 2004 and 2012 Stormwater Master Plans committed the city to safeguarding the public by reducing the risk of flooding and developing a flood warning system.
- The master plans also sought to protect the quality of the receiving streams from stormwater by reducing water pollution through passive treatment systems.
- The city removed structures and prohibited new construction in floodplains and near waterways, since people living and working in structures in floodplains were at risk – Take to Diana or Ken about this one. Not sure that it what we want to say.
- The 2012 Stormwater Master Plan adopted an overall “watershed” approach, recognizing that the protection and rehabilitation of urban waterways and ecosystems was essential to flood prevention, environmental damage, and harm to humans and their property. The changes the city has made to Stormwater management proved of enormous value. In September of 2013 Fort Collins experienced a 25-50 year flood of the Poudre River during a sudden and very heavy rainstorm, but there was minimal damage to Fort Collins and its riparian environment and no loss of life.

Still, putting stormwater plans and protections into place has involved (and continues to involve) many challenges, and we’ll address those today.

Questions
1. Owen, by the time of the 1997 flood, you’d been working with Utilities for almost 20 years. Though you hadn’t been directly involved in stormwater projects during that time, what was your understanding of the city’s approach to Stormwater management?

2. After the flood, you were involved in a number of large capital projects. Can you describe the scope of those projects and the challenges you faced in getting them done?
   - Let’s start with the projects in downtown Fort Collins. I think those were on Howes Street, Locust Street, and Oak Street.

3. I know you were also involved in stormwater projects after the 1997 at City Park Lake and in the Canal Importation area.
   - What were the key challenges in these projects? What have been their key benefits?
   - How did they reflect the city’s growing emphasis on protecting the city’s residents and environment from flood damage as well as doing combined benefit projects with other areas in the city?

4. One important fact about Stormwater facilities is that many of them are dual or multi-use facilities. Detention ponds serve recreational purposes in dry weather and have stormwater functions under flood conditions.
   - What do you consider the most successful of the city’s multi-use Stormwater projects?
   - What have been the challenges of building, maintaining, and managing multi-use Stormwater facilities over time? Has it been difficult, for example, to keep the public off bike trails that are part of a Stormwater facility that’s being upgraded?
   - To what extent have you been involved in the new Poudre River Whitewater Park project? What challenges have you encountered? What lessons have you learned? I have had no involvement

5. In all of our interviews, we’ve discussed the dynamic between Utilities and the public.
   - Can you tell me how you’ve interacted with the public in working on stormwater projects?
   - What’s your sense of the challenges the city has faced, or continues to face, in gaining public understanding of stormwater management priorities?
   - Can you explain “passive” stormwater treatment? I understand there’s some public confusion over what this means.

6. Are there still unresolved issues in the city’s efforts to prevent and manage flooding on the Poudre River?

7. I’d like to hear about the treatment of the city’s stormwater discharge. My understanding is that the city’s 2012 Stormwater Master Plan called for retrofitting the stormwater system to include treatment of stormwater discharge, primarily to bring the city into compliance with new EPA regulations.
• What retrofitting projects have you been worked on and what kinds of challenges have these projects faced?
• How does the treatment of stormwater discharge differ from the treatment of wastewater?

8. What do you know about the city’s intergovernmental agreements with Wellington and Larimer county for stormwater cooperation in Boxelder Basin?
   • Have you been involved in cooperative Stormwater projects in Boxelder? How well have they worked? No involvement on my part.

9. Looking forward, based on your many years of experience, what do you see as the city’s most important challenges in stormwater management? Is the city in a position to manage those challenges effectively?