



# The Power Source

## Igniting the Future of Florida



**January 2020**  
**Power Profile: Beth Cooper**  
Chief Financial Officer  
Chesapeake Utilities Corporation

**Your distinguished career has multiple examples of career advancement. What inspired you to begin a career in the energy industry?**

I initially came to Chesapeake Utilities not because it was in the energy industry but I was seeking to leave the public accounting industry (where I was auditing) and enter the corporate world working for a public company. It became very clear early on that the energy industry was so much more exciting than I expected. Not only was the company operating in both the regulated and unregulated arenas, but was involved in both transmission and distribution, in multiple jurisdictions, and in multiple energy sources (i.e., natural gas, propane and later on electricity).

**From your experience, what has been the biggest challenge you have faced or lesson you have learned?**

The biggest lesson I learned was.....be willing to take on new opportunities even if you don't have the expertise. There are so many times during my career at Chesapeake Utilities where I was asked to step in and oversee an area that did not utilize my accounting education. Those included corporate secretary/governance, human resources, communications, strategic planning and others. I have gained so many new skills and expanded my knowledge base because of these opportunities. It would have been very easy to shy away from these non-finance areas because I did not have the skills. Today, my capabilities and knowledge are much broader than Finance/Accounting.

**As Chief Financial Officer of a national energy company with various state subsidiaries, have you found that more women are entering into the financial sector?**

Yes, more women are entering the financial side of our business but there is still a ways to go in terms of getting to an equivalent number of females in executive and managerial roles. We have more than double the number of women in managerial roles in Finance today as we did ten years ago. That is so exciting but it is also motivating as well.



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### **What advice would you give to a 2nd year college student deciding on a career path?**

The job market will continue to evolve and change as it has over my career. There are many opportunities for women to succeed in areas previously dominated by men – for example, engineering, operations, technology, business analytics, etc. We need more women in these areas. Additionally, new areas like cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, robotics, and other data sciences are also areas to consider. No area should be out of consideration or eliminated. I always tell prospective students to pursue their dreams and see what they can accomplish. Take a variety of courses to get a flavor of a lot of areas. Also pursue internships and networking opportunities to get exposure to interest areas. Far too many times I hear of individuals who graduated with extensive degrees and ultimately pursued an entirely different career path.

### **2020 is a new year with new opportunities. If you had to pick just two, what are the things every company is watching as it relates to mitigating risk in the utility industry?**

Some of the current areas of focus include cybersecurity, safety and compliance, and the recent focus on decarbonization/climate change (particularly the targeted focus by certain municipalities to ban natural gas in terms of new construction). We have teams throughout our company focused on mitigating the risk associated with each of these areas. We are also working with the American Gas Association and our peer companies to make sure we continue to communicate the strength of natural gas as a long-term energy source for this country given its availability, clean attributes, and cost.

### **Chesapeake Utilities Corporation has launched a “Women in Energy” group. What are the advantages and benefits in doing so?**

There are so many benefits to this program. I could write pages on the benefits of this program. Here are just a few of the key attributes:

- To foster the development and advancement of women throughout the Company by developing a strong network
- To provide a safe environment where women can share, inspire and motivate one another
- To champion and celebrate women’s successes within the Company
- To identify new ways that women can be better supported throughout the Company
- To build upon our culture of diversity and inclusion