

GREAT FALLS PUBLIC SCHOOLS, MT  
BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT PROCESS: PUBLIC INPUT THROUGH 11-7-2017



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| <p>We are not happy with this redistricting. We will fight it. Our child has went to meadowlark since kindergarten, his friends are there, his teachers know him. This is our community. This redistricting is pulling him from a school, community and friends he loves. We are prepared to fight this redistricting it makes no sense.</p>  |
| <p>Why are you pulling kids from the Belview Park Subdivision area to go to a school that is farther away. Meadowlark is closer for these kids. It is our community. I will be in contact with those making this changes as they make no sense.</p>   |
| <p>The new boundaries make no sense. You have taken our Belview subdivision area which is part of the meadow lark elementary community we are literally less than 1 mile from it. You then take subdivisions north of 10th that are closer to West and put them in the Meadowlark district? This makes no sense. We do not live in that part of town/community, those subdivisions do. West is over 4 miles from us, Meadowlark is less than 1mile. The boundaries seem to be drawn at random with no common sense whatsoever. If this is an attempt at redistributing students it's a poor attempt. It makes little sense for our kids to go to a school that is way across town from where we live, this is our community, the church we attend is here, the grocery stores and gas stations we use are here, so should our school be. I will be fighting these boundary changes and rally everyone in this community to do so, you guys need to explain yourselves this is beyond ridiculous planning.</p>   |
| <p>Very much understand the need for the re-zoning but really hope you take into consideration offering grandfathering to happen with the schools. I have a daughter who has been at her current school for 4 years now and loves it, the staff knows her very well and what she can and cannot have. Would hate to have to start all over at a different school that has a complete different set up. Every parent and child has different needs on why they are selective in choosing the school that is the right fit for them, our family hopes that the grandfathering in rule will hold true.</p>   |
| <p>I am strongly against the redistricting plan that is currently proposed. This would entail, among other things, students residing in the Belview area to be transported all the way to West Elementary, across I-15, rather than remaining at Meadow Lark Elementary, which is much closer. This proposal does not seem to be in the best interests of many of the different areas concerned.</p>  |
| <p>I have heard it's possible that the Boundary changes may include a change for the students in the Bellview area be transferred to West. This is not acceptable for those of us who moved to this area for the very purpose of attending Meadowlark. As long as the kids who already attend Meadowlark can continue doing so I would be ok with the change, but to up and root them from their friends and the school they have known would be a huge mistake. We are military and already move our children enough. Another change of schools would just be too much!!</p>   |
| <p>I have heard it's possible that the Boundary changes may include a change for the students in the Bellview area be transferred to West. This is not acceptable for those of us who moved to this area for the very purpose of attending Meadowlark. As long as the kids who already attend Meadowlark can continue doing so I would be ok with the change, but to up and root them from their friends and the school they have known would be a huge mistake. We are military and already move our children enough. Another change of schools would just be too much!!</p>   |
| <p>I have two children that attend Meadowlark Elementary. We currently live on Greenbriar Drive in Belview Palisades. I want to express my extreme opposition to the planned rezoning for Meadow Lark Elementary. I purchased a home in this area SPECIFICALLY to ensure that my children attend Meadow Lark. To think that they are going from what is the best school in the city, in my opinion, to one of the worst, is absolutely ridiculous. I am convinced that a move like this would be a serious detriment to their school progress and acumen. I will pull my children from the Great Falls public school system and send them to a private school if this current plan is implemented. I will not stand for my children being forced to attend another school when they have spent their entire school career thus far at Meadowlark. I cannot express my feelings strong enough on this subject. I will continue to fight this rezoning to the very end.</p>   |
| <p>I STRENUOUSLY object to both elementary school options! To bus Black Eagle kids across the river to elementary schools is just wrong when they live much closer to Sac and Riverview! You are breaking up established friendships, not to mention altering high school plans. My son currently attends Riverview and i work at CMR. He is able to ride with me in the mornings and walk from CMR, catching the bus home. Whittier has no HANDS program, so he would need to be home alone in the mornings. Or, in the other option, I would have to drive him all the way to Momingside HANDS before I go back to CMR. This is absolutely ridiculous!</p>  |
| <p>Strongly opposed to the the belview neighborhood school district changing from Meadowlark to West.</p>   |
| <p>Are there going to be exceptions for the new districting? Will students who are juniors this year be allowed to remain at their current home school for their senior year? Are permissive transfers going to be allowed and if so what are the stipulations for those? I am aggravated that students who live in Black Eagle will be changing to different schools across the river. This will mean additional busing time.</p>  |
| <p>The reason my husband and I bought our house in the area we did, after he retired from the Air Force, was so our children would be able to attend Meadowlark Elementary. Meadowlark has always been known as the go to school if you want your children to get a great education. Our children have done wonderful in that school and infact our youngest is in the gifted program. Meadowlark has a much higher school rating than West Elementary and we would be very concerned that our children's education was being sacrificed for money. I see no good reason to upset the boundaries as they are now. It makes no sense to send the Belview kids to West as they live so close to Meadowlark. If the redistricting of the Belview kids to West goes through we feel we would be forced to pull our kids from the Great Falls School District and place them in private schools.</p>   |
| <p>This is absolutely INSANE! First, I knew nothing of this proposed rezoning issue until a fellow neighbor mentioned it to me. So, if you were planning this kind of move, Belview should have been notified by mail, etc. Second, this neighborhood has been in Meadow Lark's district for YEARS and the sole reason we purchased the home that we did. A place for our children to feel safe and grow academically. I am appalled that you think we will stand by and let you send our children to West Elementary. I cannot express enough how asinine this proposal is and how I will fight you until the very end. We should not be forced out because of an influx of homes being built in Big Bend, Spring Hills, Woodland Estates, and all of the other homes being built out Fox Farm Road. Those families have chosen, by free will, to live out of town. And their commute is already 15-20 minutes. What is another 10 minutes to them, when once again, they chose that commute. Our commute is 3 minutes because we CHOSE to live 5 blocks from the school. We are being punished because others chose freely to build and live outside of city limits. If your concern is keeping neighborhoods intact, this is NOT the answer and this would be so detrimental to our children. ALL of our family, friends and school mates live in this district. The impact that this proposed rezoning would have on our family and friends is astronomical. I am asking that you please reconsider your rezoning areas.</p>    |
| <p>My family and I live in the Belleview palisades neighborhood. We have 2 children in the meadowlark elementary school. I am wholly against this proposal. A major consideration my wife and I had in purchasing our home in this neighborhood was the ability for our children to attend meadowlark. I do not understand how moving my children to a school five plus miles away is improving efficiency. I do not understand how an increase of funding for schools on the opposite side of town necessitates my children leaving their school zone. I am completely and utterly appalled that this would even be considered.</p>  |
| <p>I was just made aware the new rezoning district for the Bellview Palisades neighborhood is now sending our children to West Elementary. I have to say this is a major concern of mine. I understand there is need to rezone districts upon occasion, however I do not understand how this rezoning will positively impact my family. In reading the goals of this criteria on the GFPS website, I have to say I 100% disagree with this change. It is stated on there the goals are to maximize transportation efficiency and walkability as much as possible, as well as maximizing the safety of the students. I can't even comprehend how it is thought that moving my children to a school further away and across a busier intersection and roadways could possibly improve walkability, make transportation to and from school more efficient or keep my children safer. I also do not understand how making this change will keep identifiable communities intact either. We identify as part of the Fox Farm Community and moving to this new district takes that away. One of the main reasons we chose to purchase the house we did was because of the Meadowlark school district. My husband and I wanted a home in an area close to the school our children would be attending so we could build a communal bond with the people they attend school with. Moving them to this district eliminates that. This move is literally cutting this entire neighborhood out of the community that we all associate with.</p> |
| <p>We do not agree with and will be very disappointed if the reboundary for the Belview Pallisades area to move to West Elementary occurs. We moved here from ND and waited about 9 months to buy a home because we wanted to make sure our kids would be in the best school district. That is the ENTIRE reason we chose to purchase a home in this area-because of the reputation of Meadow Lark school!! Please rethink this reboundary idea.</p>  |



I am VERY CONCERNED about this proposal. I bought my house in the Meadow Lark area because of it's reputation as being the best elementary school in the district. I am very opposed to send my children to a school that ranks so low in the district when it comes to safety and quality of education. My oldest child attended West in Kindergarten and still has the pencil lead mark near his left eye where a first grader threw a pencil at him. My younger kids are currently successful at Meadow Lark and I do not want to disrupt their learning because the lines on a map don't look pretty. Please do not move our kids!!!!

I fail to see the reason that the big traditional boundary (our Missouri River) is being ignored in this re-districting effort. I understand the need to redistrict, but I don't see the sense in its being a gerrymandering affair. What is the logic in sending Black Eagle kids way across the river and into Whittier or Morningside when most live on or near Smelter Drive, the exact street that Riverview is located on? To me this appears to be an economical divide rather than a just one. In this time of a return to the "neighborhood school" mentality, this district seems to be flying in the face of a trend that has proven to be what's best for students, families, and districts.

With all due respect, moving the BelView-Marketplace neighborhood from Meadowlark to West and moving the neighborhoods just north of 10th Avenue South to Meadow Lark doesn't make any sense. It violates the goals of keeping kids close to the school they are attending with easy transportation access, not having to cross major landmarks/thoroughfares - like 10th Avenue South - and keeping neighborhoods intact. It will double or triple the commute times for parents like me who take their elementary school age children to school on the way to work. The change will disrupt 139 students' lives while only resulting in a net change of 25 students between the two schools, with the sole apparent reason for this change from the data is to make the schools a tiny bit more socio-economically diverse. Please reconsider this part of the plan. It does too little for the significant adverse changes and burdens it imposes on parents and children's lives and on balance, it actually undermines the school district's stated goals in redistricting.

My family moved to Great Falls very recently. We spent months researching the school district and schools here before purchasing a home. We purchased a home in this area SPECIFICALLY so our children would attend Meadow Lark ES. I am well versed in education as I'm an educator myself, and I honestly do not understand why you would want to remove students from an outstanding school and send them to a less desirable school. You will be doing a huge injustice to these students! If you want to improve the education of the students in the lower income schools you need to spend the money to hire experienced teachers who can make a difference. Do not play games with the education of students who are already attending Meadow Lark!

Considering the points on the redistribution goals, busing the students from 1.5-2 miles away (Bellevue) to 5-8 miles away does not sound safe or efficient or logical. Thanks You.

Why would you even consider bussing our children past the school they have always attended to a school further away. They will be going right past Meadow Lark en route to West. Then you turn around and transfer children from West to Meadow Lark? It makes no sense what so ever. When we purchased our home we considered not only the elementary school our boys would go to but the close proximity to our home as we do many activities at the school including Cub Scouts and such. Changing Bellevue from Meadow Lark to West is a mistake that will have a great negative impact on a lot of children and is of no benefit to anyone.

We would like to add our 2 voices to oppose redistricting Bellview to West Elementary. The accessibility issue alone just makes sense to keep Bellview kids at Meadowlark. The location issue is addressed in the #1 Guiding Principle to maximize student safety, this would be violated with the redistricting proposal. Please keep our kids safe.

Dear Committee Members:

I appreciate your willingness to sacrifice your time to redistricting, to improve our school system.

Please consider not moving the Bell View neighborhood from Meadowlark to West Elementary School district for the following reasons.

This move would undermine several of the school board's guiding principles/criteria:

1) "Maximize Safety of students by defining boundaries along major geographical features such as roads, rivers and railroads."

The Bell View students would need to (pass Meadowlark and then) cross Highway 15, cross the Sun river as well as cross railroad tracks, to get to West. The West students would need to do the same, in order to get to Meadowlark.

2) "Maximize transportation efficiency and walkability when ever possible"

Bell View students are currently in walking range of Meadowlark West students in walking range of West Elementary. Moving Bell View students to West would not only eliminate the option of walking, but the commute would triple. The same would be true of moving West students to Meadowlark.

3) "Minimize the number of student moves while redistricting".

The student impact data presented at the previous meeting shows the Meadowlark-West option would impact the highest number of students of all the different moves (82 students impacted).

Additionally, Bell View is the 2nd closest neighborhood to Meadowlark (out of many neighborhoods).

And lastly, many of the residents of Meadowlark are passionate about Meadowlark, and very involved and would greatly like to continue to be.



I am a parent of children attending Meadow Lark elementary, and am very concerned about the options for rezoning of that school involving the moving of the Belview-Palisade over to West elementary. The only rationalization I can come to is the people who conducted this parameter are unaware of Great Falls and the community. We are not talking about children who live in the center of town who may live next to each other and go to schools in a mile in a different direction. This area is an isolated by the Highway I-15, 10th Ave S and the Missouri River. There is a railroad track that separates it but for the past several years has been used for parking empty cars and rarely has any moving trains. There is also flood road which is lower speed and less traffic than 10th Ave S. A few points of rezoning was to "Maximize safety of students by defining boundaries along major geographical features such as roads, rivers, and railroads. Try to minimize students' crossing over major roads if possible." and "Maximize transportation efficiency and walkability whenever possible." These goals are contradicted by moving the Belview- Palisades children. They would no longer have the ability to walk or bike (yes they do and I have seen it every year) to school. If they attended West then they would be crossing major roads, and highways miles a way to attend school. Not to mention after school activities which are often zoned by elementary school the children attend. There are many times that my children have carpooled with others from Fox Farm to activities because we live 5 minutes away from them. If they attend West their peers would live over 15 minutes away and carpooling or walking to a friends house would not be an option. There would also be a change of traffic for the bus that would have to cross to get them to school safely. They would cross several busy streets, a more active railroad line, and a river. The bus for Belview-Palisades children picks up at 8:00 am so I can only imagine how much earlier it would be to safely get children to West. This would also affect the time on the bus ride home. I am aware that the bus department is always working on behaviors and adding more time to a bus ride would probably be frowned upon.

Some more points as stated by rezoning, "Minimize the number of student moves, while considering redistricting goals." "Balance building utilization by reducing overcrowding in schools based on functional capacity." When you look at the moving of children from Belview-Palisades the survey estimates 82 students from Meadowlark to West, in the same survey 57 students from West would attend Meadowlark. This is moving 139 students to have a difference of 25 students at Meadowlark. My thoughts as a home owner are if I knew my school was over 3 miles away, and crossing 10th ave South, I would have bought in the Fox Farm area. I know that there are several other families who feel the same way. That would make it harder for anyone who lives in the Belview-Palisades area to sell their home to a family. Which in theory would reduce the number of students that would live in that area and therefore increase the number in Fox Farm. My guess would be in a year or two that difference of 25 students would disappear and then Meadow Lark would be facing the same issue of alleged overcrowding. I am aware this is not the first time I have heard that Belview-Palisades is bearing the blame of the alleged overcrowding. However, if a point of a boundary is to "Be proactive for future potential growth if all possible." is considered why are the households outside of city limits with undeveloped area included in a school with alleged overcrowding? Belview-Palisades are within Great Falls City limits. They have been for decades adding taxes and children to Meadow Lark. In the last five years I have seen neighborhoods added to the Fox Farm area. If you look on a geological map you can see there is undeveloped land that could hold future for large amount of homes and a continue increase of students. It is disappointing that when passing the bond levy, that many parents in the Belview-Palisades supported, the alleged over crowding of Meadow Lark was not considered in the funds. I understand that is a different issue but other schools are being rebuilt when Meadow Lark could expand and continue to serve the community. I can also imagine the loss of home value and decrease in tax revenue if you move the Belview-Palisades children. Not to mention has anyone looked to see if the free and reduced lunch and federal support for West would change significantly ? If you look at the the points for rezoning almost every one is contradicted if you change the Belview-Palisades children from Meadow Lark to West. As I stated before is that the Cropper GIS is qualified but are not local. I have lived in the same area for over ten years. When my children will have completed their elementary school years, I will have had children attending Meadow Lark for 16 consecutive years. It is a big deal for me in what I consider a mistake, a breaking of a geologically isolated community, and a contraindication to all the points made for the rezoning. I am hopefully that the Board of Trustees who are familiar with the community realize all of these points and consider a different option than the two provided and do not change Belview-Palisades home school to move 139 to make a difference of 25 students. Thank you for your time.

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We have lived in the Belview area for 11 years. My daughter attended K-6 and just entered middle school this year. My son is in the 3rd grade. One of the main reasons we looked for a house in the Belview area was because of Meadowlark Elementary. My daughter had an awesome elementary experience with staff that really care about the kids and wonderful friends. My son was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes when he was 5 and so entered school with concerns about how to manage his blood sugars effectively and though they had no T1D kids at the time, the staff were amazing and have continued to be understanding and supportive of his needs dealing with highs and lows. The kids in school have also been very supportive and have been curious to learn about T1D and not made him feel different. Since then there have been two other kids that were diagnosed while at Meadowlark and they have, with everyone's permission, connected the families to be a support for each other. This is a long standing relationship that has taken many years to build and simply changing schools for unknown reasons is uncalled for. If we were redistricted to any other school, we would send our son to Our Lady of Lourdes for the remainder of his elementary years. I would feel confident that if he were going to be required to change schools at this point, he would be more successful at a smaller school with smaller classes. We have worked very hard for 4 years to create an environment where we feel confident that his needs are being met and he is safe. We only live 3 minutes from the school and 5 minutes from our employment so we can be at the school quickly if need be.

I read the criteria that the committee is attempting to adhere to for this redistricting and one of them is to get more kids to be able to walk to school. If you move Belview kids to West or any other school you remove that option entirely and there are a number of kids who do walk or ride their bikes to school in nice weather. There are also a large number of parents who drive their kids to school and pick them up. This would also stop and would be having a higher number of kids riding the bus. From our experience with North this year, it is very difficult for Big Sky Bus Lines to accommodate the need for buses as it is. Increasing that demand seems counter-productive. It is also fiscally irresponsible to bus kids farther than they need to be.

Another item on the checklist is using natural boundaries and main streets and railroads. You would be taking kids that cross one, hardly used railroad ( we occasionally hear a train whistle in the middle of the night and I have never in 12 years been held up by a train at that crossing) and taking these kids across a major highway and/or interstate and a river doesn't match your own criteria.

My son also plays baseball with West Side Little League. This is set up by school district. If he were not going to Meadowlark, he would be playing baseball for Riverview Little League as that is where West kids play. This would take a significant amount of income and participants from the West Side Little League without their input. Many of these ball players ride their bikes to the games, which moving their League would remove that option as well.

The ramification does not just affect families that live in the Belview area that have children attending or will be attending school. You need to share this information with property owners as a large selling point to this area is the school children would attend. This could result in reduced property values and a more difficult time selling houses in this area.

Perhaps if I had a child that was only attending school for one year I would not feel as passionately as I do about having to change schools, but we have 11 years invested in this school not only in relationships, but financially with supporting the PTA and fundraising for new school equipment that I felt proud to be involved in and helping the school for my own children as well as those who will be attending for years to come. It is not about, "if you have to bus kids to one school you might as well bus them to another" it is about MUCH more than that. This area is very much like a small community and we have chosen to be apart of that community with Meadowlark included.

I am not sure of the real reasons behind this suggested redistricting, but I do know that displacing 87 students with guidelines you are not following breeds distrust and speculation. My husband and I have to do what is best for our son and we feel that pulling him from public school and sending him to a private school is the best option if he were not to be able to continue with his current, trusted school.

To all it does concern-  
I am disheartened, disappointed and quite disturbed with the way in which the daily lives of the children of our community are being ignore/played with and their families being manipulated and disregarded. It seems the rezoning committee and school district, guided by an outside consulting firm, have become too enthusiastic and far reaching in their endeavor to do what they deem right for the children. A defined issue has grown to impact our entire city and unnecessarily so. The people of Great Falls graciously and generously supported funding to improve the schools and our children's learning environments. The physical replacement of two schools has posed a concern of the division of student populations. With this, other "fixes" have been suggested for things that do not need fixing! It is extremely unfortunate that the growing population in several areas, where new elementary schools are needed, was not addressed by the school district- something that does needs fixing! Proposals and decisions should not be based on the latest trends but on the specific needs of THIS community. There have been too many past instances to prove this correct. It now seems any child may be subject to removal from their current place of education. Moving children from their current school, their friends, their neighborhood, their educational support system, their teacher and school family, their safe place, their comfortable place, for the purpose of raising test scores, improving diversity or simple because there are a few too many kids in the halls, is not responsible nor the right thing to do! It is not a new fact that children need to be and feel all the aforementioned to successfully learn and grow to become involved, educated and contributing members of community. It would seem moving as few students as possible should be the objective -mainly those directly impacted by the new schools. The families greatly impacted by these options chose to live and pay taxes where they feel their children will attend a school which provides their children with the opportunity to succeed. These are not decisions to be made by ANYONE else! The objectives listed are not being met by the proposed boundaries-in many cases, they directly contradict them. It is not safe to unnecessarily bus children up to 5 miles from their homes-crossing major roadways, rivers and railroads. Additional transportation time only makes their day longer - when close, walkable proximity is the desire. Displacing and replacing children does not make any student feel safe, happy, or secure- it makes them feel intimidated, uneasy and scared- none of which is conducive to learning. Nor does it welcome supportive, involved and comfortable parents- as it may very well have the undesirable result of causing anguish, doubt, anger or revenge. Once children begin their educational journey, at their particular school, there is ownership, pride and commitment that should not be broken. Children need to remain in the school in which they began and attend- It is invaluable for their success! I have always believed we have a wonderful school district that tries to do all things in the best interest of kids-it would be a travesty if even one child lost their love of learning because of unnecessary changes in their educational life! Please don't let the decisions being proposed tarnish our district. Thank You

I don't completely agree with boundary change. It will effect permissive transfers and could make to were kids are stuck in not so good of schools. Schools that aren't teaching at their academic level and could cause them to fall instead of continuing to go forward. My daughter has been a permissive transfer for almost 3 years. She excels at her school and is doing extremely well. Kids that are in her same grade but who attend the school in our district aren't at that acidification level as her do to the school not teaching their students. I would hate for my daughter to have to leave a top class school we're she is excelling and has all her friends to be forced to attend a school who would hold her back from learning. I understand there are other benefits to this boundary but there is negative ones to that can affect kids and their learning. I really hope you see and understand where I'm coming from and I appreciate your time. Thank you.

Opposed to redistrict Bellevue elementary students from Meadowlark as we it will decrease the value of home in Bellevue. Meadowlark has a reputation of being one of the best schools in Great Falls and people move to this area in order for their kids to be in the Meadowlark district. By redistricting to West (reputation plus longer commute), it will make the real estate in Bellevue less appealing and decrease the value of our homes. In addition, we value the proximity of Meadowlark to our homes, redistricting us to West poses expense, difficulty and danger (children going across the water and literally passing Meadowlark in the commute to West).

I absolutely am against this boundary adjustment that would send my daughters to Longfellow. I bought my house specifically in the Sunnyside school district. The environments those poor kids come from at Longfellow is not their fault. I understand the teachers are trying their best, but my children do not need to be exposed to some of the situations that happen in or around Longfellow. Just the other day they arrested 2 meth dealers a block away from that school. I mentioned at the beginning I bought my house with my children's education and well-being in mind, as I'm sure others in my neighborhood have. I hope the school board takes that into consideration before making such a drastic decision.

I am very much opposed to moving students from Meadowlark Elementary to West Elementary or other location. Currently, many of the students can walk to school. For others, it is a short trip on mostly residential streets. Meadowlark is the classic case of a "neighborhood school". It provides a good education to our kids in a safe and healthy environment near their homes. Meadowlark currently has 507 students in a school recommended for 500. That is not significant overcrowding. We must concentrate on our kid's education well before demographics, building useage or any other lesser considerations.

When reading through the "criteria/guidelines" for redistricting, I still can't understand why my kids, who can bike/walk to school now, have to take the bus. We (Belview families) are literally driving by Meadow Lark to take our kids to a different school 8 miles from our home vs Meadowlark which is 3 miles. And then there's 10th ave which our kids are now expected to cross. I would think this is considered a major roadway-and let's be honest, the worst road/Ave in Great Falls where the most accidents happen! Why are we making kids cross 10th if they don't have to? I cannot stress enough how moving Belview to West elementary does not make any sense nor does it follow barely any criteria for redistricting.

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First of all, thank you to all who are working on the redistricting plan. It must seem to be a thankless job because you won't be able to please everyone and some very difficult decisions will need to be made.

I would like to encourage you to more carefully consider a couple of points when creating the boundaries.

- 1) Keep children in existing schools when possible. Because school assignment affects placement for soccer, basketball, Boy Scouts and many other activities outside of school, a change in schools could potentially disrupt a kid's entire world. Currently, of all my child's team affiliations, only baseball would likely remain unchanged. This is a lot of change for these little ones. In addition, for juniors and seniors in high school, the established relationships with faculty and staff are so important for Letters of Recommendation and scholarship applications.
- 2) Geographic proximity. We are in the Belview neighborhood - chosen intentionally when we relocated here 6 years for work. At that time, we did not have school-age children, but we liked that the kids would be able to ride bikes to school. In the proposed boundaries, the assigned school is much farther away, over the river and across some very busy roads and riding bikes would not be an option. I like to walk to school to pick up my kids when I can and though much of the year this is not possible, it is exceptionally nice when weather permits.

Please keep in mind that a change in Elementary school is for 7 years, more than half the time that the child will be educated in the GFPS system. Many parents carefully research and select the Elementary school district they reside in for this very reason.

I know personal situations cannot be considered, but I think adhering to the above is in the best interests of all students in Great Falls. As noted before, we intentionally selected a neighborhood assigned to Meadow Lark because we value the school rating and have family very near Meadow Lark that care for our children on days I work late. I'm disappointed that the careful planning and decisions we made to engineer the life we wanted may not come to fruition.

Thank you for your consideration and time. I wish you the best of luck in your endeavors.

I am a resident of Bellvue Hts and I am not agreeable with rezoning ours kids, the whole reason we bought in this area was so our kids can continue going there. Plus this will definetly impact our resale value in the neighborhood, we already pay enough in taxes to also get hit with decrease value

With regard to permissive transfers... We would like to see permissive transfers continue for siblings of special needs children who are unable to attend their home school. Many of the MSDB students mainstream into Lewis and Clark/East/GFHS, including our hard of hearing kindergartner. Moving our hearing 2nd grader to Lewis and Clark from Meadowlark this year was a very positive change. It's improved our kids' relationship with each other and it certainly makes logistics easier on us as parents. It also eliminated the need for bussing for both children, as we drive them to and from school now. We would like to be able to continue sending our hearing daughter to Lewis and Clark (and eventually East and GFHS) in the future if possible. Thank you, Whitney Olson and Doug Little, parents of Aliona and Lucia Little

Esteemed board members,

My neighbors and I are strongly opposed to this measure regarding the move of Belview Palisades students to West elementary. I moved to Great Falls in 2016 and specifically chose my house based on the children's attendance at Meadowlark. As an Air National Guard member in Alaska over 16 years my kids have had to deal with my deploying for an aggregate of years due to operations in the Middle East. This has brought a level of instability that I can't prevent given my choice of profession. I moved to Great Falls in order to be closer to extended family and raise my kids in a great small town to help mitigate my involuntary leaves of absence. My kids are the most important thing in my life. That importance directly affected where we moved when we arrived. Hence the selection of the Belview area, as Meadowlark is so well regarded. I couldn't be happier with my decision over the last year as I truly enjoy Great Falls and Meadowlark. However this redistricting is a punch in the gut. The move was not easy for my son and two daughters. They have never moved before and had to say tearful goodbyes to many friends they had known there entire life. Luckily they have made fast friends at Meadowlark elementary and we have had great engagement with the teachers. Moving them again I fear would rip a bandage off a healing wound, increasing the unpredictability they have already suffered given my work and our recent move. Please do not rip this bandage. Please do not redistrict the Belview area.

Additionally, my children sometimes ride their bikes to school as we all did when we were kids. This commute on bike would be very hazardous given distance and the amount of traffic they must navigate if they had to move to West. This portion of the decision goes directly against many goals stated in the guiding principles and criteria stated on your website which I hope are given more weight in a reconsideration of the Belview area redistricting.

Anecdotally, a house has come up for sale this week on my street. A coworker was considering buying this. I disclosed this current potential of redistricting. She said that would definitely prevent her from buying this house if Belview was redistricted. I am disappointed that my coworkers do not want to join my community based on this situation.

I urge you to reconsider this action. I will be available for additional justification at any time day or night. Please email, call or Facebook messenger me at any time.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very respectfully,  
Major Brian Nosich  
Montana Air National Guard  
Chief of Wing Intelligence

Hello, my name is Ryan Winkler, I am a parent of a current 4th grader at Meadowlark Elementary. She has attended Meadowlark since beginning her public education and this is my third child to attend the school, as her two older brothers also completed their Elementary education there. I would like to express my sincere disagreement with the committees potential plan to redistrict my neighbor hood and force the current children of Belview Palisades to change the Grade School with which they happily attend. I sympathize with the challenges that public schools face on a regular basis concerning boundaries, student populations, socioeconomic blending and the financial objectives of the district, but would urge this committee to reconsider this potential move. In addition to the increased cost for the district to bus students to the new location, and the obvious challenges that the students themselves will face, please consider these additional arguments. Meadowlark is a highly regarded school in this district, parents have worked hard to afford a residence that falls within its boundaries and most have made conscious decisions and sacrifices that ensure their children can attend this high performing school. For the committee to disregard the desires of these high tax paying families, the sacrifices they have and continue to make, and the emotional toll it will undoubtedly take on the children is inconceivable. In addition, the obvious affect it will have on property values must be taken into consideration. Challenges to the students, increased cost to the district, the negative affect on property values and the overall anger and resentment of these affected families cannot be ignored. Please reconsider this measure and work to find other means with which to reach the committees desired goals.

Not in favor of transporting elementary students from Belview Palisades to West Elementary. Please keep them at Meadowlark where they have been since the subdivision was established....

As a current Middle School Counselor and former Middle School Teacher for 23 years, I believe demographics of the school population is a critical consideration for this committee. Information on free & reduced lunch, group homes and students considered homeless should be considered. When Great Falls Public Schools had three middle schools, the populations were evenly dispersed between the schools. This created an effective learning environment for all, including those groups mentioned above. We know poverty impacts our students and when the numbers are out of balance it impacts all students in a school. It also impacts teachers, administrators and those who provide necessary support; for instance counselors, school psychologists, SRO's and support staff. In my opinion, this is a great opportunity to address some of these issues.

As a traveling elementary teacher, I see the need to rebalance some of our schools. My daughter is on a permissive transfer, however, and I am very apprehensive about the possibility that her school will change when she is so successful at her current school. Is there a way to "grandfather in" current permissive transfer students for the benefit of those students without affecting the overall process?

I would encourage the department to find ways to keep the children from Belview Palisades at Meadowlark Elementary School. A longer bus ride would not be productive for elementary children. In addition, parent involvement and after school activities could suffer.

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We purchased a home in the downtown area with a school boundary placing us at Lincoln, many of the students (lower socioeconomic) within this pocket have excelled because of their ability to attend a higher AYP school like Lincoln (unlike Whittier) these students have benefitted by being transported and integrated into Lincoln.

I was so proud of the district for having this pocket of socioeconomic diversity redistricted for the past few years. I consider this very progressive for Montana. Now many of these children are going to be moved to a school that can't meet AYP for many years and will see an influx of more students. Does that make any sense? What resources does the district plan to give to Whittier to accommodate a higher enrollment of socioeconomic diversity? Why has Whittier continued to perform so poorly and yet you want to move more kids there? What does this do for our city to continue to create these pockets of poverty? I am so sad that I promoted, fought for and encouraged the passing of the bond and now feel blindsided by this quick move by the district to change boundaries! If it's about overcrowding then why give so many permissives to Lincoln then say it's overcrowded? We bought our residence because of the school. We want to revitalize downtown but it's almost impossible with no school integration and pockets of poverty attending a couple schools. We currently support Lincoln with additional personal funds and encourage business support for our public schools but if we are redistricted to a school with such poor performance such as Whittier we will be forced to take that financial support for the public schools and use it to pay for private education.

The one thing I'm grateful for is this has opened my eyes and I now realize the disparities of our schools to a greater extent. What are the AYP scores for Whittier the OPI webpage says there's an error and I'm unable to find the scores? Another link to the <https://www.schooligger.com/go/MT/schoolrank.aspx> says Whittier is one of the worst performing schools in the state and has been declining for the past 10 years? Is this true? I'm beyond disappointed by this.. How does a school remain open with these scores if they're correct? And now you want to put more students there? How is this safe? Safe for our community? Our tax dollars are doing what? And now I will possibly be forced to put my child in this school and continue to have to pay taxes to support this, even if I put my child in private school? I can now see the reason or benefit of Charter schools, it gives parents options.

Please don't redistrict the pocket of students from downtown that attend Lincoln and have benefitted immensely by socioeconomic integration!! This helps our downtown immensely and improves our city more than you'll ever know.. I see it every time my child rides the bus and we wait at the bus stop, these kids are benefitting!

If you insist on redistricting consider parallel horizontal borders of integration of the North side with one line going to Whittier and the other to Giant Spings with both reaching far to the east and west!

I would like to pose several related questions to the committee. Since the timeline for implementation is proposed to begin in Fall 2018, what is the plan for students who currently attend one school but will be asked to move schools because of boundary reajstment? Are there plans to allow those who are in 6th, 8th or 12th grade to be allowed to finish at the school where they began? In particular, students who live on MAFB and who are seniors at CMR seem to deserve consideration. Will there be changes to permissive transfer system at the high school level? How should parents seek this information? Thank you for taking time to discuss these complex issues.

I spent some time looking at the various options made available on the Redistricting website, and I would like to submit an additional option for the committee's consideration. I wish I could comment on more than just Meadow Lark's boundaries, but I am not as familiar with those areas and so I restrict my comments to what I know and the data that I have reviewed.

One of the challenges facing Meadow Lark is that the school is at capacity and the population within the geographic area in which the current Meadow Lark students live is growing, so there is a need to move some current students from Meadow Lark to another GFPS elementary school. In the majority of these options on the website, the Belview neighborhood (West of Flood Road and the train tracks) is shown to attend West Elementary. I would like to present an alternative.

I think moving these children from a local, neighborhood school is not in the best interest of the community. Extracurricular activities for older elementary school students take place before and after school and outside of the times the busses run. Currently Belview students who wish to participate in these activities are able to ride their bikes or walk to school. If these students were moved to a different school, the walk or ride option is eliminated. For students whose parents work and are unable to drive children to/from school at those times, that leaves them with the options of attending HANDS (which is not designed for the older elementary students), having students on school grounds 'illegally' at times which they are not permitted to be unsupervised or not participating in the enhancement opportunities.

Older elementary students currently are able to walk/ride to many of their classmates' homes which fosters community and independence. To move these students to a school further away would disrupt that growth as well.

Based on the importance of attending a true neighborhood school, I would propose that the areas S of 45th Ave SW on both Flood Rd and Fox Farm Road would be districted for an elementary school other than Meadow Lark. While perhaps not a large number of students in comparison to Belview, this area is the fastest growing section of Meadow Lark's current boundaries which would aid in the school's population being at capacity. Geographically, these houses are not close enough or safe enough to ride bikes or walk to school or friends' houses. In addition, busses do not currently run to all areas both before and after school. These students would still attend school with their closest neighbors fostering community in their small pockets.

I appreciate the committee's consideration.

After reviewing the options that have been provided, I still think there is some work to do. I would like to see Giant Springs servicing the students on the other side of 8th avenue north. It is contradictory to the goals by having these kids going to Morningside which is farther away and along 8th avenue instead of having them cross the street to go to GSE. I do not think that having kids go from Black Eagle to Morningside makes any sense at all. Black eagle children should go to Sacajawea. I am not buying into the diversity bit of the goals. That is only prevalent in the Elementary School changes. I do like that Malmstrom MS and HS goes to GFH. That makes more geographical sense. I would love to be apart of the conversation whenever the public is aloud as I was with the facility upgrade conversations and provide input.

Thank you for looking at the current school boundaries. When hearing comments, I want to urge everyone to resist a narrative around home prices. I believe this to be coded racism. With the historical context of good neighborhoods, with high house prices, meaning low crime and neighborhood efforts meant to keep out racial minorities, good schools and good neighborhoods has an inherent racial background. When considering the best boundaries for schools, stick to the data found in your GIS study, not the opinions of ill-informed citizens.

The last paragraph was quite incoherent, but I am trying this on my break and wanted to do so before I forgot.

Garrett Lankford

Dear Committee. I am not able to attend the meeting tonight 11/28 to listen to what is thought and said, however here are my thoughts on the boundaries referring to moving the Bellview homes out of Meadow Lark district. After last meeting I only options 1,2,3,4 were available. I see now that options 5 and 6 are on the website and asking as far as Meadow Lark is concerned to please lean towards them. The reason for the boundary moves are concerning the new Giant Springs Elementary and it is logical to make use of those areas and the changes on that side of town. The buildings on the West side of Great Falls have not been expanded, the changes regarding Meadow Lark seem counter productive with all the goals set by the analysis company. In the first table shown the schools labeled as "above high capacity" are Lincoln, Meadow Lark, Riverview, and Sacajawea. When moving to Great Falls over ten years ago, those were the schools I heard you wanted your children to attend. I believe that will continue to be true and changing the lines will not change the fact people will continue to move into these boundary lines to attend the schools. Moving the Bellview children from Meadow Lark would create that neighborhood as less desirable to families moving in the area due to the distance that West Elementary is from the location. This would have been true to me when purchasing a home over ten years ago. I can only imagine what it would do to house value, which is only a concern to the fact the line change would have us consider moving to continue to be in the boundary lines of Meadow Lark. This year my youngest child is in kindergarten at Meadow Lark. We chose this home truly because of the proximity to Meadow Lark, which is slightly over a mile and not crossing 10th Ave South. I know my family would is not the only ones considering this or the other option I have heard is private schools. Which I can relate to. If we are suddenly busing and commuting miles across town then why not another direction towards a private school? I am sure this is not what the Committee wanted when trying to make the school capacity use more productive. I did also notice the change in the graph from the table given out Oct. 10 from 82 students that would move from Meadow Lark to West, to the table now as 71. If you are considering either number it is a large number of students to move. A table of Total K-6th Live and Attend in Impacted has an estimated number of 400 to 301 impacted. The last number does not include the change of Bellview out of Meadow Lark boundary. This is a huge change! When looking at GFPS redistricting guiding principles/criteria, "Minimize the number of student moves, while considering redistricting goals" is definitely not being met here. When looking at the table Enrollment/Live-In Statistics: Continued (page 2) There is always a school with "Above the High Capacity", it is more of choosing which one it is. It is also interesting that Meadow Lark changes to "Within Low and High Capacity" from 507 to 492. I would again like to point out the previous change in from the table released in October to the the table released now in November that it was an eleven student difference. Which is also very close of the amount that would have Meadow Lark in the ideal range. So why are we moving 71 students to make a 15 student difference? Why have them suddenly be out of range to walk to school or bike to school. They do walk and/or bike or have after school activities (which are usually divided up to school attend) in an area close to their home. Why have change a 5 to 7 minute commute to over 15 minutes and crossing large amounts of traffic? Why change an area where there is little room for development and within the city limits but not areas that are miles away from Meadow Lark, out of city limits, and already commute? When considering the GFPS Redistricting Guiding Principles/Criteria, please really look at the impact changing this Bellview neighborhood geographically close to Meadow Lark and isolated from the other choices of elementary schools. Thank you for your time.

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To The Great Falls Public School Board, The Great Falls Public School Board Redistricting Committee, and Cropper GIS:

Schools are supposed to be a safe, constant in a child's life. A place where a child can go to learn and grow in a stable environment. A place that is unwavering. Great Falls Public School District is in the process of redistricting the entire community after the voters passed \$98.8 million dollar bond levy to pay for renovations, upgrades, and remodeling of several school sites; as well as building two new elementary schools. My husband and I both fought for this bond to pass...to better the children of this community's education. Little did we know in hopes of strengthening the education system they are now in fact trying to destabilize hundreds of children's educational communities. Had we known what would have come from passing this levy, maybe we would have voted the other way. This move on the school district's behalf not only shows a lack of concern for the well being of the hundreds of children affected by redistricting, but also the lack of forethought. They should have planned better to accommodate the children currently enrolled in the public school system. While it is understandable to renovate, update, and build additional schools; why does it need to affect every school in the district?

They say overcrowding in certain schools is a problem and that is one of the many factors related to moving children around. But on the contrary, Meadow Lark Elementary for instance is not overcrowded. But they still want to pull all of the Belview community out of Meadow Lark and place all those children in West Elementary. Why? Each one of those children will be destabilized and emotionally troubled by such a move. The redistricting guidelines set forth by the committee and Cropper GIS need to actually be followed. They have broken all but one of their own guidelines by moving the children of Belview from Meadow Lark Elementary to West Elementary. Why are they doing this? Is there an underlying objective? Not to mention the 300+ homes in the Belview area that will decrease in value, but continue to pay very high property taxes! Great Falls as a whole has always struggled to attract young professionals to our community and struggled even more to keep them here. While we, as a community, are trying to remedy this problem. Issues such as the School District's redistricting makes for yet another reason for people to lose interest in Great Falls. My husband and I moved back to Great Falls after college because we felt it was a safe, stable environment to raise our children. We knew they could receive a great education in the public school system. We moved home, bought our house in the district we wanted our children to attend school in, and remodeled our home. Now not only does the School District want to pull our child out of her elementary school. The school she knows and has come to love. The school she has made friends in. The school she feels safe and comfortable in. They also will be decreasing our property's value. So, after all the time and money spent to renovate (which only increases the value); which is a good thing for the community) we will be in a financially difficult situation. This will not just affect people with children in the district; it will affect every home owner in the designated neighborhoods.

As parents you always try to do what is best for your child. You try to plan for everything. You try to ensure your child is safe and secure. By redistricting children it is also affecting everyone on an emotional level. It is very frustrating, confusing, and saddening to see our public school system have total disregard for the children and the parents of this community. In the end the Great Falls Public School District can do what they choose. However, we will not be sitting around waiting to see if our child's education is going to be destabilized. We will not be waiting around to see if our home's value is going to plummet. And shame on this School District for making us all feel this way. If we need to we will be pulling our child out of the public education system and taking our child's education to the private schools. This, in my mind is a travesty.

We moved from Georgia last year. When deciding on a home to purchase, we specifically looked at school performance and reputation. We quickly discovered that Meadowlark was known throughout the state as one of the finest elementary schools. We specifically purchased a home in the Bel-View area to be able to send our not yet school aged daughter to Meadowlark. Redistricting our kids to West elementary would be blatantly unfair to the many homeowners who made a choice to purchase inside the existing boundaries. The Cropper report states there will be a decline in Elementary school population after the 2018 school year. Based on that alone, I see no reason to adjust the school boundaries.

My house is located on Huckleberry drive and the diversity and redistricting plan directly affects not only our kids but also our property values. We bought in this area strictly due to the fact that the district allows our children to go to Meadowlark a top performing public school. This is a major contributing factor to why people buy houses in certain locations in the city, it would be very unfair of the school district to now rezone and take our kids out of their current zone and send them to West who in turn scores so much lower on the public school ranking. We as parents made the financial sacrifice to allow them the opportunity to go to a certain school and we should be afforded that opportunity to continue with their education where we planned on them going. Further more it directly affects the real-estate investment that we have made and should not be taken lightly. Meadowlark makes sense for the location we our in and if you want to up rankings of other schools, get buy in and commitment from the parents in those areas, do not bring in outside help to fix a localized problem!

The cropper rep. Was supposed to provide the committee with student load information for the other Meadowlark areas, other than Belview.

It seems typical that the neighborhoods closest to the school are normally chosen last to be moved to a different school district. BelView is the second closest neighborhood to meadowlark school. Many students in Belview neighborhood walk and ride bikes to Meadowlark currently, while students in Foxfarm and other areas are currently bussing.

Regarding the idea of moving Belview students to West in order to reduce the load at Meadowlark elementary school, I feel this will be a very short term solution for the following reasons.

Many Belview neighbors are invested in Meadowlark. Of the several families I've surveyed, if they are districted to West:

- 1) Many will either purchase properties in your new Meadowlark district (I know 2 families literally in this process before this decision was made)
- 2) Some people will somehow come up with Utility bills for your new Meadowlark district while remaining in Belview (this is currently done by several families that send their children to Meadowlark).
- 3) Several families will leave the public schools all together, and attend private schools (this will decrease school funding).

I think you can see that the load on Meadowlark will quickly shift back to the same load.

I would note that from what I've heard, the surplus of students in certain grades at Meadowlark has been cyclical and in past goes back to below capacity numbers within a year or two.

I would also note that there is currently, available space for classroom expansion in those grades which you feel this is needed.

These seem easy and logical solutions to reduce Meadowlark's load:

- 1) Moving a more distant neighborhood of the Meadowlark district (more traditional way to district schools).
- 2) Allowing a year or two, to see if the class size will decrease, as has happened in past years.
- 3) Classroom expansion and
- 4) A better system of confirming the Meadowlark district residency (other than utility bills)

My child is going to be affected by the redistricting sending him from Lincoln to Whittier. Not to mention the value of our house will decrease having Whittier as our school district. We bought this house because it was in the Lincoln School district. Would you want to purposely send your child to a school who does not have good ratings and that is continuing decreasing on their scores....no! The whole purpose of sending my child to school is so he learns, excels and succeeds, exactly what he is doing at Lincoln. He will be bused no matter which school He is at, so why not leave him at Lincoln. This will also affect my niece and nephew. Sounds like the redistricting will require more buses than they are using now. Way more shuffling involved.

This redistricting of schools will effect so many parents and children. This redistricting will send my child to a school that is below average on test scores. I want what is best for my child and his education. If he is going to end up being bused to a school that does not meet the standards, he might as well be bused to his current school, Lincoln. He has severe allergies and is established at the school with the teachers and staff. He has a bond there and trust in them that he would have to reestablish. It would be detrimental to his education. We are giving these kids in the satellite area an opportunity to succeed. Why take that away from them.

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I think it is a very bad idea to redistrict all the newer construction and growth south of town on Flood Road to West Elementary as in Option 5 and 6. The Meadowlark district has been a consistent supporter of all mill levies and bond issues. Moving many of them from the Meadowlark School district will very likely impact that. People built their homes or bought their homes with an understanding of the school boundaries and it is unfair to them to change those boundaries. It not only impacts their children but the desirability of people moving to this region. Permissive transfers to the closest school will not happen especially for larger families. The inconvenience to all will be substantial with no definable benefit. This will likely lead to a much stronger push on the families that can afford it to move their children to private schools and a subsequent loss of support for the public school system. My children are grown but they now have children and have chosen to live primarily in the school region they desire. They do not want to move do to redistricting so they likely will move their children to private schooling. I would suggest you strongly consider the political fall out of unfavorable redistricting of previously supportive regions. I would hope the committee is considering the impact to all, not just those that are making the most noise.

Interested in rezoning and why it's happening

I only really looked at the boundary options in regards to Meadowlark and West elementary since where I reside now will be Meadowlark no matter what and where we will build will be West no matter what. I do not like Option 5 or 6 because it seems like it would leave West in a similar predicament it is in now. I like the other proposed options with Belview area going to West because I feel it would help West be a better rounded school, one which I would want to send my kids.

Education is such a huge part of what I preach to my children. With that being said my husband and I have strategically planned our moves in GF to areas where there are great school districts. One of those is Meadowlark. We recently moved from one great school district, Sacajawea district, to the Meadowlark district after we built our home. Buying our property in this area was mainly due to the beauty of the area and also because we knew our children would get a great education at Meadowlark. This is not to say I feel as though other school districts are subpar, but you do often get what you pay for. For example, my youngest son is accelerated academically. Meadowlark does a great job recognizing the students that may need more advanced education. Moving him to WEST would be horribly detrimental to his educational requirements. I know how it works at poorer schools. There are often greater behavioral issues with many students and because of this where do you think the attention is given? It's directed at the problematic kids. My son will be affected academically due to more direction and attention given to kids with behavioral problems. There are more problematic kids in poorer areas due to lack of parental support and guidance. This is not a made up statement people. Do your research. Are crimes happening in wealthier areas? No. Are crimes happening and carried out by the less educated and poorer people in poor areas? Yes. This proposition is very poorly thought out and will not only affect the Meadowlark students, but also the WEST students as well. Moves like this affect self esteem, academics, performance and affects childhood friendships. All of which are extremely important for children in these developing years.

As much as I am against moving children from one district to another, maybe an alternative thought for an idea should have been for the NE side of town and the massive expansion of new homes. From what we experienced first hand living on the NE side of town was the lack of boundaries with the housing additions headed North. Sacajawea, Riverview and Valleyview are congested due to the increased growth. Moving the newer developments to WEST would make sense from a geographical perspective and also help control overcrowding to the 3 schools just mentioned. As the area continues to expand in the NE area are there any plans on building a new school for them as well? It would make more sense to move the growth to WEST.

We live out toward Woodland Estates. We are so far away from WEST compared to those close by the NE side of town. How does this make geographical sense to the committee that proposed this preposterous idea?! Also, I want to know what background and experience the people on this committee have? Where did they get this model for redistricting our Meadowlark students to WEST? If this is someones ridiculous idea of redistribution of wealth then maybe they need to do some serious research on what sort of impact this has had on similar groups in other cities across the nation. Where is your data? You cannot simply move one demographical group on one end of the spectrum to another end of the spectrum without problems. Our students are not a social experiment!

We are very concerned about possibly changing from Meadowlark to West. We have two children at Meadowlark where we have been for 5 years and the change would be a significant disruption to their learning. It looks like out of the options left, we would show support for either option 4 or option 6. I would also recommend having a grandfather system for students that have been at a certain school over a certain length of time for a few years (e.g. 4th grade and up could stay). That should help minimize transitions since they will be changing to middle school shortly. Thank you for hearing opinions on this change.

My husband and I use to live over in west school district by the Franklin apt buildings. We saved and saved and saved our money for almost three years in order to move into a better neighborhood with a better school all to be rezoned to the old school which is completely out of our way going to and from work as well. It would be absolutely devastating to have made so much effort to relocate only to have our house value depreciated that we worked so hard to save for and the school district moved further away from the neighborhood they grow up in and build friendships around.

I am writing with regards to Option 5 of the Border Adjustment proposal. If this option is selected, to take my daughter to school, I would have to drive 20 minutes to the other side of town. Our current drive is only 9 minutes. Not to mention that we would have to drive right past Meadowlark Elementary to TAKE her to West. Even if she took the bus, the bus would either have to drive up a winding dirt private road (which is not regularly plowed during the winter) to get to the Ulm Frontage Road to take kids to school OR drive past Meadowlark on its way to West, which just seems absurd! Meadowlark is also a 3 minute drive from my workplace, as well as our son's daycare, which makes it incredibly convenient for our family. If this option is selected, my daughter, as well as my son when he is ready to enter elementary school, will not be attending West. They will instead attend Holy Spirit which is a 5 minute drive from my wife's workplace. We chose to live in the Meadowlark district because it was the school I attended and wanted my children to go there. Not to mention the connections we've made in the Meadowlark community. I know this option looks feasible on a colorful map but please take a drive out to our neighborhood (Gannon Drive) and you will realize how absurd this idea is. When considering the drawing the new boundary lines, please do not select option 5.

Thank you, I look forward to attending the December 12th Meeting.  
Cliff Rossberg  
56 Gannon Drive

We bought our house in Cottonwood Glen specifically based on the schools. Being a military family we do quite a bit of research on the best schools in a district. We always live in the neighborhoods that feed the best schools. Meadowlark is the reason we live where we do. We want what's best for our children and specifically their education. Redistricting our neighborhood will kill our resale value on our home, disrupt our neighborhood children's education, and cause our family a lot of heartache. Leave our neighborhood at Meadowlark!!!

I'm writing to oppose option #5 on the redistricting. This option would negatively affect both my kids and me as a parent. My son has attended Meadowlark since kindergarten, and is half way through his elementary education. He has established relationships with the school, the teachers and his close lifelong friends. A change of school at this point in his education would not only adversely affect his learning, it also will likely affect his social and emotional growth.

The proposed change also puts a huge strain on me as a parent as it would require me to drive across town through major intersections on busy streets at times where the city has busy and unpredictable traffic. This includes crossing both 10th avenue South and Central Avenue during times of heavy traffic. I simply cannot fathom why anyone would ask a parent to literally have to drive past the closest school to them on the way to other school on the other end of town. Those streets and traffic patters also create major safety concerns for me and my children.

Simply put, taking the kids who live the farthest out and moving them across town is not a good option for either the kids, or the parents. As such, I am opposing option #5 to the redistricting.

I believe this boundry proposed would be extremely difficult for my sons children and my neighbors who bought in the area knowing their kids would also go to school close to home

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My husband and I are retired teachers. We are now residents of Great Falls who reside within the Meadowlark Elementary School boundaries and are the grandparents of two boys, one kindergarten and one first grade student in Meadowlark. We firmly oppose one of the proposals under consideration by the school board that, if implemented, would remove our grandsons from their neighborhood school and their established community of classmates, teachers, school staff and families. We judge this plan detrimental to our family and to the community at large, so much so that we are helping our daughter explore alternatives to Great Falls Public Schools education.

Our strong opposition, shared by neighbors, is based on concerns including our grandchildren's safety, their regular school attendance, our monetary and time investment in transportation and, furthermore, the disruption of family life, the children's circle of established friends and classmates, and our close neighborhood connections.

Furthermore, students from our neighborhood, who already have a longer than average transportation time, will be forced to make a challenging school commute which includes Comer Hill travel. This extra travel entails further danger on the road, especially during inclement weather, and longer waits on frigid intersections at earlier hours for buses which may well run late as weather gets ugly. The parents who choose to provide their children a ride to school will be driving longer distances in highway traffic, as compared to the current drive on side streets and country roads.

The challenge of a longer, more difficult commute will certainly influence parents' decisions to send children to school in inclement weather. It is easily predictable that absenteeism from our neighborhood will increase, which will impact the public school funding that is partly based on attendance records.

Besides a likely loss in funding due to absenteeism, all of the students may well lose important instructional time. The teachers and staff will have to cope more often with the problems associated with absenteeism; including disruption to routine and classroom management, teachers' classroom and planning time spent reteaching important lessons, and challenges to the cohesiveness of the classroom and school community.

Fewer students, either through absenteeism or complete withdrawal from public school education, translates to less government funding for our Great Falls Public schools. It should also be taken into account that the necessary fundraising which school staff and students participate in just to make ends meet, will have less support. Families whose children do not go to their nearby neighborhood school will be less likely to participate in school fundraising, as most certainly will the families of students who have forsaken public school education for Private or Home Schooling. Parents will be less involved as the distance to travel for meetings and school gatherings is greater.

Currently, options to public school education exist. They will be further discussed and planned as parents come together against this unpopular proposal. We urge the school board to discard the proposal under discussion which redistricts Meadowlark students, and instead work to find a way that meets the school district's challenges without moving our children out of their neighborhood school. The proposed plan would have a negative impact on our families and neighborhood, and would surely compromise the overall effectiveness of Great Falls Public School education.

Respectfully Yours,  
Susan and Giedrius Ploplys

Option #5 does not follow the goal of minimizing major road crossings for the kids who live in the SW area of the existing Meadow Lark area i.e. Woodland Estates and Gannon Ranch. They would be required to cross several of the busiest roads in Great Falls under this option. Additionally, this re-districting option would force them to pass directly in front of Meadow Lark Elementary and drive an additional 2.4 miles to get to West Elementary. I sincerely urge the team to decline this option.

My family and other members of the Cottonwood Glenn subdivision are adamantly opposed to any redistricting option that would remove our children, our subdivision and our homes from the Meadowlark school district. Being a military family, our children move frequently enough due to military relocation. As parents, we desire the best for our children and pray for them to find stability to get their lives back to normal as soon as possible after a military relocation. Moving to a new school and making new friends is difficult enough for our four children without forcing them to change to another new school so soon after they've found their new normal. Their friends, their teammates and their new routine are all at Meadowlark and it would be unfair and practically unkind to make them start all over again just when things are becoming stable in their lives. Additionally, we specifically bought our home in this location because of the school district, and we paid a very handsome price as a result of the school district the house was located in. We believe Meadowlark is the best district in the city and I know many other families bought in this area, specifically in Cottonwood Glenn, because of the school district associated with our homes. If the subdivision were to be placed in any other district, our property values would most certainly be negatively and detrimentally affected. Our children, our property values and the Cottonwood Glenn subdivision implore you to please leave the Meadowlark school district unchanged. Ultimately, my family and our neighbors would greatly appreciate the stability and reassurance that our lives will not be affected so that we can maintain the same quality of life for our children and have the financial security of unchanged property values. Please don't change our school district after we have invested so much of our time, energy and money into being right where we want to be. Thank you.

I am not in favor of redistributing. Young children already spend too much time on a bus to Meadowlark. West would be too far and I would NOT be in favor of that bus traveling on the interstate to West. Comer Hill road is also gravel and NOT safe for a bus to travel on regularly. It is unfortunate that the last levy did not address the infrastructure of Meadowlark.

Proposed redistricting lines also seem to favor developments disproportionately which will affect property values.

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The state of Montana Rates its school on a 1 to 10 scale. Meadowlark is rated at 9, West is rated at 3. Meadowlark's proficiency scores are Math 80, Language 82 percent proficient; West scores are Math 29, Language 32 percent proficient. No one wants to leave a great school for a poorly performing one that is twice as far away.

The #1 reason we purchased our home in Bel View was so our two children would attend Meadowlark Elementary. I do not understand how changing schools for them helps anyone. It will increase travel time for all students involved. It will add unnecessary stress for both students and parents involved in switching schools. It will also more than likely negatively affect home values. I ask the committee to keep students in the Bel View area in Meadowlark.

I am writing as the Secretary of the Blue Heron Homeowners Association to communicate that our members are opposed to Option 5 that would move children in our neighborhood south of Great Falls out of the Meadowlark School boundary. First, it seems unreasonable to move the families who are farthest south of town and farthest away from West to that school. Comer Hill road that would provide the most direct road from our neighborhood to West is a treacherous, steep, gravel road with sharp curves that is unsafe for buses to travel, particularly in the winter when there is snow and ice. Transporting kids to West instead of Meadowlark will add significantly more travel time for kids on the bus and for those whose parents drive them to school. While our middle and high school kids do have long bus rides to their schools, putting an elementary age student on such a long bus ride is not reasonable if it can be avoided. Secondly the small population of students in our area will not have a major impact on enrollment over the total capacity at Meadowlark. Lastly, many of the families in our Homeowners Association specifically chose to live in a neighborhood where they knew their kids would be attending Meadowlark because it is such a highly regarded school as evidenced by state data on reading and math proficiency. Many of our homeowners are concerned about the impact the boundary adjustment in Option 5 will have on our property values. Although we recognize we have excellent teachers in all of our schools, our homeowners will feel less positive about our school district and less supportive of future mill levies if our property values decline because Option 5 is chosen.

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| <p>My wife and I are very much opposed to Option 5 and being redistricted out of Meadowlark's area into West's.</p> <p>Busing children from Flood Road across town would not benefit the children in that area. Children now days already spend a large portion of time in school and getting to and from school. Busing these children would require them to go across town crossing major roads, spend at least 30 extra minutes on the bus and will place them in a school that struggles with over crowding and lack of resources.</p> <p>It does not make any sense that the children who are furthest away from West Elementary, living in Gannon ranch and Woodland Estates, are the children who would be redistributed. Please consider leaving the students at Meadow Lark! My daughter, who struggles with anxiety, is so successful at Meadow Lark and I fear what will happen to her health if she has to change schools. Being on the bus an additional 60 minutes each day is never a good plan for students. Thank you!</p> <p>Object to the move of elementary students from Woodland Estates and points further distant along Flood Road to a school several miles further distant than Meadowlark. Makes no sense to figuratively or literally bus students directly past one elementary school to get them to another. Risk to and safety considerations of both the student AND parent is greatly increased by the travel and congestion related to other city travel patterns. School district boundary changes need to minimize/reduce risk.....not increase it as the West Elementary change would. Poor planning (capacity and future placement of individual schools) is no excuse for jeopardizing human safety.</p> <p>I am also concerned for the public attitude and good will that the District has garnered these last few years....it will suffer greatly with this proposed change. That does not bode well for future bonding and funding issues. I applaud the District, Board and Superintendent for your recent efforts. Please don't sacrifice those tremendous gains with such a redistricting gaffe. Thank you.</p> <p>I am hoping that there is a plan to at least "grandfather" in students who will be moved to a new zone, but wish to remain in their current school. We bought our house because of the school zone and our children really want to remain there to finish out their elementary school years. In this transition we need to come up with a plan to minimize the impact on the current students continuity of education and relationships at their current elementary school. Eg. Can we prioritize permissive transfers if there is room in their current school for the children being moved to a new zone?</p> <p>As a mother who lives in Woodland Estates with a child in Meadow Lark, I would ask you to not consider Option 5 a viable option for my neighborhood. I understand I am partial to the current zoning and, by the map, it looks reasonable but in reality the practicality of actual travel to West is excessive when Meadow Lark is between my neighborhood and West. This is not just because I prefer to travel this route, but because it is the route to travel into Great Falls from my neighborhood. Additionally, besides driving past Meadow Lark, this redistricting would cause us to cross not only the 10th Ave S intersection but also Central Ave W to go to school. I urge you to vote to keep Woodland Estates students in Meadow Lark. Thank you for allowing us input into this very complex undertaking.</p> <p>I am against redistricting Gannon area. It is a very long bus ride to Meadowlark for young children. Adding additional travel would provide hardship to those families. I think these children should have the advantage to attending a school closer to home. Many of use bought homes and built homes in Gannon specifically because our children would attend Meadowlark. I also feel that currently there are not many families with elementary aged children in Gannon and re-districting this area would not be helpful in accomplishing adjusting the school's population. I also believe that moving children away from their friends and the school they know can be potentially difficult for them.</p> <p>USING THIS FOR MY STORY ON KRTV -- NOT TAKING SURVEY.</p> <p>We live on Flood Road. I totally disagree with the proposed redistricting for Meadow Lark School. We have no children in school but have had 4 in GFPS. If my children had to be bused over to West Elementary I would have been inclined to homeschool them. The bus ride is way too long on frequently bad roads. People buy their homes with consideration of the schools their children will attend and distances, bus schedules and quality of schools in mind. And your proposals will affect too many children negatively. Great care must be taken when deciding to move children from one school to another and perhaps a different option to save money should be considered than redistricting. My kids went to private school for years at a fraction of the cost of public school! There must be another way to cut costs...is this just a way to scare people into approving your levies!??</p> <p>Woodland Estates has historically always been part of Meadowlark School long before some of the newer subdivisions have. People are extremely upset about this. If students cannot go to Meadowlark, they will probably opt to go to private school, as there are many options in Great Falls.</p> <p>Is a copy of the proposed districts available?</p> <p>I live in Black Eagle and have looked at the proposed maps. I do think rezoning is important however for black eagle to be thrown to schools not close to our homes is ridiculous! Riverview or Sacajawea are within a short drive of our homes where as Whittier or Morningside are across the bridge and town. Then to have our kids move for middle school to East and then High School Great Falls High is definitely not acceptable. Those are farther traveling distance for this area. I have two older kids that thank God will follow under their fathers address for the middle school and high school but looking into the moves Black Eagle should be left on this side of the zoning.</p> <p>We bought our home in Woodland Estates specifically to be in the Meadowlark school district. We do not want our child bused past the school she attends to go all the way across town. Meadowlark is rated 2 nd in state while West Elementary is rated below 100th in state We do not want our child transferred against our wishes out of our school district and into a school district we did not select.</p> <p>If a stated goal is to reduce overcrowding, why is Valley View - which is currently at low capacity - being pushed over high capacity? The majority of the students being moved to Valley View are coming from West, which is currently well under high capacity and in two of the options will end up under low capacity.</p> <p>My children go to Meadowlark, we moved into this neighborhood to send them to a good school. In your proposals you take them out of the school they have grown up in, away from their friends and bus them from Gannon Ranch all the way to West Elementary-right past Meadowlark-their neighborhood school. Redistricting us to West not only poses expense, but puts children in danger by having them cross the river and major highways. You say it is due to overcrowding, but the numbers say that this will be less of a problem in years to come. Please reconsider this proposal and keeep our kids in their neighborhood school!</p> <p>We live in Black Eagle, my children go yo Riverview elementary. I have one child who is in the autism spectrum and has quite attached to the staff at his school. This attachment has helped him succeed in school, and helped re staff with dealing with him in a more friendly manner. My worry is I'm going to have to go back to square one on dealing with behavior problems with him since if he goes to another school, he has to deal with people he doesn't know. Also, why move kids across the river if your trying to keep them from crossing major roads.</p> <p>I'm against redistricting. Children should stay within their familiar neighborhoods so that they can walk to and from school if at all possible. I thought, possibly trusting too much, that the new school plans took care of building safety issues AS WELL AS issues such as child population. Can the Board and Administrator not multitask? This bussing plan is ridiculous.</p> <p>Talking with our neighbors in the Lincoln triangle, the comment was made that the reason the re-districting is occurring is because of too many students in the zone, but if things were kept the same there would not be overcrowding from live in students, but from permissive transfers? The current capacity at Lincoln is 353-409. However there are only 328 students who live in the current boundaries. So why are the current boundaries the problem?</p> <p>We value the proximity of the school to our home. We recently moved from 2nd Ave SW into Woodland Estates, and our two main motivating factors were 1) to get out of the district for West and 2) to get into the district for Meadowlark. Redistricting us to West would negate the decisions we made while moving, as well as add time, expense and danger to our children's transportation. Furthermore, it is absurd to ask families from the Woodland Estates/Gannon Ranch area to travel PAST Meadowlark to attend a different facility. At Meadowlark, our children are interacting with children of similar means and family structures/values; this is highly important to us and to the development of our children. Redistricting would mean forcing our children away from friendships they have retained since preschool, and exposing them to a whole new set of people, standards, customs and more. I am not willing to put my children through this. When I was a child I attended three different middle schools in one calendar year - I know all too well what it feels like to switch schools, how difficult adjusting can be to new friends, how lonesome a new school can feel regardless of how many kids walk the halls. Again, I am NOT willing to enroll our children in West. We are Meadowlark.</p> <p>Our home is 317 7th st south and my son attends Whittier. The change would have him go to Longfellow and I do not want this. He has established friendships with classmates and a repore with the staff. If you do make these changes you must allow students to attended the schools that they are currently attending if they want to. You are making these changes to help students but you need to keep in mind that this may have the opposite affect and make things even more difficult for these growing minds. I will fight for my sons right to stay in the school that has helped get him to where is at.</p> <p>I am so saddened to learn about our area being eliminated from the Lincoln district. We bought our house here because it was in the Lincoln district, a school which has an amazing community and learning environment, including students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The options for redistricting leaves the entire lower north- side in one school, moving even more students from the lower SES areas into Whittier. This is a huge blow to those of us who voted for the levy and are now being completely blind-sided. One of the reasons stated for the changes is "overcrowding", however the number of students living in the Lincoln district is well within, and even below capacity. If there is a problem with overcrowding, it is not because the area has too many students, it is because of the number of permissive transfers that were allowed and now the families and homeowners in the Lincoln triangle area are being eliminated. (Not that I don't love our permissive transfer families!) But the reasons and resulting impact don't make sense. I think this issue REALLY needs to be re-evaluated for the benefit of the entire north-side community and students. It has been stated that they are trying to keep the numbers lower at Lincoln so that some permissive transfers can be allowed, but this does not help those students in lower SES status whose parents can't drive them to school each day. So again, we are creating huge discrepancies in our schools on this side of town.</p> |
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My husband and I have been looking at houses in Sun Valley Meadows, near Sun Prairie. The houses are listed in your info finder as being part of Vaughn, but they are, in fact, part of Great Falls and are part of the area whose taxes were increased in the GFPS levy. I have been told by residents of the area that the GFPS bus runs by the subdivision, along the Ulm Vaughn road but just doesn't stop. Is there a reason it has not been included in the boundary adjustment? Residents of the area are under the impression that it's not being included because it's a new subdivision and info finder lists it as Vaughn. Is this true? It would definitely weigh our decision in the home buying process. The address is 55 Meadows Loop, 59404. Thanks.

We value the proximity of Meadow Lark to our home and are concerned about the additional travel to West because of the added expense and difficulty of transporting our children a further distance.

Please do not redistrict Meadowlark School. I live at 47 Woodland Estates. We do not want our kids bussed all the way across town, A major highway and the Sun River, to West Elementary. The Flood Road, Woodland Estates, Gannon Ranch Area residents purchased their homes with the intent of sending their kids to Meadowlark, North and CMR. This is a major life choice to purchase a home in this area or any area for that matter. Meadowlark School can support the students that it currently has. I realize it is full, but it is not overcrowded. We supported this recent mill levy because we support education, period. However, had we known in advance that this would be the result, we would have voted differently. In my opinion, this information should have been presented to the public when the mill levy was initially requested. If these areas are redistricted to West Elementary, I think I can speak for a lot of residents when I say, I will have a hard time supporting any future mill levies. Please leave Meadowlark be.

Thank you.

My son went to Longfellow Elementary for 2 weeks. He was beaten and bullied so badly I had to pull him immediately. The main reason was because he did not live in the public housing. I spoke quite abit with the principal. He has a unique situation in GF. The kids from the public housing are a tough, tight knit group of kids who do not welcome outsiders. Mr Gilbert is very dedicated and compassionate about helping those kids but it was unlike any other school that my son went to. I understand these kids deserve just as good an education as the rest of the GF kids but this school has a high concentration of kids from damaged/broken homes and all of the sad things that come with it. You need to allow kids who end up in that school district to transfer out if they want. They were several months behind my son's previous school, the kids were very aggressive and with little to no help from parents, there is little recourse to fix things.

To the Community Committee, Cropper GIS, and The Great Falls Public School District:

After hearing the dialogue of the committee meeting Tuesday November 28, 2017, we as parents of a child whom attends Meadow Lark Elementary School feel as though some of the committee members may be getting off track and putting no basis regarding the established guidelines into their decision making. For instance when the discussion to move Bel View students to West Elementary arose, some of the committee members thought it was a good idea because and I quote, "To raise the bar at West. Nowhere in the established and accepted guidelines is the movement of children... and let me remind you we are talking about real, breathing, emotional children here... permitted to help raise the bar of another school. Yes, they have one guideline for socioeconomic reasons, but those two are NOT one in the same.

Secondly, the committee thought the parents of the children currently attending West Elementary should have a chance to voice their thoughts on the topic of bringing Meadow Lark students to West. One of the reasons they thought this a valid point was because the West parents may want them there to raise the bar for their children. I am not sure what the committee is thinking, but the only person who gets to decide what is best for my child is my husband and I. Why is our child's education being put in the hands of what other people want for their children? How does that work? The parents of West have had all the same opportunities to voice their thoughts or concerns regarding the redistricting as the rest of the community. The lack of input is to no fault but their own.

In the end the point remains moving children to raise the bar of another school falls COMPLETELY outside of the parameters set forth by The Great Falls Public School District, Cropper GIS, and the community committee.

Another example of a horribly insulting and irresponsible comment by a committee member was when asked what option they thought was best their response as to why they chose the one they did was and I quote once again, "Because I like the way it looks." Referring to the map of the option... The way the actual lines/colors looked on the map. What does that say? It says to me as a parent, the people who are making these important decisions for my child and HUNDREDS of others are not only not taking it seriously, but they may not be qualified to be doing so.

A huge concern seems to be regarding West Elementary as a whole. They say it is underutilized. Then why are they even considering taking children who currently attend West out and transferring them to other schools. And in the same breath considering pulling children out of Meadow Lark's School district and placing them in West. If West needs more students why pull out any at all? Why disrupt all those children's educational communities? What is the point?

Another point brought up by the representative of the bus system is that Great Falls cannot add more bus routes. Period. If you want a new line for a school one will have to be taken from somewhere else. There are state mandates that have to be followed pertaining to bus routes. Why was this not given more consideration in the early planning stages of the redistricting?

As a parent, as a community member I am appalled at the redistricting process thus far. It seems to me that the committee is straying away from guidelines and goals and letting personal emotion play a significant role in decision making. I think people are forgetting who this affects the most... THE CHILDREN. Small, young, innocent children. Children who need school to be a safe constant in their lives. Children who rely on routine to feel stable. Children who have friends. Children who have relationships with the staff at their perspective schools. Children who have enough going on in their lives without incompetent adults adding more to it. Has anyone thought about the children who struggle with mental disorders such as anxiety or depression? Or a child who is on the Autism Spectrum?

I think everyone involved in this decision making process needs to take a step back and remember why they are doing this... for the children. And the least amount of children affected the better.

This negatively impacts my family if this is out in place it will force my daughter out of Lincoln Elementary where she has established herself and she will have to attend Whittier which will force us to hone school her

I am submitting this opposition to ES Option B. I am shocked that this proposed redistricting is remaining as an option as it does not meet the standards set forth for redistricting, specifically for student safety, not crossing major roads and landmarks, and continuity. The proposed plan would require students who live along the river portion of Flood Road to have to cross either railroad tracks and highways, and/or two major streets, 10th avenue south and Central Avenue, during times of busy and unpredictable traffic. There is simply no safe or convenient way to get children to and from school under this plan. It should not even be considered.

My son has attended Meadowlark since Kindergarten. He has established friendships and relationship with both the students and educators. A change in school would not only adversely affect his learning, but would also effect his emotional and social growth and development. Under the proposed option B, he would not even live close to most of his classmates. As a parent, I know that would adversely affect his social and emotional development, and affect his ability to build strong and lasting friendships.

Why this proposal is even still on the table is so confusing to me as a parent because it would cause a major inconvenience and safety concerns for drop off and pick up. This proposed redistricting would literally require me to drive past one school to get to another in the morning for drop off. For pick up, it would require me to go far out of my way, rather than simply stopping by on my way home. I cannot understand how taking students who live the furthest away from the next closest school is a viable option, especially given the roads and traffic patterns. This is unsafe, horribly inconvenient, and not compliant with the goals of redistricting. I urge you not to adopt this unsafe and impractical proposed redistricting plan.

I would like public assurances that permissive transfers would be available to children whose daycare is within walking distance of a neighboring district. My situation is my wife and I are both working medical professionals who start work early in the morning. We live in riverview, our daycare provider lives in valley view, the daycare is walking distance to valley view school. If my children were forced to go to riverview, they would have to walk from valley view to riverview school. Alternatively, my wife or I would need to switch jobs in order to alter our start times of work in order to drop our child off at school and pick them up after school. In either case this would be an undue burden on my family. Please make very clear that permissive transfers that result in walkable distances to a school will be available and approved.

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Hi my name is Jennifer Moore. We pin our home and live in Black Eagle. We built our home her in part because our kids would go to Riverview. Two on my kids this is the only school they have known and my one has been at Riverview since 3rs grade. My daughter started at Riverview when she was in 5th grade and is now in 8th at North. As a parent if 4 kids, an 8th grader at North, 6th, 4th, and 1st grader at Riverview I do not like the proposal to move Black Eagle kids. These are the only schools my kids have known and the only friends they have. High School is hard enough, but to have to start at a new school not knowing anyone will add on to the anxiety my daughter already has. My son who is in 6th grade has amazing friends and is devastated about the thought of having to make new friends and go to a different middle school then the kids he has gone to school with.

Riverview and Sacajawea are the closest elementary schools. To bus them across the river is crazy. Please don't sent the kids in Black Eagle across the river.

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| <p>It can be very disrupting to uproot children from their school. Every child is different with different levels of maturity, some will adjust well and some will not. Some are young or just beginning kindergarten, others reaching puberty, with many other stressors going on. I worry about the children who will not adjust well. This can be traumatizing to some children who may have instability in other areas of their life. I will pray somehow we find a different solution and not rearrange the childrens lives!</p> <p>I have several concerns. The first had to do with how this will affect families with a permissive waiver when several schools would be at high capacity under these plans. Schools like Valley View Elementary have 170 waivers with 370 students enrolled. If waivers are denied this seems like an excessive amount of families that could be impacted. Additionally I am concerned about how redistricting will impact property values due to the proposed changes.</p> <p>Do you have a clearer view of the proposed boundaries? Itâ€™s hard to decide on Options A-C if you canâ€™t tell the areas impacted. Thanks</p> <p>My kid currently attends Roosevelt and has since kindergarten and he will be in the sixth grade let him use his permissive transfer for 1 more year ..to stay at the only school he has known and has friends and academics are above average .. I am willing to drive him there every day .. if he canâ€™t I will not put him in public school for our area I live in Longfellow area right now .i will be looking at selling my house if need be . I want my son to stay where he is at ! Have you thought about kids that walk to school and now it might be a further distance or away from there friends and cutting boys and girls club from schools transportation..kids are not being thought of at all and think about kids routines and structures .. think about kids instead of money !!</p>   |
| <p>All three scenarios you have thought of have no other option than to move Black Eagle kids to Morningside. They could easily satellite into Valley View. Keep them on their side of the river. We have asked around our community and no one was reached out to for being on the task force for this re-zoning and we have had no representation. You also are extending more kids into Riverview with the newer Neighborworks builds up north in Option C and then taking kids out of the picture by removing Black Eagle. You could also satellite THOSE kids to Valley View and leave the Black Eagle kids alone. To think there was NO other option in any scenario for Black Eagle is appalling that we were sloughed off like we didn't matter at all. To commute Black Eagle kids to Morningside is to break each and everyone of your safety check list that you don't want to do. The kids will have to be bused over a state highway (15th ST *IS* a state highway all the way to 10th Ave South) , over a river, on a bridge (The 15th street bridge is the most dangerous bridge in Montana, look it up) and then onto River Drive North, which is in itself a very busy road where we have encountered fatality crashes on numerous occasions, where multiple law enforcement agencies high speed pursuits have taken place, to include the pursuit of Adam Sanchez who fatally struck Deputy Joe Dunn and attempted to strike another police officer. He drove into oncoming traffic in the two lane traffic and there will be no where for a large school bus to veer in the event that this ever happens again. My child will also be on the bus for a longer period of time. I am already displeased that now I will have to commute all the way to the east end of town if I ever need to pick him up. If he misses the bus, there will be no other option for him to make it to school. Again, Black Eagle had no representation in this task force and we were never made aware of how to become involved. We will prove that no one was ever contacted in our entire TOWN. I live in a subdivision/HOA where I know all 21 of my neighbors. None of us ever received a thing. We are frustrated and this better be fixed since we were never involved.</p> <p>I strongly oppose the new boundaries for West. My son has been a student at West K-3, he has his friends since Kindergarten and has a great relationship with his teachers. He helps out the librarian and has a small job of turning on the computers every morning. Transferring him to Valley View would be devastating to him. If the boundaries do change I would hope there is still the ability for a request of transfer. Perhaps you could change the boundaries for students starting kindergarten or 1st grade.</p> <p>I think this is a horrible idea... Many of the people who live in Great Falls bought their homes based on what school their children would go to. You are looking to make will be seniors switch schools their last year, and parents who work for the school district having to take their children to other schools, sometimes in completely the opposite direction. And most of us parents have our routes set up with other people to make it all work with our schedules and the new schools and routes don't work at all.</p> <p>We live in the Chief Jo boundary but my kids have a permissive transfer to attend Lewis and Clark. How will redistricting effect them? Will they continue to have the permissive transfer? That is my main concern. Thanks!</p> <p>Why is the situation at Sacajawea being ignored in all but one of the adjustment options? We live in the district and our children will be attending school there soon. The data shows that Sacajawea currently has 456 students which is nearly 30 students over its high capacity of 429. However, only one option (Option 5) does anything to bring the attendance at Sacajawea down. All 6 of the options bring down attendance at the three other schools that are currently overcrowded (Lincoln, Meadow Lark, and Riverview). Why is Sacajawea not being addressed?</p> <p>I am very worried by this all, my autistic child was moved from Sunnyside, we're we are currently under boundary wise, she had a very hard, bad time, to I moved her to Mountain View, we're she has done amazing, and has grown and improved greatly, I need to know for a fact that she will in no way be moved by all this to some other school, it would harm her deeply to be moved. I will not have my child hurt. If someone does try to move her I will pull her from public school and put her into a private school. So please I am asking as nice as I can do not move my baby from a school were she is so happy, has friends, knows the school and staff and is stable, if you need I will even get a letter from her therapist for you as to why she needs to stay put. Thank you</p> <p>I don't feel that the black eagle kids should be transferred to morningside...if they need a school rebuy back the immaculate church and open it as a school again</p> <p>Strongly oppose all proposed Options. Black Eagle students should go to Valley View (which is undercrowded &amp; has kids currently on permissive transfers). Keep them on their own side of the river. Safety concerns re crossing Hwy .87, crossing the river and railroad tracks. Valley View would make much more sense. Black Eagle residents were not even consulted or included in the research groups. This was sprung on the entire city only weeks before the final decision. Our childrens' education should not be based on socio-economics, as presented at the public meeting. All students should be treated equally. It makes no sense to shift so many kids around. Leave alone what does not need to be fixed. Same goes for Meadowlark.</p> <p>I do not believe singleing Black Eagle mt out to make them go across the river and have a 5 mile drive is fair to that community i have lived in that community for years not giving us a voice in this and moving our children across the river is not fair we should be able to stay on this side of the river. Transportation are you guys going to make up for that 5 mile drive?? Are we still going to have a Hands program as we need it we use it at Riverview i do know alot of schools across the river dont have it, Our kids cant ride bikes home anymore because of the distance if you move them theres alot your taking away and its sad that all three zoning maps show us going to Morningside maybe choose a school on this side of the river its sad were the only ones your pushing to that side!</p> <p>I am highly opposed to the option B plan and how the boundary for the Meadowlark school district moves to the middle of Flood Rd. There are two guiding principles/ criteria set forth by GFPS that are not being followed by placing the Meadowlark district line where it is being proposed on Flood Rd. GFPS states that they want to "maximize transportation efficiency." How is it efficient to remove the people that live the furthest from Meadowlark and make them go even further to get to school? There is not a public access road to get to the interstate unless you drive past Meadowlark or go through Market Place. Additionally, where is the efficiency in having the Meadowlark bus turn around in the middle of Flood Rd and then have a West bus continue from where the other stopped? This would be running two busses on one route and that does not seem efficient. The second criteria not met in this rezoning is that the boundary line runs right through the middle of my subdivision on Flood Rd. The criteria set forth by GFPS states, "Attempt to keep identifiable community entities intact."</p> <p>I hope the board considers preference for permissive transfers to those who have been attending school in their home district, but are being moved. It would minimize the impact on the kids if they could finish their time at the school they have attended for many years. We attend Lincoln school because that is where our kids are zoned to attend.</p> <p>us? My choices? 1 Riverview!!!! 2. Worst case, Sac</p> <p>Very concerned about property values as realtors are telling homeowners their values are less because the children in this neighborhood will attend West Elementary. It is not about the kids in the school, its more about being on the bus for so long when you live near a neighborhood school that these kids have always attended. People who live in the south of Great Falls knew when they purchased their homes, that their children would be on a bus for a long time. That was their decision but it shouldn't effect the children in the Belview area as they have been attending Meadow Lark since Belview was developed</p> <p>The redistributing changes has the potential to change the dynamics of the neighborhoods in this community, the value of homes, and rearrange Great Falls altogether. Redistricting will not solve the problems of low funds and high capacities in our school. Redistricting may not be the only answer, and likely is not be the best answer to fulfill the community needs though public schools. It's not even a good temporary fix.</p> |

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Currently my home is in the satellite zone for Lincoln. I am not advocating that it stays this way, as I know the benefit of having a neighborhood school vs. being bused out of one's neighborhood is far more desirable. In 1978, I was in first grade when the satellite zone was created and greatly benefited from the teachers and opportunities Lincoln afforded me. My attending Lincoln grades 1-6 was a win for our family. After the closure of McKinley, one option that was discussed was to have children in my neighborhood attend Whitter grades 1-3 and then be bused to Lincoln for grades 4-6. At that time, attending Roosevelt was not an option due to the students they absorbed from the closure of Lowell. Thus the satellite (or weird Y area) was created and we were bused to Lincoln. My mom, who was on the front lines trying to keep McKinley open, and who was advocating for what was best for her kids, was happy to have all her children (grades k-6) in one building, even if being bused was part of the solution. Therefore, my childhood neighborhood, now being the neighborhood in which I chose to invest, became part of the Lincoln culture.

Deciding the fate of families and ultimately neighborhoods is not an easy task. Especially if one who sits on the committee does not live in the affected area. In my opinion, Lincoln's satellite zone is one of the most unique and also most highly impacted when looking at the current rezoning options. Please take the following notes into consideration when making your final decision.

I do not have children, nor do I plan to, my perspective comes from someone who has lived in the affected area for more than 40 years.

School zoning is a selling point for a neighborhood on the brink of being swallowed by concentrated poverty. The current zone, I feel continues to bring diversity to the area, which is always a strength.

Although our neighborhood is aging, I have seen an influx in young self-reliant families moving in when homes become available. When speaking with them about their decision to move into the neighborhood, they mention the character of the older homes, the community feel between 13th & 15th street, the longevity of home ownership, and always, always, always mention that we are zoned for Lincoln. I know that the Lincoln zone is a considerable component in the survival of our neighborhood.

Currently, a small number of kids who would be impacted by rezoning, but with younger families potentially moving in, the number could be greater.

All our schools are good, all our teachers are competent, all of the curriculum is the same, yet we know that the culture of the school is just as important as everything else when it comes to the comfort and success of the school's families. I think most would agree that the culture of Meadowlark is different than that of Sunnyside and the culture of Loy is different from that of Sac. Culture, as I am using the term isn't a term of judgment, but rather what makes our schools unique and great yet different at the same time.

The culture of Roosevelt, which will most likely impact the culture of Giant Springs, most closely reflects the current culture of Lincoln. . . diversity of families, socio-economic mix, size, etc.

Having lived through rezoning once, I know the personal impact it has on kids. Although my time at Lincoln was wonderful there was a period of adjustment that lasted 2-3 years which was challenging. Kids feel different when forced to attend a new school. It takes families a while to navigate their way in a new system. Simply put, it takes time to be accepted. And yet, the growing pains Lincoln felt and the strength it still gleams from diversity today, is what makes it the success it is.

I am highly disappointed that in the final three options presented to the public at the December 5th meeting, none of them show Giant Springs as an option, as I strongly feel attending Giant Springs would lessen the effects of change and transitions on the kids in this unique area.

Although I feel that our neighborhood could impact the challenges faced by other schools in our area, I don't feel we alone have the numbers to make a progressive influence. Therefore, lessening the impact of change, moving children to a school that reflects their current school's culture, for the kids involved is my main focus at this time.

I hope that this current rezoning brings much needed attention and support for some of our schools and neighborhoods. There are creative options that will strengthen the health and livelihood of all schools. I hope those discussions can take place and I would be happy to serve on a committee tackling these issues in the future. I would also be happy to comment in person on any of the above mentioned notes.

Thank you for your time and dedication to the process and for truly being considerate of what is best for all kids and all neighborhoods.

Hi! I live in Black Eagle and currently have two children attending Riverview. My son will be moving into 7th grade next school year, so he will then be attending North, but my daughter will be moving into 5th grade. I am having a hard time understanding the moving of Black Eagle to Morningside school. The charts say there are 70 kids in Black Eagle but how many of those 70 are actually at Riverview? I know it's not all of them. I can count 5 in 6th grade and 4 in 4th grade currently that I know of, so is moving Black Eagle a farther distance from our home the right choice? My thoughts were that you could move the boundary lines like the tick of a clock hand. Pull Black Eagle into Sac school, which is closer than Riverview, and place some of Sac's boundary to Riverview and some of Riverview's to Valley View and some of Valley View to West...so on and so on. I know you are trying to move as little kids as possible, but shifting to neighboring schools where the kids are probably together in their neighborhoods would probably be easier to stomach. I mentioned this at the meeting at Paris and the reply from Cropper was "what do you do with Meadowlark then?". I mentioned to tick it to the right and the reply was "you can't because of the river." Well why can we be shipped across a river? Part of Meadowlark's boundary line that is close to West could be pulled into West. My daughter would change schools for 2 years, which I have no issues with Morningside, but then in 2 years she will leave all of them and come back to North since Morningside goes to East usually. I thank you for your time and hope that there is some solution to keep Black Eagle on their side of the river for schooling.

I just finished the survey concerning the three current redistricting options. I found it to be very confining and narrow in the options for voicing my opinion. It doesn't seem to allow me to really express my concerns on this entire matter. I would have liked an opportunity to address other related topics than those provided. Being able to prioritize answers would have been good. I think having to provide where I currently reside is unnecessary and only allows the responding party to categorize those that complete the survey! I don't feel this is right.

I have also been following this process and have learned some very disturbing things in relation to it-

Committee members saying:

Meadow Lark school is a bubble school because the wealthy live on that side of town and it absolutely needs diversification; the principal at Meadow Lark is insisting at least one neighborhood be removed because she doesn't want all the current kids to remain there; Loy school should only have base kids because other kids have a hard time making friends with and spending time with the base kids; it's okay to split the Parkdale kids into two different schools because they are transient and are not engaged anyway; they like one option more because it looks prettier on the map-

The comments made by the consultant:

In response to this matter being emotional- that it doesn't really matter; judging the demographics of an entire neighborhood as having wealth or not by merely driving through it; that this is in the best interest of ALL children - becoming very defensive when approached and questioned at the meeting

I still am not convinced that redistricting the entire city is the right thing to do when only one new school is being built that effects current boundaries- Morningside and Roosevelt areas are impacted and not the others - This seems to be a catalyst to address other issues within the district- And lastly, the best interests of children - all children- are not being considered by this- They will be loosing much!

I have messaged before and have not received a response. I have been looking at houses in Sun Valley Meadows, which is in the Ulm Vaughn Road, and is part of Great Falls, NOT Vaughn. Is there a reason that this area is not included in GFPS? Info finder will not accept the address as a Great Falls address and changes it automatically to Vaughn, but it is not part of Vaughn and the residents in the area have told me that the GFPS bus drives by the subdivision every morning. The address I've been looking at is 55 Meadows Loop, 59404.

Why could Valley View not pull out of Riverview's district into their district? I am thinking of ways to keep Black Eagle at Riverview, or at least on our side of the river for middle school and high school social purposes. Valley View seems lower on enrollment. I would prefer my child to not cross the bridge and river and then come back for middle school where they should be. Could eagles crossing be a satellite to Valley View? Could the new neighborworks in upper skyline be a satellite to Valley View? Or could some new houses in Skyline be satellites to Valley View.

Why could Valley View not pull out of Riverview's district into their district? I am thinking of ways to keep Black Eagle at Riverview, or at least on our side of the river for middle school and high school social purposes. Valley View seems lower on enrollment. I would prefer my child to not cross the bridge and river and then come back for middle school where they should be. Could eagles crossing be a satellite to Valley View? Could the new neighborworks in upper skyline be a satellite to Valley View? Or could some new houses in Skyline be satellites to Valley View.

Is there a possibility of putting 6th grade back into middle school? Opening Paris as a middle school again?

I am very concerned about the new proposal for my children to go to Morningside. Per GFPS there are several safety issues; they are crossing the river, 15th st bridge, which is listed as one of the unsafest bridges, and crossing two railroad tracks, both do not have a hand that go down.

As a Black Eagle resident who has had 4 children at Riverview and still have 2 there, it makes me sad that my children might have to go to a different school. I have thought of several different options that do not show in the options now.

Make the line to Riverview cut off right by Riverview Like Greg has suggested doing so that our children can still attend Riverview.

We could satellite the Riverview children, or satellite the new Neighborworks builds

Re-open Skyline for the families to use up on the hill. I am aware that this will cost money, but eventually it will need to be opened as Neighborworks still has 7 more years of builds.

Move 6th grade to the Middle School. When I was in school 6th grade was in Middle school. With the way they have teams now there would not be any intermingling.

Today when I was talking about this with my children my one boy, who is in 3rd grade at Riverview started to cry. This is the only school that him and his brother, who is in 1st grade, have ever known. They have established relationships with peers and adults. These are the kids that they have played baseball with, basketball, and football with. Not only are they being asked to go to a different school, but it also effects their sports.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.



Relocating Black Eagle kids so far away is inconsiderate especially because you failed to have a member of the Black Eagle community on the committee, of whom are making these decisions.

I am very upset on this change. I am a single mom living in Black Eagle, and I work at Albertsons on the west side. BOTH of my kids go to school at Riverview and North and that means I can drive to work and to my kids all in 10 mins. Why would you want to send them across the bridge? My oldest is home to get my daughter off the bus because I work until 6pm. Am I suppose to quit my job and find another because my position does not fit getting off before 6? Now, I do not want to put my daughter's in sports because how is driving across the bridge how many times a week fit my schedule that is already busy? I have already moved my daughter to a new school so why can't the new build and children go to Valley view? Move kids to Valley view not to morning side. Why not move 6th graders to middle school? I know there are ways around the decisions you are considering. I sure hope that the fact this town considers Black Eagle low income is not the reason why we are getting kicked out of what we love. I wish someone on this committee knew how this change felt because I am sure none of you even can feel how any of us feel right now. I don't vote, I don't get into politics, so voicing my opinion is huge...that means something. Therefore I hope you guys do what is right for the kids not for whatever reason you have figured these 3 options are what's best cause we all know it's not what is safe. Please reconsider these decisions and put yourself in our shoes with your kids.

I feel that your three options are not the right answer. My idea would be all the kids west of the school could go to Valleyview then that would leave the Black Eagle Kids at Riverview. You guys say that safety is a big issue! Then way would you send any kids across a bridge that is deemed structurally deficient, cross two railroad tracks going one route, or one set going the other way. Another reason is disrupting our kids from sport teams, Scouting, and friends that they have known from day one at Riverview. We should keep our kids on this side of the river. If my son gets moved to Morningside it will cost myself and his mother more money in travel and time away from our son and our jobs. It will cost the tax payers more money to have to move these kids feather away to a Morningside. I don't understand why it being an issue when your own study show a decline in enrollment after 2018. The way this has been handled in not right and the lack of informing parents was poor. Black Eagle has a right to be heard!

I appreciate the time and effort the school district and task force have put in to developing the boundary adjustment plans. In general, I think the three alternatives make sense, and I can support any of them. However, I was disappointed with the condescending attitude of some of the task force members I spoke with during the public open house, as well as the general messaging espoused by consultants, task force members and school district representatives. By consistently reminding all of us to provide "objective" feedback (the only feedback that "really matters" in the process), decision-makers have fallen into the dualistic trap of privileging the so-called "objective" and disparaging and dismissing the subjective/personal concerns that individual stakeholders may have. These quaintly Cartesian (i.e., 18th century) habits of thought and speech are not value-neutral. By privileging one pole of these artificial either-or dichotomies, we trivialize and exclude the other and, as in this case, deny it voice or legitimate standing (rational vs. emotional, mind vs. matter, male vs. female, white vs. black - all of these either-or constructs are deeply value-laden and have had far-reaching historical/political consequences).

Like any thoughtful and caring parent, I have deep, deep concerns about removing my son from a school environment he loves, and in which he is thriving, and placing him in an unfamiliar school. I consider this a very reasonable concern - although one that seems to fall outside the scope of your "objective" calculus. When a task force member tells me that concerns like mine are "more about the parent than the child" or that "kids adjust quickly; in the greater scheme of things, it's not a big deal," I feel marginalized and unheard. The message is clear: My family's personal - human - concerns just don't matter. Be "objective" about this!

To be honest, I'm fine with any of the proposed boundary changes. They follow the established criteria and make sense. That's really not my concern here. My concern is how the school district will respond to impacted families once it decides on a final plan. This is a huge issue for me - and a place where the district and school board could show some real emotional and relational intelligence. I hope you will reach out sincerely and personally to all impacted families (with much more than just a form letter!), acknowledge their concerns, explain their options, and provide them with the resources they need to make the best decisions for their kids. Yes, this will take a bit of effort and staff time (although not nearly as much effort and time as the boundary adjustment process itself), but I think you really owe it to these families whose lives have been disrupted by this. Also, I believe there should be some prioritization of permissive transfer requests for kids who have a history of attendance at a particular school so that they can, if they desire, continue to go to that school.

This isn't about my child attending a "better" or "newer" school (again, comments made by task force members that I found very insulting and indicative of their "deafness" to my concerns); it's about him leaving the only school community he's ever known. In the end, we may end up doing exactly that. But, it's a big decision for us and we'd really appreciate the district's support - and assistance - in making the best choice for our son. Thanks for listening to my concerns.

My children currently attend Riverview, and we live in Black Eagle. I am very disappointed that all of the options your task force drew up has our community moving. Have you looked at redistricting eagles crossing and the new homes above 36th to valley view? I am very concerned about our kiddos having to cross 15th st bridge every day, a railroad crossing and traveling hiway 87 everyday. We really dont think you understand the safety issues you are dealing with especially with safety of transportation one of your main topics on your list of reasons for drawing boundaries. I have no issue with Morningside as a school. Just know that if anything ever happens to my kids due to their travel route I will hold every member of this task force accountable for their actions, especially since travel safety is how you determine boundaries. Use your guidelines and not your heart in making these decisions.

Dear School Board,

Our family has a strong objection to option B, redistricting the Sunflower Ln and areas southwest of town out of Meadowlark.

If this option is selected, our family would have to drive past Meadowlark and add additional 15 minutes each way onto our daily school commute to get to West. This would double our distance to school. The children would have to travel across a major thoroughfare to get to the new school, cross railroad tracks, and travel on an expressway.

If we go the other way over Comer Hill Road, which is privately owned and maintained, we have to cross railroad tracks. Often a train is stored on these tracks and physically blocks the road. This road is not maintained regularly and is impassable in bad weather. The way over Comer Hill also entails travel on the highway.

Socially, our children are well integrated and happy at Medowlark. This redistricting will break existing social ties. It will be difficult to drive through our old school community every day on the way to a new, unfamiliar school. The doubled travel time to the new school will decrease our participation in school and recreational activities with that community. As, in fact, we are not geographically part of that community.

Please keep our school community intact. We love our neighborhood school and wish to stay where we are already members of an active educational experience for our children. If option B is selected we will have to consider alternative educational options to meet the needs of our family.

Thank you for listening,  
Emilia Plopys

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Dear School Board,

I currently reside in the Meadow Lark district, off of Sunflower Lane on Gannon Drive. My two grandsons are very happily attending school with the Meadow Lark community of neighbors, teachers and staff. It appears to me that Option B would outright violate 4 of the 9 Guidelines you have posted.

\*Students would be in vehicles and on buses that could not avoid crossing over major roads, the river and railroad tracks. Currently, my grandsons need not travel over any of the above on the drive to Meadow Lark.

\*Instead of maximizing efficiency of transportation, travel would be much less efficient. Not only is it a longer trip to West (9 miles to ML now, 13 to West with Option B) but the travel over Comer Road, a privately maintained road with extreme washboard, and then travel through highway traffic to the school would be much more difficult and dangerous, especially in cold, icy and snowy weather.

We also must consider travel as it affects the ease of parent volunteering, attendance at school community meetings, conferences and after school activities which would be outside of our neighborhood. School community participation as well as daily school attendance may well be compromised because of the less efficient travel route to the new school.

\*Contiguous Boundaries? Students would have to travel right through the Meadow Lark boundaries to reach West.

\*Option B would violate the Keeping of Identifiable Community Entities Intact. We STRONGLY identify with the Meadow Lark school community. Adjustment to a new community which lies further away from home would be difficult and maybe not even possible given all of the obstacles mentioned above.

I have been a teacher in the Denver Public Schools, working in a city school with well over half of the children in the free and reduced cost lunch program. Yet, because of our program and district support, our magnet public school always had a waiting list of students whose parents wanted them in our school. The demographics will balance if the schools are all attractive to the Great Falls Public School Community at large. Drawing unnatural boundaries to effect that result is only a way of addressing the symptoms of a greater problem. Support the programs, teachers and staff so that the schools will each shine like individual gems in a bright future for all of the children of Great Falls.

I'm concerned about the decrease of permissive transfers. Not only will it take away from funding balance, but also flexibility. Please continue to have the same amount of permissive transfers.

Redistricting (option B) the Woodland Estates area increases travel expense, decreases overall transportation efficiency, AND increase safety concerns of children in the area. There are approximately 24 children in the area which would potentially be transferred to West moving them from a top ranking school in the state to one of the least ranked. There are many concerns from parents in areas outside the city limits in rural locations (such as Woodland Estates) that feel their views are not being represented appropriately when it comes to these potential changes. Although Meadowlark is at capacity, numbers indicate this is a temporary surge in student numbers and they will again fall in the coming years. Although we realize changes must be made, we do not feel such a drastic change in this community is required at this time. We appreciate your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Michael Weaver

We are residents in Woodland Estates and found out recently that one of the adjustment plans (Option B) will remove our children from Meadow Lark and place them at West. Our family has many concerns about this movement with the top concern being safety, especially with transportation. This change would increase the distance to school for our children by a few miles which will increase drive/bus time as well as take them across 2 very busy intersections.

Socially, this move would be a detriment to many kids having to change to a new school, meeting new friends, changes in academic standards, and separating them from a known to an unknown as far as the day to day schedule.

We chose to live where we do partly because of the top state ranking school district we are currently in. This change would place our children in a very low state ranked school district and would change the economic value in our neighborhood. It is thought, in talking to neighbors, that many family's will choose to move, or place their kids in private schools if Option B is selected.

It is my understanding that there are very few (20+?) kids this change would affect in our area and that future predictions on enrollment at Meadow Lark show a tapering within the next few years.

If redistricting must happen then we would opt for Option C as a first choice and A as a second choice. Both of these will leave our kids where they are with many of their peers also being unaffected.

It is felt Option B would be a detriment to the well being of all kids involved and is more drastic than necessary at this time.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely

Kathy Weaver

As for my opinion on the redistricting plan, I am not a big fan of consulting firms. They are generally very expensive, and decisions made are usually ones that are based on common sense. I appreciate allowing the public to participate in the process, but it would appear as if the majority of the decisions made are ones that are based on number of students at each of the schools. Knowing the 500 rule, if exceeded, would be an expense the school district would not want to spend, when room is available throughout the district. That being the case, this should have been the number one concern discussed with the public.

The kids from the north side of the river just need to be shifted west and Valley View seems to have more than enough room to accommodate that move. Taking the western portion of current Riverview residents children and redistricting them to Valleyview is not going to make much of a difference in their commutes. Also, the ten new builds from Neighborworks up in the Skyline area should also be satellite to Valley View. The truth of the matter is those homes are going to produce more children. If you ask Neighborworks what has happened in Castle Pines (south of the mall) and the Copper Basin (Black Eagle) builds, they will tell you that after those families move in they start settling down and having kids. So if you're really trying to think of what's best for the school system here, you need to think ahead and put those kids to Valley View or Riverview is just going to fill up again. In this case you could also either allow the Black Eagle kids to stay at Riverview OR shift Sacajawea kids to Riverview and place Black Eagle kids at Sacajawea. Morningside for Black Eagle kids means they have to be up way too early to get ready, eat breakfast, and then take a long bus ride to a school that's many more miles away. They'd cross two railroad tracks on the way to 8th Avenue north. One of those railroad crossings don't even have an arm guard and BNSF is known for having malfunctions at those crossings. Too dangerous to go to Morningside for that commute because River Dr North is definitely not an option for a bus full of 75 kids. They are already three to a seat no matter where they go and that's dangerous enough as it is.

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Dear advisory/school boards, we are very happy with the current district zones, our school, its staff and the community we have built therein. Please do NOT go with option B for the redistricting of our schools. This would take our children out of their scholastic community while blatantly violating several of the redistricting guiding principles/criteria. Option C would be my vote as it seems to be the least disruptive to the community and saves travel time to and from schools. Thank you for all you do for our children and community, and thank you for allowing and listening to our comments.

TC Hirsch

This is an absolute disgrace. It would almost be humorous if it were not so sad as to the way the school board has approached this situation. The school board waited until many of us Meadow Lark parents campaigned very hard to pass the mill levy, to fund our students education, and then took a large sum of that money to fund some social engineering project. If we, the tax base, had even the slightest idea that redistricting our children was part of the plan, none of us would have voted for it. Of course, the board was well aware of this and thus made no mention of it until they got their levy approved. This type of dirty politics that has deteriorated the trust in our elected officials to an all time low. Please do not plan on getting another mill levy approved any time soon.

As a parent of an elementary school student in the GFPS I appreciate the work that has gone into this project. However, throughout this whole process of information-gathering and school-option notification I have been struck by the notable lack of any specific plans/actions/questionnaires that seem to address the concerns and emotional well-being of the people most affected by this redistricting: the kids themselves.

There are lots of charts looking at numbers of kids potentially affected by the redistricting, school enrollment adjustments, concerns about busing costs, etc. etc. I have yet to hear any specifics about how the GF school district is attempting to address the large-scale transition of anywhere from 300-379 kids in a manner that is sensitive to the actual students who are being forced to change schools due to the new boundaries.

I would hope that the GFPS would give priority to permissive transfer requests from students who currently attend the schools they would like to continue attending. It seems that a plan that phases in the proposed redistricting in a way that allows for more student-sensitive transition options would be embraced by more families being directly affected by this move.

The boundary line on 32nd St S. for Lincoln Elementary would be better moved to 34th or 36th. The kids in the neighborhood would have to now cross 36th and 38th St S to get to Lewis and Clark Elementary School and would have to travel two to three times as far to get to school. I know that the thought is that 32nd is busy due to Starbucks being on the corner of 10th Ave S and 32nd but living in the area I would like you to know that most of that traffic is by the coffee shop and not even by 9th Ave South. Most of the users of the coffee shop come off of 10th Ave S and then go back to 10th Ave S.

This is to voice our opposition to Option B that redistricts the Flood Road area from Meadowlark Elementary to West Elementary.

1) The EXTREME DISTANCE from the Flood Road area to West Elementary:

a) Puts a disproportionate SAFETY RISK for sheer time on the road to get to West.

b) Has the children drive either past Meadowlark Elementary or across RAILROAD TRACKS, or on the INTERSTATE or on a road that appears to be on private property that is not maintained nor navigable during winter months - requiring parents to drive their children additional distances to meet the school bus, which adds further road time to the children's time on the road to get to school.

c) Negatively affects children's ability to participate in extracurricular activities.

2) The "Comer Hill" route (or private property access/personal driveway that appears to be under consideration as a school route) seems to be an attempt to make this redistricting option more viable on paper, but in reality ENDANGERS CHILD SAFETY by putting a school bus on a road that is not maintained and not traversable during bad weather.

3) The "Comer Hill" route appears to cause parents and children to drive even further out of the way and across RAILROAD TRACKS and onto the INTERSTATE to meet the school bus before the children have even begun the bus route to West Elementary. What does the total daily distance traveled from home to school add up to when this is accounted for? Two and a half hours? Longer? How can this be justified or seen as logical? Who is liable for damages if you approve this and a school bus accident happens on a private property path?

4) If the "Comer Hill" private property thoroughfare is not used, the speed limit is 35 - 45 miles per hour on Flood Road due to the winding road, proximity to the river, subsequent icy conditions and deer crossings. How long is this proposed round-trip schedule for the Elementary school children to travel beyond Meadowlark Elementary to West?

5) Your own analysis shows an expected decrease in enrollment at Meadowlark in a couple of years, and MEADOWLARK HAS THE ABILITY TO USE THE CURRENT FOOTPRINT OF THE SCHOOL TO SUSTAIN ENROLLMENT NEEDS until decreases begin shortly.

6) Why were the redistricting proposals or additional school renovations not reviewed prior to the bond levy if the School District feels redistricting is of critical importance? Specifically, WHY WEREN'T EXPANSIONS TO EXISTING SCHOOLS AT CAPACITY INCLUDED IN THE BUDGET from the bond levy if the school district considers the issue critical?

7) We moved our family back to Great Falls, Montana and having our children be in the same COMMUNITY and attend the same schools my wife did is meaningful to us. Moreover, maintaining logic in redistricting assessments is reassuring to families and retirees that want to relocate and invest in homes here.

After driving the routes from our home to West Elementary over break & on icy, snow packed conditions, we really need someone to explain to us the validity of moving students, who currently live in the Woodland Estates & Gannon Ranch areas to West. It took almost 45 minutes to drive to West, but only 15 to get to Meadowlark. Comer Hill Road is a private road. It is not maintained by the city or county. It is maintained by the homeowners association. This means, when it snows, this road is not plowed or sanded. The route we would take, if we were to drive her to school, we would go within a few blocks of Meadowlark (Flood Road) if not right by it (Fox Farm Road) to bring her to West. On a day when the roads are clear, it would be an hour drive, round trip, to take our daughter to school at West. It's less than 30 minutes, round trip, to Meadowlark. So, if we are rezoned to West, I would really like someone to explain to us, how sending our daughter, and later our son, to a school that is 30 minutes away makes more sense than sending our children to one that is more of their neighborhood school and is less than 10 minutes away.

GREAT FALLS PUBLIC SCHOOLS, MT  
BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT PROCESS: PUBLIC INPUT 11/28/2017 THROUGH 1/9/2018



We are a permissive transfer to valley view from west, and we love valley views small ratio kid to student. And we Love The staff- we would be so devastated to have to be forced to leave. My son is pretty timid to new change. I think a good idea is to allow all current permissive transfers and start with next years kindergarten class.

We live at 173 Comer Hill Rd which is in the Grandview Estate at end of Sunflower lane. I still have 3 children in elementary school for next 11 years so this boundry change with definitely affect me. We built up here and our property value is over \$1 million. School Districts is a major factor in where people look for properties so obviously it is not favorable for our house values to be moved to West after our property taxes just increased significantly to accommodate school improvements. We would not have done that to be moved to West. We have had our 2 older kids at West before and purposefully built t9 be in a strong school district with strong support by both teachers and parents. A district with strong support from parents in sports and PTA which I am very involved in. West does not have that. My kids have had a lot of support at Meadow Lark and we know the teacher and principal and they have been great in supporting and building up my kids. I would be very reluctant to put my kids in a school that I know from experience does not have that support and would look at other options for schooling for my kids. Bellview were once part of West and would have a much shorter bus commute than us.

167 Comer Hill Road

Our family has 7 children, 3 attending Meadowlark currently with one more not yet attending. "Option B" for the boundary changes is unacceptable for our family. We have attended GFPS for the past 8 years and recently built a home on the outskirts of town, our location chosen partly because of the schools they would be attending. Due to the fact that we are located on Comer Hill Road, which is basically the very end of Sunflower, our bus ride is already almost one hour one way to Meadowlark. The idea that we would have to attend West and go even farther is absurd. Obviously, schools have an impact on property values and changing us from Meadowlark to West would be a notable loss to our resale value. In addition, as substantial contributors to the levy, due to the very high value of our home, it is incredibly frustrating that our family will be impacted in such a negative way. It is in no way an incentive to support future levies. As productive members and an integral family in our community, if our family is redistricted to West it will be very disheartening to have to look for education outside of GFPS. Thank you for your consideration.

175 Comer Hill Road

We are a family of 7 with 5 children. 2 of our children are currently attending Meadowlark. We have 2 young children who will attend Meadowlark in the upcoming years and 1 who already "graduated" Meadowlark Elementary. "Option B" for the boundary changes is unacceptable for our family. My children have been attending GFPS for many years and Meadowlark has been a large part of that. We recently bought property on Comer Hill Road, just on the outskirts of town. One of the large deciding factors of the purchase of our our location was because of the schools our children would be attending. We are just finishing up construction of our new home and the thought of our children not being part of the Meadowlark boundaries has many frustrations. Obviously, schools have an impact on property values and changing us from Meadowlark to West will be a notable loss to our resale value. We are substantial contributors to the levy, due to the ver high value of our home, and it is very frustrating that our family will be impacted in such a negative way. It is in no way an incentive to support future levies! We are highly involved members of the community and if our family is redistricted to West it will be very disheartening to have to look for education outside of GFPS. The bus ride is already almost one hour one way to Meadowlark from Comer Hill Road. The idea that we would have to attend West and go even farther is beyond frustrating! Thank you for taking the time to read our comment and for your consideration.

GREAT FALLS PUBLIC SCHOOLS, MT  
BOUNDARY ADJUSTMENT PROCESS: PUBLIC INPUT 1/9/2018 THROUGH 1/29/2018



I do not want my Granddaughter to attend Whittier Elementary we live on 14th and 3rd ave North. She has attended Lincoln her entire time while in school. Please leave the boundary alone. I do not want the value of my home to change because of the boundary change.

I wish one of the plans, addressed the problem with Meadowlark. There is a big lack of economic diversity at Meadowlark, and the students especially would benefit from a change. It is too bad, Meadowlark and West's current boundaries can't be scrambled to come up with a solution for both schools.

My daughter currently attends West Elementary. We live on 10th Ave SW, and you have now moved us to drive even further across a bridge to a different school (on your updated map). My daughter who has had a hard time making friends and becoming involved will have to start over at a new school. She will be in sixth grade next year, and you want her to attend a school for one year and then bounce back to North and try to make friends all over again? My husband, his family, my family have all been CMR Grads, hence the reason we bought a house in the district we did. My daughter already has a difficult time in school and uprooting her would make this worse. By building more schools and utilizing other spaces to keep children with their familiar surroundings seems more ideal than the zoning you have created. In a world full of bullying, it seems the school district is the worse one! As someone who lives between 32nd and 34th and was planning to send my small children to Lincoln, I don't understand why the boundary was shifted from 34th two blocks over to 32nd in all of the drafts to date. It seems like a needless change. The change might seem inconsequential, but I know families who have purchased houses in order to be in the Lincoln district who will now be moved to Lewis and Clark, also a highly rated school. Considering that the affected area between 32nd and 34th is relatively small, I can't imagine that changing the border to 32nd would make a huge difference in attendance for either school. It would, however, make a big difference for the families in that area. Please keep the boundary at 34th, as it has been.

We have been told that there will be time at the meeting on February 12, 2018 to have community input about the final redistricting proposal, but I would like to share some thoughts in writing with the school board before the meeting as well.

I am writing because the residents in our neighborhood have serious questions about safety considerations and to express continued concern about the redistricting process regarding the Lincoln School satellite area. Foremost, the apparent disregard for the task force objective of creating greater socio-economic integration, which was one of the initial purposes in the history of creating the Lincoln satellite. This satellite area distributed students in this lower socio-economic area of the lower north side of Great Falls between Roosevelt, Lincoln and Whittier.

The area includes a relatively small group of families that often do not have a voice, yet will be one of the most impacted areas affected by the current redistricting proposal. We have tried to express concerns via comments on line, writing letters, by attending meetings and by showing committee members around our area, but these concerns do not seem to be listened to or addressed because we are smaller in number.

The biggest worry is about perpetuating the lack of socio-economic integration in our downtown area even further and discouraging families from moving into this lower economic area of town that is beginning to see some revitalization, often specifically because of the integration of this area into Lincoln School. There were at least nine families from this neighborhood that attended the community meeting on December 12 and proposed a compromise of moving the Lincoln satellite district into the new Giant Springs district. Yet, it seemed that the concerns about our area were simply discounted at the meeting on January 9 when presented by the committee members.

If the school district does need to eliminate the Lincoln Satellite area, our first choice option would be keeping our satellite community together and moving the students into a comparable learning environment at Giant Springs. This would lessen the impact to the neighborhood community and the students who have been attending Lincoln School, which is consistently high performing and socio-economically integrated. The current redistricting option only adds more families from this fragile lower SES area into Whittier School. Moving these students will not significantly impact the challenges that Whittier School faces at this time, but it does isolate even more at risk students from the lower north side into one school.

From observations made about the discussion at the last committee meeting regarding our Lincoln satellite area, these concerns do not seem paramount to the importance of walk-ability to neighborhood schools and the desire to decrease busing of kids. The desire to meet these objectives is understandable and, on a map the lines make sense. However in reality, the current proposed option for redistricting especially disregards the safety of students living between 14th and 15th Streets North.

This area is between two major one-way arteries in Great Falls and connects the inter-highway traffic between Highway 89 and Highway 87. These students will now be asked to walk across a 30 mph (or more) one-way designated as a state/national highway with no safe crossing unless the kids walk up to the stop lights at either end of 14th Street N. This is not a safe, walk-able option for these students.

I am requesting you consider the safety of these students and to compromise with our area in order to mediate the transition of these students to a new school. Do not simply draw the boundary lines based on cost savings and convenience of not having to bus students a few more blocks. These boundary decisions impact not only our families personally, but our neighborhood and the greater community of Great Falls. An integrated, vibrant downtown, where people want to live and work is key to a healthy community overall. Eliminating the socio-economic integration that has been taking place in our school district is taking a step backwards for our city.

I have also contacted the city planner and the traffic engineer at the Montana Department of Transportation as to how we go forward with addressing the safety needs of students in this area. I forwarded contact information to Ruth Uekre and to Mathew Cropper about getting some input from these agencies before the final redistricting draft is approved.

I understand this is a small dot on the radar of the redistricting consulting group, but it will have a huge impact on the community of this historic neighborhood and the vulnerable families that live in this area. Please consider listening to our concerns in more depth. Thank you for your time.

I am extremely disappointed in the new plan that was presented at the last meeting! In my opinion this is the easy way out. I would love to talk to the board and express my thoughts. I teach at a school that will greatly be affected by this new plan! This is not at all why I am writing this. It is because if you look at the kids whom we are moving around it the kids who are in the Lower Income bracket! I can't put all of my reasons into words but I would love to meet or talk with someone in person! I am very passionate about this subject!

Has anyone shared what will be the impact on students who currently attend a Title I school and receive those benefits (extra support on reading/math, free breakfast program, etc.) and then those children are sent to a non Title I school and lose those programs. The number of students being redistricted is small and will not increase the percentage so the new school will become Title I. Also, will some schools lose those benefits because their numbers of lower income families is sent to another school or higher income students arrive?

Redistricting has to happen, but what is best for the development of children should come first. Studies show that children need care and environments that are consistent. Children already enrolled in a school should be permitted to stay in that school until their family moves out of that area or they age out. It is a tremendous stress on a child to leave their friends, teachers and school. Forcing a child to leave their school due to the changing priorities of a school district shows lack of support for child development and family support. Teachers and administrators develop relationships with families that clue them into possible needs and struggles. For many of our families, these people may be the only people who know the family and their needs. Families will fall through the cracks if that relationship is severed. Redistrict, but grandfather in the children already attending for the few years they need to have a consistent education.