

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



<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>
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<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 Palisades 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.