

MISSOULA COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (MCPS)
A Facilitated Discussion about Location Options for
Cold Springs Elementary School
August 31, 2015

Session Summary

COMPLETED AGENDA ITEMS

Update community members on the process and a tentative timeline for locating/rebuilding Cold Spring Elementary School.

Superintendent Mark Thane welcomed and thanked meeting participants for their attendance and willingness to provide input on 4 possible locations for rebuilding Cold Springs School. He explained the overall process and that the School Board would make the location decision – hopefully this Fall - and then introduced Cold Springs Principal Jill Sheridan who talked about how the process got to this point.

He also introduced District personnel (Trevor Laboski, Executive Regional Director: Region One; Hatton Littman, Director of Technology and Communications; Burley McWilliams, Operations and Maintenance Supervisor) who would be assisting in the session and the meeting facilitator who would explain and manage the discussion process.

Further community understanding of important criteria related to location selection.

Superintendent Thane introduced Brent Campbell from WGM who Campbell presented the following specific criteria for location selection and explained that all the sites that would be discussed tonight, at least minimally, met those criteria:

- Size requirements/limits (preferably at least 5 acres)
- Buildable slope and accommodation of other site aspects
- Availability of utilities and broadband
- Safety and emergency response
- General access; neighborhood amenity to student access options
- Current and anticipated student distribution

In general terms, provide information about four possible location options for rebuilding Cold Springs Elementary School including the current location.

Mr. Campbell walked the group through observations about the four possible sites including the current location of Cold Springs School (currently owned by the District); the lower Miller Creek site; the Meriwether site and the Maryland Park site (currently owned by the District). Those observations came from ongoing analysis about the sites and the criteria described above. His presentation was followed by a Q/A period with attendees.

Get feedback from community members on individual options.

The facilitator explained the discussion process and asked those in attendance to form 4 small groups that would rotate through the 4 sites giving input on the following questions per site:

- What positive things do you see related to Option One, etc.?
- What potential problems do you see with the site?
- Are there things the District may not be aware of... and if so, what are they?
- What other information would you like to have about any or all of the four locations?

Trevor Laboski, Hatton Littman, Burley McWilliams, and Mark Thane acted as recorders for the participants comments on the 4 sites. Those comments are listed below.

Lower Miller Creek Site

What positive things do you see related to the lower Miller Creek site?

- Space
- Space for infrastructure
- Accessibility
- Easy in/out access
- Walkability for students/families
- Sewer is there
- Fire station in the area
- Proximity to students
- Number of students near and into the future
- Not in an existing neighborhood
- Least residential but in a growth area
- Parking possibilities
- Flat for building
- Easiest to build on of the 4 sites
- Commuters drive by it – can drop off
- Outdoor education opportunities
- Physical Education on the golf course
- Dog park
- It's for sale
- If a bridge is built, it would be great.

What potential problems do you see with the site?

- Path maintenance
- Possible internet problems
- Sidewalks
- Traffic bottleneck – one way in/one way out
- Floodplain questions
- Feels far out in terms of location
- Need to purchase

Meriwether Site

What positive things do you see related to the Meriwether site?

- Miller Creek Road access and proximity to Gharret (Gharret as second exit)
- Buildable lot; good terrain
- Natural division between Cold Springs and this site

What potential problems do you see with the site?

- All based off Miller Creek Road
- Not very walkable
- Crossing Miller Creek Road – A safe traffic control device would be needed
- Uncertainty of traffic flow from new development
- Traffic counts on Miller Creek Road
- Road is steep
- Emergency services slow
- Close proximity to Cold Springs
- Would have to purchase

Marilyn Park Site

What positive things do you see related to the Marilyn Park Site?

- Closest to current site – doesn't feel far away
- The District already owns it
- Great view
- School is in the neighborhood for pickup and drop off
- "Close to my house ' my child could walk"

What potential problems do you see with the site?

- Could have egress issues
- Steep area - on a hill – could be injuries on the playground
- Tight streets
- Need easement for functional access
- One access out of Miller Creek - What if the roundabout gets blocked?
- Traffic flow at peak times
- Parking – No more room for parking from the current site
- Access nightmare
- Huge increase in traffic and noise for the adjacent neighborhood
- Limits real estate market for homes around the site

Are there things the District may not be aware of... and if so, what are they?

- The land falls off/drops off as you cross the fence
- Normally plowed
- Senior citizen area
- County property is flatter – but doesn't have access
- If you put a school there, some people will move there; others will move out
- Safe traffic control will be needed at Lower Miller Creek Road and Linda Vista

Marilyn Park Site cont.

What other information would you like to have about this or any of the four locations?

- Could there be access from Paul Street?
- Could the Marilyn Park site be sold and money used for...?
- Why do we have two school end times?
- Could we get the County land at the Marilyn Park site?
- Could we locate a school on the City parcel at the Marilyn Park site?
- Might we need another school farther out to accommodate new home construction?

Cold Springs School Existing Site

What positive things do you see related to the current site?

- Plan can be developed without land purchase; can use existing acreage
- Three good access points; could Orchard Street be used (now)?
- Internet better at current site
- Possible quicker response of emergency services
- Older homes are selling/younger families are moving into the neighborhood
- The current footprint is large enough
- No displacement of students if new building is constructed in the current open area (look at how Paxson School was rebuilt on the same site)
- Neighborhood is used to construction disruption (i.e., building Walmart)

What potential problems do you see with the site?

- Disruption to school while construction is occurring on site
- Change is difficult

What other information would you like to have about this or any of the four locations?

- If Cold Springs School is re-located, what happens to the existing site?
- How might sale or change of use of the current site affect the neighborhood?

Identify preferences and rationale for those preferences.

The facilitator asked attendees to participate in a “Four Corners” exercise where they would stand with the site they preferred. She explained it was not a vote but a look at preferences based on tonight’s discussion. No one stood at the Marilyn Park site. Two stood at the Meriwether site with the remaining at either Cold Springs current site or Lower Miller Creek. The majority stood at Lower Miller Creek. Summary discussion basically repeated the positive and negatives people listed in the earlier exercise.

Where do we go from here?

Superintendent Thane explained that tonight’s conversation would provide input for the School Board’s decision analysis. He thanked the group for their contribution and noted the September 22 School Board meeting agenda would include discussing the Cold Springs location. Tonight’s summary will be on the District website in addition to other information about these sites and the ongoing process. People were reminded to add their names to the attendee sheet if they wanted to be on the mailing list.