

## [Bozeman Daily Chronicle] Bozeman High graduation set for Bobcat Stadium

Montana Coladonato\_ <coladonatomontana@gmail.com>

Thu 5/14/2020 2:07 AM

To: Public Comment <publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us>

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BREAKING

## Bozeman High graduation set for Bobcat Stadium

By Gail Schontzler Chronicle Staff Writer  
May 13, 2020

Bozeman High School plans to hold graduation June 7 at Montana State University's Bobcat Stadium, the biggest venue in town, to allow greater social distancing and avoid an outbreak of the coronavirus.

"I'm excited," Bozeman School Superintendent Bob Connors said Wednesday. "We got the seniors together one last time."

Connors said MSU President Waded Cruzado graciously donated use of the stadium to the school for free.

He said he made the decision after meetings with Gallatin City-County Health officer Matt Kelley, the city mayor and police chief, police officers who work in the schools, and several MSU facilities, ticket sales and other officials.

School leaders had floated the idea of using Bozeman High's new Van Winkle football stadium, but social distancing would work better at the larger Bobcat Stadium.

"Somehow, some way, we wanted to end the year in normalcy," Connors said, though this graduation won't look very normal.

The plan is to allow only two guests for each of the 500 or so graduating seniors, which is all the Health Department would allow, Connors said. The two guests would have reserved seats together in the stadium, separated from other guests by four empty seats.

Seniors would sit 6 feet apart on the field. Wearing masks will be recommended though not required.

It will be a quick ceremony, starting at 2 p.m., with no band or choir.

Graduates' names will be announced and displayed on the big football screen.

But seniors won't walk up to shake hands with dignitaries to receive their diplomas.

"Oh, gosh no," Connors said. Instead graduates will pick up their diplomas from tables in the North End Zone.

There will be no practice ceremony on the Thursday before the Sunday ceremony.

Families will probably be upset by the limit to two guests, but the event will be streamed live on Facebook and carried on a high school federation site.

"It's all weather-dependent and COVID-19 dependent," Connors said. "With the pandemic, it could be shut down at any time."

He added he hopes that private at-home graduation parties "will be kept to a manageable size and we won't have a spike" in virus cases.

While Bozeman is planning a single graduation ceremony for the Class of 2020, Missoula high schools may break their classes into several ceremonies so that no more than 250 people congregate at each one.

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*Gail Schontzler can be reached at [gails@dailychronicle.com](mailto:gails@dailychronicle.com) or 582-2633.*

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**Gail Schontzler**

Gail Schontzler covers schools and Montana State University for the Chronicle.

## Graduation

Nicole Sharkey <20shanic@student.mcpsmt.org>

Wed 5/13/2020 2:43 PM

To: Public Comment <publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us>

Dear Mr. Watson,

I read through your email about graduation, but I just have a question. I just saw that Bozeman High gets to graduate with all 508 students together while outside. I am just wondering why we are not able to all graduate together when we do not even have half of this amount of students especially at Big Sky?



-Nicole Sharkey

## Graduation

srhoderick@gmail.com <srhoderick@gmail.com>

Wed 5/13/2020 8:44 AM

To: Public Comment <publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us>

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Hello,

I read today in the Missoulian what is being planned for graduations, and I'd just like to say that I think holding one schools graduation over 3 days while only allowing 2 guests is a terrible idea. We, for example, are a family of 4, so only 3 of us can go ( including our graduate) to watch our daughter who has worked her butt off as an IB diploma student, walk across a stage to pick her diploma up off of a table with basically one of her graduating friends if it's done alphabetically? What is the point? I know for a fact that she doesnt care about actually walking across a stage, the most important thing to her is having her friends who have been there, from the beginning, with her as a formal good-bye to their high school life. This idea, is not the way to do it.

Sincerely,  
Susan Rhoderick

Sent from my iPhone

## Graduation

Emily Cohen <emilycohen3366@icloud.com>

Wed 5/13/2020 5:30 AM

To: eleahy@missoulacounty.us <eleahy@missoulacounty.us>; Public Comment  
<publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us>; Robert Watson <rwatson@mcps.k12.mt.us>; Judson C. Miller  
<jcmiller@mcps.k12.mt.us>

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Good morning,

I want to thank you all for the hard work and compassion that you have brought to this situation. I have been so impressed and thankful.

My daughter, Thalia Gustina, is a senior at Hellgate High School and I know it is very important to her to have the class graduate as a whole, at one time instead of split into groups of 80. If it is at all possible please consider having the class graduate as one group and to offset those student numbers, not including parents or guests. I recognize that this is difficult for families to not be there but it seems like it is more important for the class to have this shared experience.

Thank you so much,  
Emily Cohen

Sent from my iPhone

## Missoula Graduation Ceremonies

Marti <marti@advancedlithoprinting.com>

Tue 5/12/2020 9:42 AM

To: eleahy@missoulacounty.us <eleahy@missoulacounty.us>; Public Comment  
<publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us>

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Ellen and the Missoula County Board of Trustees,

I have a high school senior in Missoula and I am writing to you today to respectfully ask you to please reconsider the maximum group size of 250 people at in-person graduation ceremonies. We are fortunate to have an outdoor venue in Washington-Grizzly Stadium which is large enough to easily hold the entire graduating class from each high school plus family members while also adhering to social distancing guidelines. These amazing seniors have already been forced to sacrifice so much due to the COVID-19 situation. Please reconsider and allow them to graduate with ALL of their fellow classmates, together at one venue, at the same time. This can be done safely outdoors at the football stadium.

Please also reconsider and allow more than two family members to attend. Sadly, I understand why grandparents or others with underlying health conditions, etc., probably should not attend, but please allow parents and siblings to attend. Again, the outdoor venue at Washington-Grizzly Stadium can easily accommodate with social distancing.

Other communities in our state are moving forward with plans to allow in-person graduation ceremonies with the entire class graduating together with at least 2 family members also in attendance. Please allow our Missoula high schools to do the same.

Thank you,

Marti Hege  
406-240-0520

## Graduation 2020

Leslie Thompson <l\_hall77@hotmail.com>

Tue 5/12/2020 4:31 PM

To: Public Comment <publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us>; eleahy@missoulacounty.us  
<eleahy@missoulacounty.us>; Robert Watson <rwatson@mcps.k12.mt.us>

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I respectfully ask the district and the health department to reconsider their crowd limits for graduation. Most other AA districts in Montana are allowing graduation for all seniors with 2 guests to occur with social distancing. There also is the option of graduating seniors and no guests similar to Great Falls. Another factor to consider would be the mental health of the seniors being denied graduation with their classmates. This is a once in a lifetime event, please reconsider.

Leslie Thompson



## Graduation

Beth Munro <bethkmunro@gmail.com>

Mon 5/11/2020 2:22 PM

To: Public Comment <publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us>

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I would respectfully ask that the board to consider the possibility of holding a somewhat traditional graduation ceremony for Hellgate High School – a ceremony just for students. I believe that the seniors should have the opportunity to gather ***all together*** (while 6 feet apart) listen to speeches, maybe play pre-recorded choir and band music, and have their efforts, achievements and activities acknowledged. Although there are 249 students in the HHS senior class, I wonder if the health department would be willing to negotiate just a bit. I wonder if all those students will graduate or plan to attend any formal celebration. It seems there have been many empty seats in past years. A live stream would allow families and friends in Missoula and elsewhere to watch from home, part of the celebration without increasing risk.

A student-only graduation may not be ideal but I think it is possible with some creative thinking and cooperation from the health department. I do know that my senior has expressed no interest in a graduation parade and real disappointment in a ceremony that would not include her closest friends and teammates. They have lost so much and will likely have to make many adjustments to plans for the immediate future. I'd like to at least know that the possibility of providing them an all-inclusive ceremony will be considered by the board.

Sincerely,

Beth Munro

## Graduation ceremonies

Angie Paulson <paulsons@LIVE.COM>

Mon 5/11/2020 10:40 AM

To: eleahy@missoulacounty.us <eleahy@missoulacounty.us>

Cc: Ryan Rettig <rrettig@mcps.k12.mt.us>; Public Comment <publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us>

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Ms. Leahy,

I am contacting you requesting your reconsideration on the limitations you have put on the high school graduation ceremonies in Missoula County. There are several concerns and inequities I see in your order to limit the total number of attendees to 250 people. They are as follows:

1. Yellowstone County Health Department has approved graduation ceremonies for all 3 public high schools to include all students graduating together as well as allowing 2 guests per student. Each of the public high schools have at least 350-400 students graduating. Each person in attendance must wear a mask and have the 6 feet between them. How is it that a community in the same state can look at the same CDC guidelines and approve such vastly different policies? Perhaps you should contact your counterpart at the Yellowstone County Health Department for guidance. Collaboration is key in these situations.
2. Again, in comparison to Yellowstone County, who has had 89 confirmed cases to Missoula County's 39 cases we have a much lower number of confirmed cases. Missoula County has not had a new confirmed case in almost 3 weeks. Therefore, the safety measures that have been taken are effective. With a ceremony using the proper safety measures such as requiring masks and social distancing this can continue to be the case.
3. The mantra surrounding this pandemic has been "We are in this together." These Seniors have been through this together and now you are requiring them to split up, not graduate as an entire unit and feel a sense of loss by separating them before they all take their paths toward adulthood.
4. Butte High School also worked out an effective plan with Butte Silverbow County Health Department to allow all graduates and two guests to attend their high school graduation. Another resource to look to for guidance.
5. Why is it that the most infected state in the union, New York, is allowing West Point Military Academy to graduate 1,000 cadets on June 13th? We are one of the least infected states in the union and have graduating classes of 1/3 that size and you are taking

away the graduation these young people deserve and have earned? Again, another resource to consult with about a feasible plan and solution.

Everyone in the country has access to the CDC guidelines and the Johns Hopkins report you referenced in your press conference on Friday, May 8. However, you are coming to very different conclusions to those resources. This is where collaboration and reasonable accommodations for a beneficial resolution is needed.

I implore you to take a second look at your directive and to seek additional advisement from other large communities in the state to right this situation for the sake of these young men and women who deserve to celebrate their accomplishments together as a whole class, not as segments of their class, and bring them together one last time.

Thank you,

Angie Paulson  
Proud parent of a Sentinel class of 2020 graduate

## Graduation ceremony idea

alsterneilmarie@gmail.com <alsterneilmarie@gmail.com>

Mon 5/11/2020 9:34 AM

To: Public Comment <publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us>

Cc: Ashley House <ahouse@mcps.k12.mt.us>

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Hi,

This is not my ideas, but I thought it was a good one for a way for us to celebrate our seniors/graduates.

Video record the graduation and give a copy to each graduate on or before June 6. Here's how it could work:

Designate a certain number of seniors and their parents (under 250 total) to come at a certain time prior to June 6. Seniors will have their cap and gown on.

Have a stage set up and the people who are going to hand out diplomas, etc. on the stage.

Seniors will walk across stage, get their diplomas, get a picture. The crowd that is there can acknowledge them. Then they leave and the next group comes in.

Prior to the graduation date, video tape the people who are giving speeches and talking.

Put all these tapings together and give to the seniors on or before June 6.

Then the graduates can watch and share the tape at the senior parties.

One last thing that needs to be considered. My daughter, Melina Peck, is in a wheelchair and will need to ramp to get on the stage.

Thanks for your time,

Neil Marie Peck

## Hellgate Graduation

rosedumont11@gmail.com <rosedumont11@gmail.com>

Mon 5/11/2020 6:04 AM

To: Public Comment <publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us>

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To whom it may concern:

Please consider Missoula high school graduations being held at the Griz Stadium. Many Montana schools are utilizing their large capacity venues for their graduation. Please also take into consideration where we will more than likely be on June 6<sup>th</sup> with virus health concerns. I believe with specific guidelines we can all be safe.

**ROSE DUMONT**

## Graduation

Sophia Gettings <20getsop@student.mcpsmt.org>

Sun 5/10/2020 11:48 AM

To: Public Comment <publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us>

Hello,

I'm a senior at Hellgate high school, and I have a concern about the graduation ceremony. I have a parent who is compromised, so we won't be able to risk going to a large event. How will not attending the ceremony affect my graduation? I look forward to hearing a response.

Thank you,

Student

## Graduation

Karen Sautter <karensautter@yahoo.com>

Fri 5/8/2020 1:26 PM

To: Public Comment <publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us>

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Thanks for considering an in person high school graduation. In planning please remember what is most important to the students, besides first priority of safety. Students want friends, families and classmates at the ceremony. TO WALK IN CAP AND GOWN. To hear their name called. Pictures in cap and gown. Not speakers or a full stage of school administrators or school board members and teachers. If this SAVES in the number counts, let's do this. FOR THE STUDENTS WANT FRIENDS AND FAMILY TO CHEER AND CELEBRATE WITH THEM.

Thanks for what you do. Karen Sautter

high school graduation

ja\_ferguson@yahoo.com <ja\_ferguson@yahoo.com>

Fri 5/8/2020 12:58 PM

To: Public Comment <publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us>

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I know you are hearing from many parents and students and have many issues to consider as you make plans for graduation. Please consider outdoors as it is the safest setting and consider limiting the amount of time people are gathered to limit possible extended exposure. By making people as safe as possible and making people aware of informed safety precautions taken, they are likely to not only attend but also enjoy the ceremony.

Thanks so much for your efforts!

Jennifer Ferguson

Senior Parent

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)



## Graduation

Jodi Hunt <jjbrhunt@gmail.com>

Fri 5/8/2020 12:18 PM

To: Public Comment <publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us>

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Thank you for your thoughts and planning for graduation.

My senior (and us as parents) are most concerned about community health. I am sure you have majority of people asking for a ceremony but I want to say we are totally in support of no gathering.

Thanks for your hard work and leadership.

Jodi and Jeff Hunt

## MCPS Graduation 2020

Laurel Miller <quantumpdx@gmail.com>

Fri 5/8/2020 10:08 AM

To: Public Comment <publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us>

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Please consider doing what Great Falls is doing where the kids have the ceremony together as planned with no guests but all guests watch from home. This seems much easier on staff and schools to prepare and it allows ALL family members to view in the same fashion not putting stress on students to choose who to have at the ceremony especially with multiple siblings step parents/family and grandparents. Whatever is decided please live stream for all of the family members who cannot travel or attend the previously planned ceremony. Thanks you, just my 2 cents :)

--

**"How people treat you is their karma; How you react is yours." ~Wayne Dyer**

## 8th grade promotions

Michelle Ferrel <mferrel88@gmail.com>

Fri 5/8/2020 9:48 AM

To: Public Comment <publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us>

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I am a parent to not only a graduating senior but also to a promoting 8th grader. While I am very excited to see that we may still be able to have some sort of graduation I am very disappointed that not one thing has been said about 8th grade promotions! I do understand that the kids are not completely done with school for a lot of these kids they will be leaving friends just the same since a lot of them will go to different high schools. Please do something for these kids also!

Thank you Michelle Ferrel

## Graduation

Kathy Peterson <katjojo71@gmail.com>

Fri 5/8/2020 9:40 AM

To: Public Comment <publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us>

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What if they did it by alphabet. Now seating folks whose names start with a-g. Once they get there diploma kid and family leaves

## Graduation 2020

Leslie Thompson <l\_hall77@hotmail.com>

Fri 5/8/2020 7:20 AM

To: Public Comment <publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us>

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I respectfully ask the district to work with the health department to reconsider their crowd limits for graduation. Several other AA districts in Montana are allowing graduation for all seniors with 2 guests to occur with social distancing. Missoula has facilities to make this happen and our seniors deserve to graduate with their entire class.

Leslie Thompson

## School year

Greg & Marcie Kessler <gmczkess@q.com>

Thu 5/7/2020 9:37 AM

To: Public Comment <publiccomment@mcps.k12.mt.us>

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Thank you all for your tireless service. These are certainly very trying times. That being said, I'm wondering if shortening the school year has been a consideration? I believe we get up to 2 "snow days" a year, of which we've used none. Also, pretty much the entire last week of school is non educational. Usually field trips, watching of movies, yearbook signing parties, cleaning out lockers.....the list goes on and on. This is all extremely taxing on us, the new parent educators. It's tough on teachers, administration, and the population as a whole. I'm begging and pleading that the superintendent and school board give serious consideration to shortening the school year by at least 1 or 1 1/2 weeks. I'm sure most parents are like us, trying to juggle our work schedule along with being newfound educators. Thank you in advance for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Greg Kessler  
406-544-1908