From:	Andrew Drobeck
To:	Grp. City Council and City Web Site
Subject:	Agenda item 5.5, disposition and sale of Missoula Water properties (tonight"s council meeting)
Date:	Monday, December 7, 2020 3:37:10 PM

To: City Council
From: Andrew Drobeck
509 Simons Drive
Missoula, MT 59803
Regarding: Disposition and sale of Missoula Water properties, specifically 507 Simons Drive

Dear city council,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the disposition and sale of Missoula water properties. I would like to keep this email positive and believe that all of you do a great job balancing the difficult and sometimes competing interests between government, citizens, and private business. I have been in contact with my ward 4 representatives regarding this issue, however, I wanted to email you all so you could hear my concerns directly.

I was made aware of this possible sale by a personal friend who had seen an article in the Missoula current. I reached out to Dennis Bowman and he we discussed this issue. He addressed my concerns and seemed willing to look at possibilities for a positive outcome.

The land Missoula water would like to sell is at 507 simons drive represents about 5 acres. It sits next to 5 acres of Missoula water land that has a reservoir and is fenced off. Above that is 10 acres of private land that is currently open space. Above that is city park property called High Park. High park is an open space (not developed and never slated to be developed) park on sloped land and cannot be accessed from our homes below. Total there is about 30 acres of open space, home to many wildlife including deer, foxes, coyotes, bears, and waterfowl. 10 acres of that has a sale pending in February and likely will be developed as they extend Landon's Way. I think we can with most certainty agree that if Missoula water sells the 5 acres at 507 Simons drive it will be sold to a developer and houses will be built. That will result in half the open space lost in this area.

I don't think any of us would disagree on the importance of open space and parks in Missoula. We all recognize the importance of livability and one of Missoula goals is to "make thoughtful decisions about land use planning that support the needs and values of residents in regards to neighborhood and community character, parks, trails, and natural resources". I'm very concerned that losing 15 acres of open space here will drastically alter community character and does not express the needs and values of this neighborhood. But I also see a great opportunity to really meet the needs of our neighborhood. Our side of the Farviews (between Hillview way and High park way) has a overwhelming need for a developed city park and playground.

With the current development up mansion heights and future development off Whitaker, High Park way has transformed from a neighborhood street to a main connector route. Traffic flows fast and the steep and winding nature of the road make it difficult to cross. I often feel like I'm playing a game of frogger trying to cross and nobody lets there kids cross without an adult. Whitaker park is our only neighborhood park and playground, but it's nearly a mile away from my house (much father for the houses off Hillview) and takes crossing High Park Way to get there. Because of this, we essentially do not have a neighborhood park where our kids can go play. Many of the houses here do not have yards and families do not have opportunity to fly a kite, kick a ball, play catch or play on playground equipment unless they drive to a park. We are so in desperate need of a developed park! The great thing is, this land at 507 simons drive would be absolutely perfect. Its flat enough, the right size, has access, and has one of the best views in all of Missoula. There is no other land available or that ever will be available in this area that could fit this need. I understand that building parks takes organization and fundraising and is takes years and decades sometimes to come to fruition. I do not think this to be an endeavor that would occur quickly and it would be something that my kids would probably ever be able to enjoy. However, once this land is gone and made into houses there is no going back. The Farviews are lacking diversity when it comes to families and I believe much of that is due to a lack of access to playgrounds and a lack of sidewalks and safe places to walk and bike. But there is an aging population up here and with families getting priced out of the Rattlesnake, university district, and Lewis and Clark this neighborhood can have a bright future with families. This is an opportunity to start securing that future for a family friendly neighborhood.

I would like city leadership to take a hard took at how we can make the desire of Missoula water to dispose of this land be a benefit to this neighborhood and the community as a whole. But to take a good hard look at the possibility of that we need time. I ask council to pump the brakes on the disposal of this land. Land in Missoula is only becoming worth more and I don't believe there would be detriment in giving the neighborhood time to work on a positive solution. We haven't been talked to up here, and the neighborly thing to do is at least give us the opportunity to bird dog this before houses are built and the character of this neighborhood is permanently changed for the negative.

Thank You for your time and what you do,

Sincerely,

Andrew Drobeck
509 Simons Drive
406-240-0049

“The one who plants trees, knowing that he will never sit in their shade, has at least started to understand the meaning of life.” (**Rabindranath Tagore**)