

Good Morning!

**This note is in response to last night, June 20, 20223, meeting of the Livingston City Commission. Sacajawea Park and rule by law, the Livingston Growth Policy, are in jeopardy. If the commission votes for having the proposed 4 Ranges Wellness Center at the proposed Sacajawea Park location, then the park itself is over and the recommendations of the Growth Policy truly mean nothing from that point on.**

Strong words, but true. The Growth Policy says that we **WILL** follow the recommendations of the “Upper Yellowstone River Task Force” which says that no structure is to be built on an island in the Yellowstone River. The wellness center proposal is on McLeod Island, an island in the Yellowstone.

After last night’s city commission meeting, it is obvious that we have to organize a campaign basically to actually save Sacajawea Park. The other three options given last night: Washington School, Northside Park, and M Street Park, do not do any of what is below and are all wonderful options for our Livingston (Not 4 Ranges) Wellness Center.

What happened last night is that our Sacajawea Park became a piece of desirable real estate rather than a park the people of Livingston have cherished and nurtured for over 80 years. That real estate is up for grabs by the private sector, because of its location and once that designation of Miles Park as a building site for one of the largest corporations in the world, the people’s park becomes the 4 Ranges, not the cities and the people’s property.

This is a clever move by Goldman Sacs. The city commission voted to stop the development at exit 330. As you may know Andrew Field no longer owns PFL. The only thing he has interest in what is termed by our Growth Policy “sprawl” development our at exit 330. He and Goldman Sacs want to win its lawsuit it has brought against the city who evoked the Growth Policy in stopping their propose development. They are entity’s whose only purpose is to make money. When the city commission voted against the 330 development, Andrew Field called the current city commission the worst name he could call them---“environmentalists.” (Livingston Enterprise)

Clever people. Putting the wellness center taking over Miles Park, puts the valuable real estate that developers covet all into jeopardy then the rest of the park, potentially, falls under that category of real estate, rather than public park, as well. Suddenly, Sacajawea Park and it is valuable real estate open to development by the private sector.

In addition, because the city commission doesn’t take a stand for the Growth Policy, they stand to lose their lawsuit against the Goldman Sacs 330 development and the Growth Policy, so many of us worked hard for. Our Growth Policy becomes a piece of paper without any clout.

When that goes, so goes the downtown and everything else the Growth Policy is protecting us against---you name it. Plus, there are other losses that choosing one of the other three options does not carry:

1. **The Civic Center** with a future as an affordable rec center that cannot be covered by the city but can be maximized by non-profits. We do not know all of the future of the building, but like East Side School, it can be wonderful---emergency shelter as it has always been, roller blading, biathlon (the Civic Center has a rifle range in the basement) offices, fund raising center, and a center for things like PCEC and other environment groups as we go into global warming, art, music---you name it that the wellness center will not accommodate. In addition, there is the loss of our civic center, multi-million-dollar existing building plus the cost, considerable, cost of tearing it down (violating the environmental principle of not tearing down existing building, but rather using them rather than making a landfill out of them.)
2. **Sacajawea Park** as a park. There are other forms of recreation and one of them is walking your dog or just yourself along the Yellowstone River and enjoying the unparalleled open space vision of the mountains and the river as you walk. Is there better exercise than that? Because Sacajawea Park had remained undisturbed for 80 years it has been a peaceful place for human and wild birds to interact with the unparalleled view of the river and mountains that only a park will give. Huge buildings in the place of open space, are simply offensive given the natural experience. People come from over the world to experience that Sacajawea walk and view. The city had almost nothing to do with the creation of Sacajawea Park. The land was donated mostly by the Swindlehurst family, and the city did not pay for the park. It was a WPA/CCC project and then 17 years of Warren McGee working full time getting 425 trees donated (record in the library) and creating the park. The soil at Miles Park came out of the Warren McGee and Tom Hallen, writing the grant for the dredging of the lagoon and putting the soil covering the large landfill where the maga-Los Angeles type building, aka wellness center, is supposed to go, where the band shell area behind the civic center is today.
3. The **Farmer's Market** which is this year almost four times larger and where parking covered all of the parking at Miles Park all of the way to the high school. The market says that were we to landscape Miles Park behind the Civic Center, they could put 20 more booths up on additional green and treed (PCEC) space as well as intelligent parking they have in mind. (They are being held back by well-meaning city employees violating the Hatch Act. As a city employee, by Montana and Federal law, you are not to use your position to advocate for anything political---that goes for teachers as well as city employees. If they do advocate publicly, they are breaking the law.)
4. **Wildlife.** The osprey, eagle, etc. nests are gone if the wellness center is constructed as proposed. The kind of disruptive constructions that the proposed \$36 million wellness center proposes, kills off the sanctuary has become. (Warren McGee told me and documented how he created nests to attract our Canadian Geese and other birds to call Sacajawea Park home. It did not happen by chance and he used to brag, with a huge smile on this face, that Sacajawea Park had more wild birds than the Hayden Valley in Yellowstone---of which he said that we are a part.) Warren McGee was also one of the major players in stopping the Allen Spur Dam that would have left the Paradise Valley under water. The proponents of the Allen Spur Dam were like the advocated of

destroying Sacajawea Park today. They had a rationale that looked good on paper, but that would have been devastating beyond repair, once implemented.

5. **The Yellowstone River.** The flooding and taking out of the civic center is putting all of that land where Miles Park is into jeopardy, not just the wellness center which could go downriver in a flood. . The course of the river is easily changed and it runs about 5 feet under McLeod Island as it is. The proposed wellness center is partially to be built on an old garbage dump 25 feet from the changing Yellowstone River and if any of that land that close to the river could result in the river changing its course. Even a slight change could have huge repercussions not only taking out Miles Park, but putting the high school and other buildings into a shift. People like Wendy Weaver of Montana Fresh Water Partners, have already made the case for the legality of building along the Yellowstone where proposed. I guess with the city's decision last night, we will have to make the case publicly again.
6. The other proposed wellness center sites are not an extension of **Yellowstone Park** through its river. Other communities that very conservative companies like Goldman Sacs and Home Depot, in spite of their façades, have taken over are not the original entrance to the first national park in the world with its historic structures and land on the Yellowstone---none. We are. where people come from all over the world to see nature and an unspoiled ecosystem at its best and they do not come to see megastructures taking over our river. The environment is first under our Growth Policy for a reason. We are only 83 miles from the source of the mighty Yellowstone River We are where the Yellowstone River comes out of the confines of the Paradise Valley and spreads out---especially during flood events. Last years flood, with global warming, is just the beginning. The river is uncontrollable as to where it will spread and wind next---thus the Growth Policy endorsed recommendations of the Upper Yellowstone River Task Force.
7. **Unsolvable traffic congestion.** It is almost impossible to get down to the school area where the high school and park are today when school gets out. With the parking plan that will come with the Main Street project, the kids can bicycle through the downtown to the wellness center wherever it is the roads in the Sacajawea Park, part of town are simply not designed for the kind of disruptive traffic that will occur at the proposed wellness center. There is simply no space for additional access. The other three options do not have that problem. In the future, additional schools will be built on the north side of town where most growth has to take place. Hopefully, Livingston, if this city commission gets its way, will become a much more bicycle, walking friendly place. Access to the alternative three wellness center locations are easy and can adapt to growth. Sacajawea Park cannot because of the limited space the river creates.

I am part of concerned people who, again, have to form an ad hoc group to save Sacajawea Park. We are not millionaires and trillionaires. We just love Sacajawea Park and our city. We will be coming together even more after last nights meeting, but we are many, but just have to figure out how to do this. We thought we made our case twice already. The 129 page "study" by PCCF was, in my judgment, deliberately inaccurate. The last time this wellness center came up, our Historical Society put on two programs opposing it with around 30 attending one of the

presentations and about 90 attending the second. Those were not mentioned in the study by PCCF. A significant group opposed the wellness center location at the public presentations given and not one of our names is mentioned in the PCCF study presented to the city commission this spring. In addition, as I mentioned, it also looks like we are facing city employees and school district employees that may be unwittingly violating the Hatch Act. Montana's Hatch Act is considerably stronger than the Federal and violation has been evoked before in Park County. According to legal counsel and my own graduate work for my MEd with a Harvard professor who argued cases before the Supreme Court, city and, for example, school employees, especially teachers and administrator cannot use their positions to advocate for anything political. This 4 Ranges Wellness Center falls under that category since there will be a vote on the subject. Rec Department and public works directors and teachers and principals, for example, should not even write letters to the commissioners much less talk publicly in any form of the location one way or the other.

It is at this point, to be fair that I would like meet with the city to see if we can paint and improve the Civic Center that has been, we believe, deliberately neglected so that it could be torn down. I asked multiple times for the last several years, that the graffiti be removed from the Civic Center and that the one-of-a-kind original mural by an internationally known local artist, Parks Reece be treated with respect. The rec department will probably be there two years and a leaking roof is a hazard and there is a group of us who believe, no matter what, we are willing to make it nice for our employees now. We are willing to work hard, as the public always has, to make the Civic Center nice again. It should happen now, while we can.

The Civic Center is in the URA district and we would like to apply for a grant on June 27<sup>th</sup>, with them while they have the money to cover ½ of the painting. We have a painter that would be available in the next couple of weeks and we could start with the bandshell back. It is not unfair to present that beautiful historical building well. We have a bid for \$43,000, half of the competing bid, to paint the Civic Center, and in addition to the URA grant would have to raise \$21, 500, and allow the Parks Reece painting be given the respect it deserves with clearing out the junk that is in front of it and placing stones there so that objects cannot be put in front of it. In addition, Parks is willing to paint a large sign, that can be seen from the bandshell, telling the history of that original mural. I have discussed this at length with Parks and he would be grateful for consideration.

There is much to be discussed and done. Conversations, again, are a good starting point.

Thanks! I believe in you as caring people and continue to make the Growth Policy with the environment at its first priority---my personal priority.

Patricia Grabow