

Barrett Road still not safe

http://billingsgazette.com/opinion/letters/barrett-road-still-not-safe/article_82073376-ea88-5e90-a3da-245b9fb82043.html

Billings Gazette Sunday, February 25, 2018

After attending three public meetings regarding the Barrett Road Zone Change Proposal, it has become unequivocally clear that the number one priority and concern is for the safety of our school children. This has been the single most concern raised by both parents of school children and motorists who use Barrett and Hawthorne Roads on a regular basis. To date, child and traffic safety hazards along Barrett and Hawthorne Roads have never been adequately and safely addressed since the opening of the new middle school.

As a concerned resident, one can only ask why is safety continually being ignored by decision makers while on-going development is routinely being approved in our area that has recognized safety hazards?, i.e. high traffic volume, speeding, little or no traffic enforcement, damaged roads, no sidewalks, no lighting. The county and the City of Billings officials must be held accountable for their decisions and/or creating additional safety hazards by poor decision making.

Albert Einstein is credited for once exclaiming, "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over, but expecting different results." It is now more than obvious additional high density housing developments must not be approved by County Commissioners and city officials until all safety hazards are mitigated. Failure to do so is irresponsible and makes decision makers culpable for any undesirable consequences caused by their poor planning. As a concerned constituent, this is the only acceptable standard of care we must insist upon from our elected representatives and officials.

Chris Nielsen

Billings

-----Original Message-----

From: Christopher Nielsen [mailto:mtbirdmancan@gmail.com]

Sent: Wednesday, February 28, 2018 2:52 PM

To: Pam Ellis <pamellis50@gmail.com>; Cromwell, Nicole <CromwellN@ci.billings.mt.us>; Lorraine <lornielson@bresnan.net>; Roger Gravgarrd <billingsheightstaskforce@gmail.com>

Subject: Barrett Road Hazard

February 28, 2018

All,

These pictures were taken on Barrett Road near the Hawthorne Road intersection. These pictures document a random number of school children walking home just east of the proposed Barrett Road high density land development proposal. The children are all east and well beyond the location where the property developer has proposed to install a 510' sidewalk on the south side of Barrett Road.

Obviously, a south side sidewalk serves little purpose since most children live east of the proposed development site. Snow, rain and mud will always be an issue along the edges of most of Barrett and all of Hawthorne Roads. The children walk on the roads to avoid deep snow and getting their feet wet and muddy. Barrett and Hawthorne roads experience many snow and rain days. Potentially adding hundreds of more vehicles on these arterial roads can only have a negative effect and increase the likelihood of an unwanted consequence.



-----Original Message-----

From: Christopher Nielsen [mailto:mtbirdmancan@gmail.com]

Sent: Wednesday, February 28, 2018 2:52 PM

To: Pam Ellis <pamellis50@gmail.com>; Cromwell, Nicole <CromwellN@ci.billings.mt.us>; Lorraine <lornielson@bresnan.net>; Roger Gravgarrd <billingsheightstaskforce@gmail.com>

Subject: Barrett Road Hazard Page 2



-----Original Message-----

From: Christopher Nielsen [mailto:mtbirdmancan@gmail.com]

Sent: Wednesday, February 21, 2018 7:46 AM

To: Pam Ellis <pamellis50@gmail.com>; Cromwell, Nicole <CromwellN@ci.billings.mt.us>; Roger Gravgarrrd <billingsheightstaskforce@gmail.com>; Lorraine <lornielson@bresnan.net>

Subject: Barrett Road Accident

February 21, 2018

0730 AM

It's a good thing no children were walking along Barrett Road when this motor vehicle slid out of control into the irrigation ditch. With the school bus and on-coming traffic traveling west and east from the proposed Barrett Road development site, this could have been much more than just a motor vehicle accident.

Submitted by:

Chris Nielsen

1125 Barrett Road

Billings, MT 59105

406-850-1287



-----Original Message-----

From: Christopher Nielsen [mailto:mtbirdmancan@gmail.com]

Sent: Monday, February 19, 2018 4:15 PM

To: Pam Ellis <pamellis50@gmail.com>; Cromwell, Nicole <CromwellN@ci.billings.mt.us>

Subject: Hawthorne Rd

Two pictures were missing from the original email. Notice the school bus using the entire road to make a left turn



-----Original Message-----

From: Christopher Nielsen [mailto:mtbirdmancan@gmail.com]

Sent: Monday, February 19, 2018 3:25 PM

To: Pam Ellis <pamellis50@gmail.com>; Cromwell, Nicole <CromwellN@ci.billings.mt.us>

Subject: Hawthorne Road

February 19, 2018

These photos document the present conditions and hazards on Hawthorne Rd. The contractor is snow plowing and leaving large amounts of snow on both sides of the road making it most difficult for vehicles to drive by one another, yet alone creating an extremely hazardous condition for all pedestrians using this road. There are no safe clearances on this extremely narrow road.

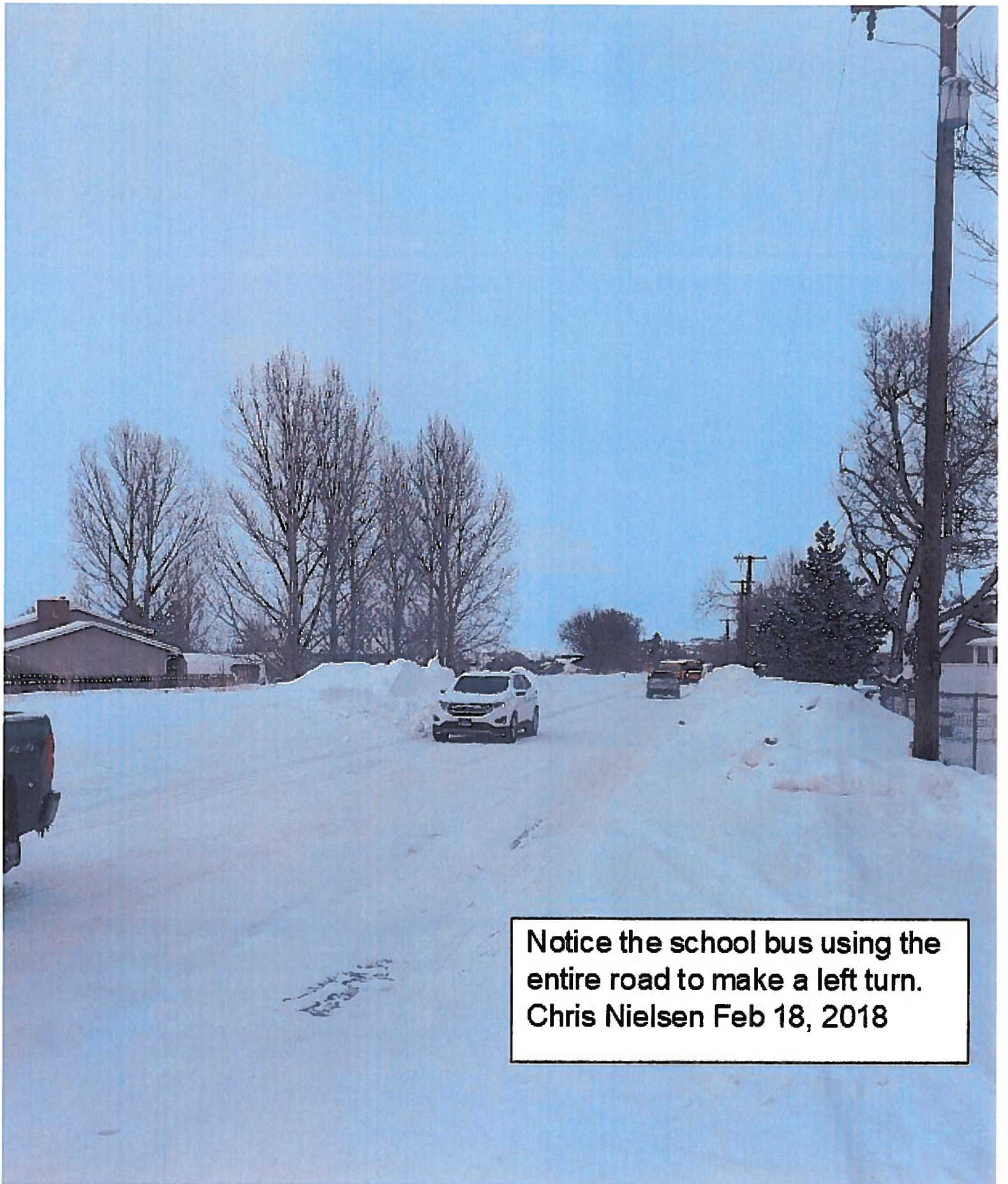
The number of vehicles using Hawthorne Rd as a crossroad to avoid using Barrett Road has exponentially increased because of the huge amount of school traffic in the morning and afternoon. Hawthorne Rd is due east of the proposed Barrett Road project which would potentially add hundreds of more vehicles using both Barrett and Hawthorne roads. Both roads are already significantly impacted with traffic congestion. Without significant road improvements along the entire traffic corridors, the probability of an impending miscue is likely. Comments and photos are submitted for the record.

Submitted by:

Chris Nielsen
1125 Barrett Road
Billings, MT 59105

406-850-1287





**Notice the school bus using the entire road to make a left turn.
Chris Nielsen Feb 18, 2018**

-----Original Message-----

From: Christopher Nielsen [mailto:mtbirdmancan@gmail.com]

Sent: Thursday, February 8, 2018 10:17 AM

To: Pam Ellis <pamellis50@gmail.com>; Roger Gravgarrd <billingsheightstaskforce@gmail.com>; Cromwell, Nicole <CromwellN@ci.billings.mt.us>; Lorraine <lornielson@bresnan.net>

Subject: Barrett Road Zone Change Proposal

February 8, 2018

After attending three public meetings regarding the Barrett Road Zone Change Proposal, it has become unequivocally clear that the number one priority and concern is for the safety of our school children. This has been the single most concern raised by both parents of school children and motorists who use Barrett and Hawthorne Roads on a regular basis. To date, child and traffic safety hazards along Barrett and Hawthorne Roads have never been adequately and safely addressed since the opening of the new Middle School.

As a concerned resident, one can only ask why is safety continually being ignored by decision makers while on-going development is routinely being approved in our area that has recognized safety hazards?, i.e. high traffic volume, speeding, little or no traffic enforcement, damaged roads, no sidewalks, no lighting. The County and the City of Billings officials must be held accountable for their decisions and/or creating additional safety hazards by poor decision making.

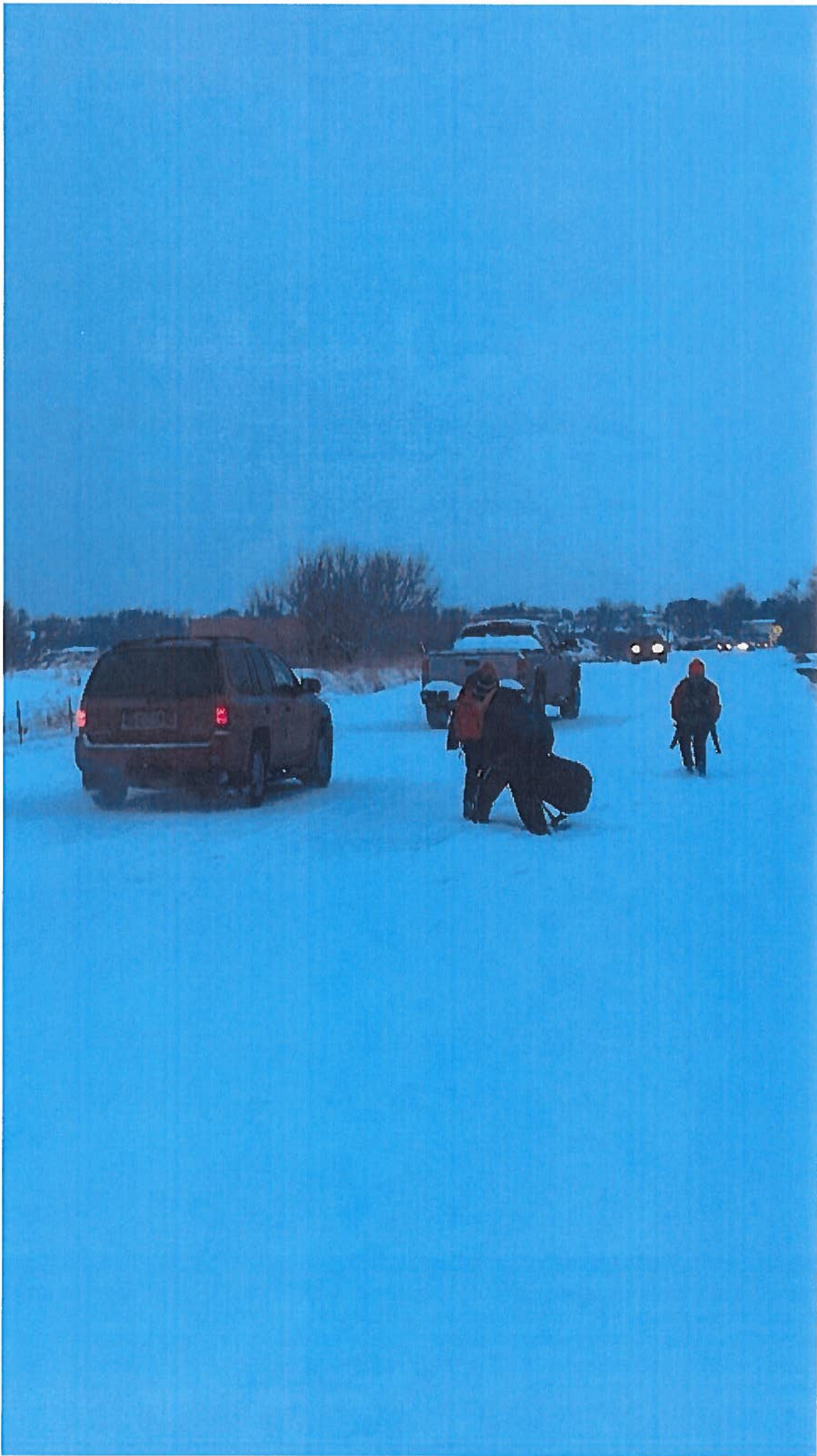
Decision makers have continued to approve on-going housing developments south and east of our local schools without adequately addressing pedestrian and traffic safety hazards along the two arterial roads used to access the two local schools. The volume of traffic and safety hazards created by increased housing development in the East Heights has now reached epic proportions particularly along the Barrett and Hawthorne Road corridors. Now, a land owner wants County and City approval to develop 10 acres into high density housing adjacent to our local schools which will only compound our existing traffic and safety hazards along Barrett and Hawthorne Roads.

Albert Einstein is credited for once exclaiming, "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over, but expecting different results". It is now more than obvious more major housing developments along the Barrett and Hawthorne Road corridors must not be approved by County Commissioners and City Officials until such time that all safety hazards are adequately addressed. Failure to do so by decision makers to make this their number one priority is irresponsible and must make them culpable for any "undesirable consequences" caused by poor planning and decision making. As a concerned constituent, this is the only acceptable "standard of care" residents in the surrounding area must insist upon from our elected representatives and officials.

Submitted by,

Chris Nielsen
1125 Barrett Road
Billings, MT 59105

406-850-1287



This picture was taken on Feb. 6, 2018 just east of the proposed development site. This area will not have a sidewalk and the children are walking on the road because of the deep snow. The road was snow plowed minutes before this photo was taken. This hazardous condition has been on-going since the Middle School opened. Any increase in traffic and congestion only adds additional risk for school children.

Submitted by:

Chris Nielsen
1125 Barrett Road
Billings, MT 59105

-----Original Message-----

From: Christopher Nielsen [mailto:mtbirdmancan@gmail.com]

Sent: Tuesday, February 6, 2018 5:55 PM

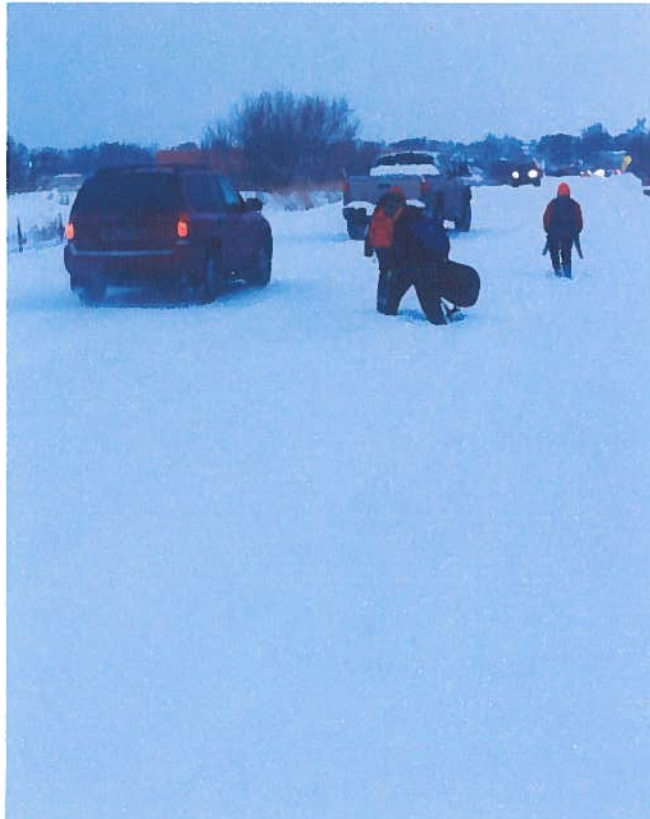
To: Pam Ellis <pamellis50@gmail.com>; Roger Gravgarrd <billingsheightstaskforce@gmail.com>; Cromwell, Nicole <CromwellN@ci.billings.mt.us>

Subject: Snow Day on Barrett Road

This picture was taken on Feb. 6, 2018 just east of the proposed development site. This area will not have a sidewalk and the children are walking on the road because of the deep snow. The road was snowplowed minutes before this photo was taken. This hazardous condition has been on-going since the Middle School opened. Any increase in traffic and congestion only adds additional risk for school children.

Submitted by:

Chris Nielsen
1125 Barrett Road
Billings, MT 59105



Cromwell, Nicole

From: Christopher Nielsen <mtbirdmancan@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, February 3, 2018 12:56 PM
To: Pam Ellis; Roger Gravgarrd; Cromwell, Nicole; Lorraine
Subject: Barrett Road Damages
Attachments: IMG_2003.JPG; ATT00001.txt

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

All,

This is an example of the condition of Barrett Road east of Medicine Crow School. This is likely a result of a great deal of on-going traffic, heavy equipment used to construct the school, snow plowing, ice, and lack of overall maintenance. The road is deteriorating along much of its edges. Major construction with any future projects will only increase additional road damages. Patch up jobs are becoming more and more unsatisfactory. Approximately 80% of Barrett Road is in the County. Adding 25% or more traffic to the road will only increase more damage to the road on an indefinite basis. There is need for responsibility and accountability.



Submitted by:

Chris Nielsen
1125 Barrett
Road
Billings, MT
59105

406-850-1287

This is an example of the condition of Barrett Road east of Medicine Crow School. This is likely a result of a great deal of on-going traffic, heavy equipment used to construct the school, snow plowing, ice, and lack of overall maintenance. The road is deteriorating along much of its edges. Major construction with any future projects will only increase additional road damages. Patch up jobs are becoming more and more unsatisfactory. Approximately 80% of Barrett Road is in the County. Adding 25% or more traffic to the road will only increase more damage to the road on an indefinite basis. There is need for responsibility and accountability.

From: Christopher Nielsen <mtbirdmancan@gmail.com>

Date: January 27, 2018 at 8:24:32 AM MST

To: Nicole Cromwell <cromwell@ci.billings.mt.us>, Pam Ellis <pamellis50@gmail.com>, Roger Gravgarrd <billingsheightstaskforce@gmail.com>, Lorraine <lornielson@bresnan.net>

Subject: Barrett Road Proposed Zone Change Comments

1. The Developer/Property Owner must be required to demonstrate that a high density project as proposed will not have adverse impacts with traffic on Barrett, Bench and Hawthorne roads. A Traffic Study paid for by the Developer/Owner must be required in advance to determine potential impacts to the elementary, middle school and surrounding community who must use these roads on a daily basis. Failure to do so can only have negative consequences on an indefinite basis to all stakeholders.
2. An environmental assessment (EA) must be performed in advance to identify any potential health hazards resulting from major disturbances/ excavations to the property. The history of the property has been primarily agriculture where decades of pesticides, herbicides, and heavy metals may be present and once disturbed pose significant health and environmental hazards to the surrounding community. Mitigation alternatives must be disclosed in advance if laboratory analysis reveals any health or environmental issues/hazards on the property. An independent environmental contractor without interest in the property must be utilized.
3. The Developer/Owner must be required to accept responsibility for all damages to Barrett, Hawthorne, and Bench Roads resulting from heavy equipment traffic using these roads to develop any approved project on this property.
4. The Developer/Owner must demonstrate that the ground water table will not be impacted by a high density development project. Restrictions/ requirements on the use of all groundwater must be specified for any approved development.
5. Specific requirements for snow removal off any sidewalks the Developer constructs must be specified. This must not become a taxpayer responsibility.
6. The Developer/Owner must provide in advance any proposed ingress/egress roads accessing this property. This must include any signage such as street signs, stop signs, etc. This must be included in advance as "actuals" in the design specifications for public review and comment.
7. The Developer/Owner must specify actual locations and types of buffers/ green zones surrounding the proposed development site. This must include: types of fencing, trees, plants, types of environmental friendly lighting, noise pollution controls, and any security related measures not mentioned.
8. The Developer/Owner must disclose the intended purpose of any remaining lands (the other 10 acres) if owned by this developer/property owner. This includes any land adjacent to the proposed 10-11 acre site but not included in this project. This must be disclosed in advance so public decision makers and surrounding property owners have the opportunity to provide any comments or concerns with future impacts.

Submitted by:

Chris Nielsen
1125 Barrett Rd.
Billings, MT 59105

406-850-1287

Cromwell, Nicole

From: Christopher Nielsen <mtbirdmancan@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, January 27, 2018 1:57 PM
To: Pam Ellis; Cromwell, Nicole; Roger Gravgarrd; Lorraine
Subject: Barrett Road Proposed Zone Change Comments (cont.)

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

9. The scope of the Developer/Owner proposed project is unprecedented for the surrounding area. It is inconsistent with the entire surrounding area developments. There is a reason for this. High density congested living conditions for residents who purchased homes in the east Heights who value home ownership and enjoy a certain quality of life did not purchase their property to have it devalued with high density rental duplexes. This project must be disapproved by decision makers to protect the interests of all homeowners who pay County and City property taxes, value their property, and their quality of life.

10. According to the Developer's representative, over 100 duplex units would be constructed on the property. Assuming rental units average 2 or more residents who work and drive daily, this would increase road usage on Barrett Road with 200 or more vehicles on an on-going basis. This is a conservative estimate not counting all of the potential visitors and guests of tenants living in the duplexes. All of these vehicles would ingress and egress Barrett Road at any given time. The traffic impacts to the elementary and middle school locations as well as Bench, Hawthorne and the remaining portion of Barrett Road would be significant and defies all logic to allow approval for this kind of project.

11. Pedestrian safety for our school children and residents is presently a major safety concern. To date there have been no successful resolutions in addressing traffic hazards. The current high volume of vehicular traffic on Barrett, Bench and Hawthorne roads has now reached epic proportions. Adding hundreds of more vehicles to this problem is irresponsible and dangerous for all pedestrians and bicyclists who use Barrett and Hawthorne Roads on a regular basis. Adding a sidewalk in front of the proposed development will do nothing to reduce congested traffic problems overall. Most of Barrett Road is in the County and a great deal of school children live east of the proposed development site. Pedestrians who live east of the proposed site will continue to be at risk and more so with the increased volume of traffic caused by this type of development should it be approved.

12. The property owned by Mr. Schulz and Developer should not receive County approval to develop any type of high density projects. This is foolish and irresponsible to allow any kind of development that creates increased traffic safety hazards to our children, pets and adults. Our surrounding area cannot accommodate develop of this extreme. It is reckless to ignore the obvious and deliberately inherit new problems that should never be created. This type of project will create identified and unidentified problems for certain.

13. Our bike path is a highly valued and used public area for pedestrians, pet owners and bicyclists. The quality and experience of the bike path is predicated upon the amount of usage at any given time. Congestion on the bike path caused by high density housing will destroy the ascetics and overall experience for those who presently live in the surrounding area and use the pathway regularly. It's assumed that use of the bike path by tenants in the development would exponentially increase bike trail usage near the two schools. This assumes that many more pet owners, pedestrians and bicyclists would be accessing the trail in the immediate area. The experience and quality of the bike path significantly diminishes as high use increases in congested areas. Nobody enjoys a crowd in one place. Not in our backyard.

Submitted by:

Chris Nielsen
1125 Barrett Road
Billings, MT 59105

406-850-1287

Sent from my iPhone

Cromwell, Nicole

From: Christopher Nielsen <mtbirdmancan@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 29, 2018 9:53 AM
To: Pam Ellis; Cromwell, Nicole; Roger Gravgarrd; Lorraine
Subject: Barrett Road Proposed Zone Change Comments (cont.)

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

14. It is incumbent upon the City-County Planning Division to determine the following:

1. If the proposed high density development is in accordance with the County and City's Growth Policy; 2. Whether the proposed new zoning promotes compatible urban growth in the surrounding area; 3. Whether the proposed new zoning is the most appropriate use of the land. Based on this criteria it is more than obvious that the proposed development doesn't fit into the neighborhood design whatsoever.

15. County Commissioners and City Planners must discern how growth proposals will affect our community. A Cost of Service Study is necessary for determining how this proposed development will affect the local tax base and the cost of providing public services, such as street maintenance, bike path, police and fire protection. Billings has used similar studies for years on water and sewer service rates. The Developer should pay for this study.

Billings citizens deserve to know how growth will affect County and City finances since the surrounding area is mixed in both County and City jurisdictions. Reliable data will ensure that citizen costs are being shared equitably. This is imperative for the long term and not based on short meeting presentations. The County and City are responsible to its citizens for providing adequate information on the following: 1. How the predicted property tax return of high density residential use development or other type of development compares to the cost of serving the development; 2. How development patterns and the way services are funded affect actual cost distribution across the community; 3. Whether police and fire service levels are adequate now and what will be needed in the future with development and growth patterns; 4. How any level of development, particularly high density development will affect local school enrollment both currently and in the future.

Submitted by:

Chris Nielsen
1125 Barrett Road
Billings, MT 59105

406-850-1287

Sent from my iPhone

Cromwell, Nicole

From: Christopher Nielsen <mtbirdmancan@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, February 3, 2018 3:02 AM
To: Cromwell, Nicole; Pam Ellis; Roger Gravgarrd; Lorraine
Subject: Barrett Road Proposed Zone Change (cont.)

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

16. Rental development immediately adjacent to our new \$62 million dollar middle school and elementary school can only have a negative effect. The potential for enrolling and unenrolling of students will be indefinite. This issue alone will create administrative havoc on staff and students.

17. Rental development of this magnitude equals additional problems for all. The tenants children will have no place to play except on school grounds. This means parents and children will likely use school property all year round to accommodate routine recreation and just having a place to go. The lack of a park in close proximity is problematic. Using the school grounds all year round for recreational activities potentially means more vandalism, more litter, and more animals present at our schools. SD2 will inherit the consequences.

18. High density rental duplexes equals an on-going barrage of people constantly moving with all of the traffic impacts to Barrett Rd. This means constant moving activities created by tenants ultimately impacting all permanent residents and those who must use Barrett Rd. Additional services such as garbage, cable, deliveries, etc. will be on-going contributing to the traffic impacts.

19. The Developer has offered to install a sidewalk which is approximately 510' on the south side of Barrett Road assuming all zone changes are approved. This will not mitigate all of the other problems identified in previous comments. It appears that a sidewalk is simply a "red herring" in trade off for development approval with no consideration for all of the other negative impacts. Barrett Road is a tiny road in comparison to other arterial roads in Billings. Common sense dictates that this development proposal is not in the best interests of anyone but the developer/land owner who are simply trying to maximize their profits with little or no concern to the impacts it would have on the surrounding community.

Submitted by:

Chris Nielsen
1125 Barrett Road
Billings, MT 59105

406-850-1287

Sent from my iPhone

The proposed 10 acre County zone change request from Residential 7000 to Multi-Family Restricted, immediately south-east of Medicine Crow School along Barrett Road is a bad proposal. Residents in the surrounding area and those using Barrett Road and adjacent roads as a regular means of travel would be adversely impacted by this kind of zone change.

Instead of developing this land with the typical single-family home design consistent with R7000 criteria, a zone change to multi-family housing simply means a great deal more people concentrated on 10 acres using Barrett Road as the only means of access as well as major potential impacts to our local schools.

With the ultimate goal to annex this parcel into city limits, this would also impact many city services required to support a high density community. Those who research the background of this developer will learn that a number of other problems (crime) associated with their past projects can be predicted and can only have a negative affect on our surrounding community.

As many of you already know, Barrett Road is a disaster during school and work commute hours. Compounding traffic with more vehicles entering and leaving this potential development defies any logic. The traffic issues, i.e. congestion, speeding and pedestrian safety have never been completely mitigated.

Two meetings are planned, one at Medicine Crow School on Jan. 25, 2018 at 7:00 PM and another on Feb. 5, 2018 at the Planning and Community Dept. at 3:30 PM.

Chris Nielsen
1125 Barrett Road
Billings, MT 59105

(406) 850-1287

Sent from my iPhone