

## **Daniel Rice**

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1901 Benefis Court  
Great Falls, MT 59405  
Direct phone (406) 454-7651

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September 14, 2018

City of Great Falls  
Planning & Community Development  
Attn: Mr. Craig Raymond, Director  
#2 Park Drive South, Room 112  
Great Falls, MT 59403

Re: Development East End of 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.

Dear Sir,

I am submitting these comments in writing because I will not be attending the meeting and I would like them to be considered.

### Background

In 2006, the prospect of a housing development on the east end of 10<sup>th</sup> Ave. South came into the public view.

There were concerns over potential impacts to future flying missions at MAFB, storm water runoff, and unknow impacts to infrastructure.

Various positions were championed by different groups. The chamber of commerce held several meetings to gather input. In particular the chamber had a group known as the Committee of the 80's which was charged with promoting the military missions at MAFB. The Military Affairs Committee of the chamber was also involved.

At some point I was asked by the Manager of City of Great Falls John Lawton, to convene some discussions between the chamber and its' sub-groups, the land

owners and other interested parties. The City would support the project if the issues could be resolved.

Those discussions took place and at the end there was agreement that it was possible and advisable for the development to go through if the conditions that were agreed upon would be met.

This is not to imply that all parties got everything they wanted out of the discussions. There was plenty of give and take on all sides but in the end there was agreement.

Regrettably, before the agreement could be formalized there were changes in the leadership of the chamber and the agreement failed to be completed. Subsequently the parties all moved on to different projects.

Below is what came from these discussions in 2006.

“The PGA Committee recommends that the City of Great Falls and Cascade County not allow any development that would infringe upon the Clear Zone and Accident Free Zones 1 & 2 (at 3,000 feet wide) for a period of five (5) years to allow for the potential of securing a new flying mission(s) at Malmstrom Air Force Base.

This recommendation will be reviewed prior to the end of the 5 year moratorium

The reason behind this compromise was 5 years was more than enough time to know if a new flying mission was coming. Those terms expired in 2011, seven years ago. And we are still having the same conversation.

### Current Status

Roll ahead twelve years and a similar if not identical circumstance presents itself.

The Committee of the 80's has morphed into The Montana Defense Alliance now supported by the City, the County and GFDA. The Military Affairs Committee

remains as part of the chamber of commerce. The developers and the property owners and adjacent property owners are also largely the same.

There is still no new flying mission at MAFB and the base infrastructure regarding flying mission is an additional 12 years old and it has been since 1997 that a plane has landed there. At least publicly, the Department of Defense is mum on any new flying missions for MAFB.

The proposed development is again being pushed for City Approval.

The Planning Board has voted in favor of the development and so has the Neighborhood Counsel.

I will address a few of the more contentious issues.

Storm water runoff to the south is a concern of the land owners Gibson Flats. Now, just as it was 12 years ago the storm water issue would be addressed by the conditions placed on the development. To the extent nothing has happened in 12 years the conditions persist without any remedial efforts.

City sewer, water, storm water and utilities were all addressed in 2006 as they can be now.

The proximity to the former accident prevention zone (APZ) of the main runway at MAFB remains the same. These zones were reasonably established off each of active runways. The APZs at MAFB have long been eliminated.

The hope of a new flying mission is still a broadly felt emotion and supported by many. That is a good thing.

What is not a good thing, is to cling to a position that excludes capitalizing on other opportunities. Twelve years ago we were told there was a potential flying mission just around the corner but so far all that has happened is the prevention of a housing development by private parties that don't require public funding.

Another concern is the growing reputation of Great Falls as the "City of No". Regardless of the merit, that reputation is growing. One indicator is what is happening outside of the city. Housing is being developed both to the east and south but outside the Great Falls city limits.

I understand that mistakes can cause problems (i.e. coal and natural gas power plants owned by the city). We should not let past ventures dictate that Great Falls should be frozen in the past.

I ask that the project be approved with the appropriate conditions so that Great Falls can show it can move forward.

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the author.