
Proposed Tenant Rent Increase at Mt Jumbo School

2 messages

Benjamin Davis <bDavis@friendsmontana.org>

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To: "publiccomment@mcpsmt.org" <publiccomment@mcpsmt.org>

Cc: "woldperson@mcpsmt.org" <woldperson@mcpsmt.org>, "awake@mcpsmt.org" <awake@mcpsmt.org>, "ldavey@mcpsmt.org" <ldavey@mcpsmt.org>, "kgammil@mcpsmt.org" <kgammil@mcpsmt.org>, "chayes@mcpsmt.org" <chayes@mcpsmt.org>, "kmercer@mcpsmt.org" <kmercer@mcpsmt.org>, "awalker-andrews@mcpsmt.org" <awalker-andrews@mcpsmt.org>, "jwalsh@mcpsmt.org" <jwalsh@mcpsmt.org>, "mwhicher@mcpsmt.org" <mwhicher@mcpsmt.org>, "kwitt@mcpsmt.org" <kwitt@mcpsmt.org>

Good Afternoon Board of Trustees,

Please see my attached communication regarding the proposed 89% rent increase over the next two years for Friends of the Children's leased space at Mt Jumbo Elementary School, which the board of trustees will be considering at your April 22 meeting tomorrow.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ben Davis | Executive Director

FRIENDS OF THE CHILDREN - WESTERN MONTANA

Tel: 406-218-6850

bdavis@friendsmontana.org | friendswesternmt.org

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Facilities Rent Increase at Mt Jumbo_Friends of the Children .pdf

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Western Montana

April 21, 2025

Board of Trustees
Missoula County Public Schools Administration Building
909 South Avenue West
Missoula, MT 59801

Dear MCPS Board of Trustees,

Friends of the Children is a proud community partner of MCPS. Our long-term professional mentoring organization, which pairs full-time salaried mentors, called Friends, with children who face the biggest obstacles, is making a transformational impact on dozens of children and families who attend all ten MCPS elementary schools.

Our Friends work with children for four hours each week and meet children where they are, including their classrooms, in the community, and in their homes. We partner with parents, teachers, school counselors and principals, to help foster health and stability in families, improve school attendance, and promote pro-social behavior conducive to classroom learning. Our presence in MCPS has helped ease the demand for teachers, principals, and counselors by providing additional support to these students.

Over the last year, our mentors have spent over 4,000 hours in Missoula schools working to support MCPS students in the school setting. Just in the last two weeks we have had three school administrators contact us to ask when we are enrolling more children in the program because of the impact we are having.

We are proud to be a community funded organization that derives 92% of our budget from private philanthropy. We do not receive funds from the school district for this work.

One of the children's favorite places is our clubhouse at Mt Jumbo Elementary where our offices and program space are based. The children love the space and treat it as a second home - a safe, vibrant, fun place where they play with their Friend, other program youth, and enjoy family engagement events together. We have taken great strides to care for the space and have spent many thousands of dollars in unreimbursed expenses for upgrades.

We have leased approximately 6,500 feet of Mt Jumbo space from the school district since 2023. Our monthly rent is a little over \$2,900 per month not including utilities. I was

recently advised that the school district is proposing to increase the rent by 51% this year and another 38% next year for a total of an 89% increase over two years, which would increase our rent by more than \$30,000 per year.

While we lease the property on 1-year leases, we were told by the school district when we leased the property that we could expect rent increases at the rate of inflation and that it would be very unusual for the increases to be above 2-3%. The proposed increase is not consistent with a softening commercial real estate market with lease rates decreasing, not increasing, in Missoula.

This proposed increase would make it very difficult for us to stay in the Mt Jumbo space and will have the unfortunate impact of preventing us from serving more children in the community as we work to raise more money to cover our rent versus hiring more staff to serve more youth and families.

I respectfully ask the board to consider a much more gradual increase over time of 5% per year. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Ben Davis
Executive Director, Friends of the Children-Western Montana
Email: bdavis@friendsmontana.org