

SPECIAL TOWN HALL MEETING

October 6th, 2017

Meeting called to order by Mayor at 2:30pm

Present: Mayor Coleman, Councilman McCarthy, Councilman Ives, Councilman Pyatt, Councilman

Councilman Wales absent not approved.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Mayor Coleman Pres Release:

Mayor Coleman reads his press release:

MILLS STAUNCHLY OPPOSES PROPOSED CLOSURE OF MOUNTAIN VIEW SCHOOL

Closure Leaves Town and 4,000 Residents Without Elementary School

MILLS, Wyo., Oct. 6, 2017 – The Town of Mills, Wyoming, opposes the proposed closure of Mountain View Elementary School at the end of the 2017-2018 school year by the Natrona County School District. The closure of Mountain View, a Title 1 school, would leave the Town of Mills without a neighborhood elementary school. Mills is the 20th largest community of the 99 in Wyoming.

Founded in 1921, the Town of Mills is located in Central Wyoming west of Casper. According to the 2010 Census, the population of the Town of Mills was 3,461. With the addition of the 268 homes that have been added to the community, the Town population is approximately 4,000 and growing. The Town of Mill's mission is: to service our residents, businesses and visitors through leadership while providing a clean and sustainable community for our present and future citizens; to develop and grow as a vibrant community that recognizes the value of economic prosperity through investments and partnerships; and to inform and involve our citizens by providing accountability, continued fiscal health and a community spirit that provides opportunities for all Town of Mills businesses and citizens.

On Sept. 29, 2017, Natrona County School District officials recommended closing four schools within the district including Mountain View Elementary School which currently serves 178 students. Surrounded on three sides by the Town of Mill's boundary, Mountain View Elementary serves as the only neighborhood school for the community. At the end of the 2016-2017 school year, the Natrona County School District closed Mills Elementary School, the only elementary school within the Town's boundary.

"The Town of Mills wants to be clear that we have had no input or communication with the Natrona County School District on this matter; and we adamantly disagree with the recommendation to close Mountain View Elementary School. "Our elementary schools have been the center of our community for years. With the closing of Mills Elementary last year, it's even more critical that Mountain View Elementary School remains open. We believe residents of our community deserve the opportunity to send their children to a neighborhood school and encourage the School District to identify alternative methods for cost reduction or increased efficiency." With the verbal commitment by the Natrona County School District 1 school board, to not reduce or lay off any staff other than by attrition, it appears that the cost savings by the school district would be \$100,000 to \$200,000 a year. If considered in the overall budget of the Natrona County School District, this would be small in comparison to the entire budget, but result in an incalculable loss to the community of Mills.

On Monday, Oct. 9 at 7:30 pm at the Bar Nunn Elementary School, the Natrona County School District is holding a meeting to take public comment on the proposed school closures including Mountain View Elementary School. The decision will be voted on by the board at the Oct. 23rd meeting at 7:30 PM at Kelly Walsh High School.

"It is critical that Mill's and area residents who oppose the Mountain View Elementary School closure attend the Oct. 9th and Oct. 23rd school board meetings and have their voice heard. "Without feedback from our community, students and their families, the doors may as well already be shut."

Excluding Mountain View, the closest elementary school, Paradise Valley, is 3.7 miles or seven minutes from Mills Town Hall while Oregon Trail, the second closest school, is 4.5 miles or 9 minutes. With reports of already overcrowded busses, the Town of Mills is concerned bussing students to other elementary schools will be a significant issue. The Town of Mills has heard from parents that there is a waiting list at both schools.

Mountain View Elementary School is a Title 1 School, which receives federal financial assistance because of the high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families. The purpose of this funding is to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. According to the U.S. Department of Education (<https://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html>), federal funds are currently allocated through four statutory formulas that are based primarily on census poverty estimates and the cost of education in each state.

In addition to receiving federal funding, local businesses and the Town of Mills continue to support Mountain View Elementary School financially. The Mills Police Department recently provided funding to the school from their Crime Prevention Program for a new security system and the Town just completed the 3rd Avenue Rehabilitation project in front of the school. The 3rd Avenue Rehabilitation project refinished the street in front of the school and added critical school signage in the area. In addition, the Mills Police Department is actively involved with student activities at Mountain View, including playing dodgeball with the students. During Fire Prevention week in October, the Mills Fire Department provides fire safety education and tours of the Fire Department to Mountain View students.

Of the 970 open seats, 620 can be attributed to the new construction of Journey and the Bar Nunn addition and previously open seats. When Natrona County 6th graders merged into middle schools and 9th graders into high school, numbers began to drop within the elementary schools. In addition, the west side of the Casper Metropolitan Area and the Town of Mills continue to experience residential growth. It is of the utmost importance to the Town of Mills that their residents and those in the surrounding areas, have access to a neighborhood school for their children.

To schedule an interview with a Town of Mills representative contact Christine Trumbull, Town Clerk for the Town of Mills at (307) 234-6679 or ctrumbull@millswy.gov or to learn more about the community visit <https://millswy.gov/>.

Resolution 2017-41: A Resolution Approving the Letter to be released about the Mountain View School proposed closure: Councilman Ives made the motion to approve Resolution 2017-41. Councilman Pyatt seconded. All Ayes-Motion carried.

Open Discussion:

Ed Greenwood: 1110 Sword:

Ed has three grandchildren that attend Mountain View School. He said he would hate to see the school close, it would not only be a backwards step for the town but his grandkids love the school and the teachers there. He feels that Mills does not get the credit it deserves. He stated it just does not make sense.

Anthony Gold: 179 S 5th Ave

Anthony has two kids that go to Mountain View. He coaches for the school in sports and volunteers his time and efforts. He stated that Mills needs at least one school. They already took one of our schools we cannot let them take another. He wanted to know what the Town does to keep the school. What role do we play in the funding and supporting of the schools? Mayor Coleman stated we do not have any role. We were blindsided as much as you all were. Anthony wanted to know the law of the state for opening our own school. Pat the Town attorney stated that it would be good for him to go to the Oct 9th meeting at Bar Nunn school and express his concerns. Pat also stated that the school board makes it recommendations and the state places the schools where they think it would do best. Anthony stated we pay property tax for a school to be placed in Mills and if we are not going to have a school then we do not pay tax.

Megan Fleetwood: 1013 Sword:

Megan has two kids that go to Mountain view School. She choose this school as it is her school of choice. It is also her neighborhood school. She likes that her kids do not have to get on a bus to go to school. They can walk or ride their bike. Plus Megan can walk with her kids. She just noticed out facebook page and will be sharing it with everybody she knows. She wants to know if she can start a petition or can we as the government in our town do it. This is very hard for her to accept and does not want the school to close. She also asked if we could start our own school. Pat Holscher stated that is very difficult to do.

Mark Hummel: 614 Brooks Lane

Mark stated that our kids need to be number 1 and that the kids are being forgotten in this whole mess. Teaching should be the priority not budget problems. Budget of the school district should not interfere with the learning the kids are getting. We have a neighborhood school and that is how it should be. Our town deserves to keep it's school.

Dave Gunn: 4925 Eisenhower:

Dave was talking with a lady from Hayden's and she has kids that wanted to go to Mountain View but was told that the school is full and the kids would have to choose another school. Kids are being turned away for no reason than the school district does not want kids to pick this school. Kids are being forgotten and to much time on the bus and not enough time being a kids and no time for family time.

Michelle Patterson: Casper

Michelle's grandkids go to Mountain View. She was very emotional and a very hard subject for her to talk about. Her kids wanted her grandkids to go to this school. So Michelle drives the kids every day to this school. Her grandkids love this school. They are exceeding in the school. She stated this is not "right " for the school district to do this to the kids. Michelle also stated that there is schools that are open that no kids even go to. Why can't they close them down and save money instead of schools that kids are going to.

ADJOURNMENT: Councilman McCarthy made the motion to adjourn the council meeting at 2:57PM. Councilman Pyatt seconded. All Ayes, Motion carried.

Mayor Seth Coleman: _____

Attested: Christine Trumbull _____