



P R E S S R E L E A S E

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CLERK & RECORDER MODIFIES PROPOSED PRECINCT & POLLING PLACE CONSOLIDATION BASED ON PUBLIC COMMENT

In response to public comment at the hearing on December 16th, 2009, Clerk & Recorder Vickie Zeier has modified the proposal outlining precinct and polling place consolidation. "I was encouraged that so many electors provided thoughtful public comment and shared ideas about the initial proposal," Vickie Zeier said.

Changes to the proposal include retaining five polling places originally slated for consolidation. The polling places to remain under the new proposal include:

- University Center
- Evaro Fire Station
- Franklin School
- Downtown (moving the polling place from the Courthouse to the public library)
- Petty Creek Fire Station

Some of these proposed changes are possible because the University of Montana Administration has assured the County they would provide the judges necessary to staff the University Center polling place. Other concerns from the public included distance to the alternate polling place for residents in Petty Creek and Evaro. In the urban area, public comment focused on eliminating polling places from high density areas including Franklin to Fort and downtown. In response, the Elections' Office proposes keeping the Franklin School polling place open, although it would need to address some physical accessibility issues. Additionally, the Missoula Public Library has offered its large meeting room as a polling place as an alternative to the County Courthouse.

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The proposal would still consolidate 8 polling places, and would reduce the need for election judges from 467 to 318. The first proposal reduced the number to 281. Under the second proposal, recruitment for a sufficient pool of election judges would need to be approximately 418 to ensure enough judges are available to work at each polling place. An additional 130 judges are needed to work at the Elections Center to help with absentee, late registration, and tabulation. All in all, Missoula County would need a pool of approximately 550 judges for each election under the revised plan.

Please also note the following correction to the relationship between AutoMark machines and the proposal addressing precincts and polling places. Contrary to earlier statements, Missoula County is not required to provide a back up AutoMark machine at each polling place. The County is in the process of developing a policy that would outline a back up plan for accessible voting. This may include providing a back up AutoMark at each rural location which would better serve voters with a disability at those polling places. In the urban area, however, the County may provide a back up AutoMark and a technician on an on call basis. While polling place consolidation would enable Missoula County to reassign AutoMark machines as a back up, it is not a driver in the decision to consolidate.

The Clerk & Recorder will hold a meeting with the Elections Advisory Committee on Thursday, January 7th at 10:30 a.m. in Room 201 of the Courthouse Annex. All interested parties are welcome and encouraged to attend. The meeting agenda will include a discussion of the second proposal, any resulting changes to the proposal based on public comment received between now and then, and the Elections' Office outreach strategy for electors affected by the polling place changes.

In the interim, anyone wishing to provide public comment may call the Commissioners' Office at 258-4877, send an email to bcc@co.missoula.mt.us, or send a letter to 200 West Broadway, Missoula, MT 59802. Comments must be received by January 7th, 2009. For questions about the proposal, electors should contact Vickie Zeier at 258-3234. To view the proposal, visit the elections website: <http://www.co.missoula.mt.us/Election/>

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