

Justin "Jake" Fields
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Yellowstone County Commissioners

Re: Zone Change Request 733

OWNER: Justin Fields

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Lot 26, Meadowlark Subd. S30, T1 N, R27 E

ADDRESS: 2535 Rockwood St.

CURRENT ZONING: N4

EXISTING LAND USE: Residential

PROPOSED USE: Residential

SIZE OF PARCEL: approximately 30,056.4 square feet

Dear Sirs:

I appreciate the opportunity to bring my zone change request before you. I am grateful to have this process in place, I am grateful for the kindness and patience of the planning staff as they led me through this process, and I am grateful for the service of the Consolidated Yellowstone County Zoning Commission.

As you know, this is the final step in the process after a community meeting, submission of a packet of materials to the planning department, and review by the Zoning Commission.

The materials that I provided to the planning department included notes on the community meeting, a letter outlining how this change is consistent with the city and county growth policy concluding that the zoning change reinforces the established mixed-housing character of the neighborhood and is entirely compatible with both current and anticipated future development patterns, a plat outline, an aerial view of the subject and surrounding properties, etc.

After review of the materials provided the planning staff recommended approval of the zone change on the basis that the change does meet all eleven criteria set out in the city and county growth plans along with explanations for each point as to why and how the change does meet the criteria.

A public hearing was held on January 8, 2026, at 4:00 pm in City Council Chambers, 5th Floor City Hall. Karen Husman, Zoning Coordinator for Billings Planning and Community Services, presented the zoning staff's findings, I was given a chance to address the Commission, public attendees gave their statements, and then the Commission made their determination.

I was quite surprised to hear the Commission unanimously vote to recommend denial of the zone change request. Commission Vice Chairman, Pam Ellis, without reading the text of the criteria point or points, only read the question posed by each criteria point and said "No, it doesn't" meet the criteria. She offered no evidence or supporting statement to rebut the statements that planning staff provided showing that the zone change request does meet the criteria for each point. She initially picked item eight stating that the zone change would violate state law (a law she could not cite specifically) and that I would need to have a foundation under the mobile home, a point that was not stated during all my communications with Mike Schieno nor the zoning staff before the hearing and over which there was some confusing communication between Mrs. Ellis and Karen Husman of the planning department during the hearing. Karen Husman attempted to clarify the scope of the law being referenced, which did not apply here, however Commissioner Ellis did not seem to understand how it was unrelated to my zone change request. Commissioner Ellis eventually added items seven through ten to say "No" to.

I would like to take this opportunity to present the full text of the points in question so that you will have a chance to see them in their entirety:

7. Will the new zoning be compatible with urban growth in the vicinity?

The R-RMH zoning district supports compact residential development that is compatible with the urban character of the surrounding area, which includes a mix of residential zoning districts such as RMH, N2, and N4. Under both the current and proposed zoning, the maximum number of principal buildings permitted on the property is two.

8. *Does the new zoning consider the character of the district and the suitability of the property for particular uses?*

The surrounding area consists of similar residential zoning districts, including RMH, N2, and N4, which support a range of housing types. Adjacent parcels to the east and west contain existing manufactured homes, and an established mobile home park is located approximately 200 feet east of the subject property. Rezoning to R-RMH allows for the existing single family and an additional manufactured home that matches the scale and style of surrounding development.

9. *Will the new zoning conserve the value of buildings?*

Similar to Criteria 8 above, the new zoning itself is not expected to alter the value of any buildings in the area. Valuations are typically based on improvements to the individual properties themselves. Adjacent parcels to the east and west contain existing manufactured homes, and an established mobile home park is located approximately 200 feet east of the subject property. The new zoning will allow the addition of one manufactured home. The residential uses should have no impact on surrounding properties. Any development of the property will need to meet the site development requirements in the zoning code, including building heights, setbacks, and separations.

10. *Will the new zoning encourage the most appropriate use of land in Yellowstone County?*

Similar to Criteria 8 and 9, the proposed zoning supports appropriate residential land uses. Surrounding parcels include manufactured homes and a nearby mobile home park, this confirms the zone change promotes compatible growth consistent with the existing residential character. The property immediately to the west of the requested zone change added a manufactured home between September 2009 and June 2011, based on available aerial imagery. The property to the east has contained a manufactured home since at least 1974, according to Department of Revenue records.

Please allow me to offer this information in an attempt to clarify the law, HB 785, which became law in 2025;

Key Requirements for Permanent Foundation Status (HB 785)

To be considered real property (like a stick-built house) for tax and lending purposes, a manufactured home must meet these criteria, with specific allowances for older homes:

1. **Remove Running Gear:** The wheels, axles, and towing hitch must be removed.
2. **Permanent Foundation:** Must be on a permanent foundation, defined as concrete, concrete block, or wood piers on concrete/block footings (not temporary supports like wood blocks).
3. **Attach to Land:** The home must be affixed to the foundation.
4. **Land Ownership/Permission:** Must be on owned or permitted land.

Although Commissioner Ellis never referenced any particular law, this law concerning foundations on mobile homes was passed in 2025. The purpose of the law is for tax and lending purposes and is not intended to require permanent foundations on any and all mobile homes from 2025 on.

The Yellowstone County definition of R-RMH zone contains no requirement regarding foundations and reads as follows:

R-RMH: RURAL RESIDENTIAL MANUFACTURED HOME The R-RMH district is intended to provide stable environments for individual manufactured homes and compatible accessory uses.

Also, **in regard to criteria 8**, planning staff notes the existing mobile homes on the lots to the east and west of my property and a mobile home park (actually two mobile home parks) within 200 feet of my property. I would add that three properties north of my property and the property to the east have businesses operating on/from them. This indicates to me that the neighborhood exhibits a multi-use personality.

Criteria 7 refers to the limit of two principal buildings on the property which fits with my intended use. My communication to the planning department supports criteria 7 in this way;

A. Consistency with the 2016 City of Billings Growth Policy

The proposed zoning map amendment supports multiple Growth Guidelines:

1. **Home Base 1 & 2 – Housing Diversity and Affordability**

The Growth Policy encourages a mix of housing types and supports housing that meets varying income levels. Allowing a mobile home in addition to the primary residence directly aligns with this guideline by creating safe, affordable housing within an already serviced area.

2. **Strong Neighborhoods – Compatible Infill**

The Policy supports infill development where infrastructure already exists. This request uses existing utilities, road access, and emergency services without creating sprawl or extending service boundaries.

3. **Community Fabric – Reinvestment in Existing Neighborhoods**

Adding an additional housing option to an established parcel enhances the neighborhood's stability and supports flexible, multigenerational housing options.

4. **Essential Investments – Efficient Use of Existing Services**

The Policy prioritizes development that makes full use of existing public investments. No new infrastructure is required for the proposed use.

Criteria 9 addresses the question of property values stating "Similar to Criteria 8 above, the new zoning itself is not expected to alter the value of any buildings in the area. Valuations are typically based on improvements to the individual properties themselves." In other words, the value of a property does not materially affect the value of any other property. If it did then my property would be the one being negatively affected, seeing the condition of surrounding properties. Planning staff also refers to the existing individual mobile homes and mobile home parks on surrounding properties.

Criteria 10 also refers to the existing individual mobile homes and mobile home parks on surrounding properties which supports appropriate land use by me.

I think it appropriate to mention the improvements that I have made to my property to facilitate the addition of my mobile. In 2024 I had one large tree that was a danger to my neighbor removed and during the summer of 2025 I removed 10 trees, some of which were very large and some a hazard. Some of the trees were on Lockwood Irrigation District right of way. I communicated with Carl Peters, the president of the district, about the cost of removal if done by a professional tree service. Because the removal was beneficial to both me and the district I removed them at no cost to the district. I brought in a large amount of gravel for parking and driveway areas which helps to stabilize the land. I took out the old and inefficient heating system in the existing house on the property and installed new central heating and cooling. The skirting I installed on my mobile is built like a house wall, framed with 2x4s, insulated, and sided. The addition of cedar trim completes a pleasant look for the skirting.

I would say that I struggle to understand how Commissioner Ellis can deny my request on the basis of a law that she could not cite specifically but that she accused me of being in violation of or how the other commissioners, Tyler Bush and Carlotta Hicker, could follow her lead without being sure of the law in question. These actions by the Commissioners seems harsh, reckless, and irresponsible. I am not sure if any of the commissioners had a chance to read the findings of the planning department so that they could understand the issues involved in this zone change request.

I would like to clearly state that HB 785 has no affect on the status of my zone change request.

I am including with this letter pictures, videos, and an aerial view of my property and the surrounding properties. I think you will be able to see from these that my property is compatible with and is in at least as good, if not better condition as surrounding properties.

I respectfully request that you view the links for videos we took on the evening of January 11, 2026, in order to show the scope of the Greenwood and Rockwood Street neighborhoods.

You will see that the neighborhood is defined by:

1. Mobile and manufactured homes. Both placed on the street, and viewable, in numbers,

from anywhere one walks or drives through the neighborhood.

2. Numerous unmoving vehicles.

3. Livestock presence. Goats, horses, sheep, chickens and free roaming chickens.

4. Properties in severe disrepair. (Exposed siding, overgrowth, 531 Greenwood was razed by the owners in the fall of 2025)

5. Nine camper trailers being inhabited for full time, residential use. There are possibly more being used for the same purpose, as camper trailers in various states of dereliction are prolific in the area.

The first video is 1:39 minutes long and shows the approach from Old Hardin Road, ending at the front door of my home. <https://youtube.com/shorts/62fz4PypgYg?si=0x7JC9luqEVdEbga>

The second video is 7:09 minutes long and shows the approach to the mobile home park one street over, and the state of properties along Greenwood.

<https://youtu.be/MZIrHy9dkvc?si=tO4Gn2tlgLSg3QqL>

On the basis of these things, I would respectfully request that you not follow the recommendation of the Consolidated Zoning Commission but that you follow the recommendation of the Planning and Community Services Department and approve my zone change request.

Respectfully

Justin Fields

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01/12/2026



Completed Document Audit Report

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Files

ZONE CHANGE - Yellowstone County Commissioners.docx - 4 pages	Jan 12, 2026 13:30:22 UTC
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