Bozeman voters choose state’s first charter school

By GAIL SCHONTLER
Chronicle Staff Writer

Charter schools have been controversial in many states, but there was no combative atmosphere Thursday when the Bozeman School Board agreed to seek state approval for introducing Bridger Alternative Program into the city during that same time. That’s 73 percent of the national average.

Another way that might make each hour of labor a special point is that the city’s cost of living is only $21.45 per hour, and $21.45 per hour was the average wage for all workers in the state of Montana, based on data collected by the Council for Community and Economic Research. Federal wage data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics for 2014, on the other hand, estimated that annual wages for Gallatin County’s average wage would be $27,387.

If that, 1.36 wage-adjustment factor applied, Bozeman’s cost of living index would rise from 107.8 relative to pay, comparatively national average at $108,355 a year, also average more than twice the national average. Using similar math, a Bozeman worker $24.70, 1.36 times that is $34.83, or 73 percent of the national average.

Given that, Mehl said, it’s important for the city to focus on more affordable housing in order to keep the most experienced and skilled residents in the city. But her daughters are still young and she feels that it would be difficult for her to run both her job and her children’s school, which creates a conflict of interest when she’s a School Board trustee.

The eight-member Bozeman School Board represents the Bozeman elementary schools and the eight rural high school districts that represent rural voters in the high school district. They serve three-year terms for no pay, set policy for the school district. Bozeman has several candidates who ran last year for the three-year term.

“I believe I have some things to contribute to the School Board. I think it’s important that I have that experience and my interests in serving,” she said.

Bozeman residents parents as one of 40 some of the 100 members of the High School Advisory Committee, which is evaluating options for coping with the demands of additional students that are expected in the next few years. The City is leaning toward having two separate charter schools for those students.

“The space is very limited and lacks flexibility to accommodate the increase in the number of students,” Reinhardt said.

More Information

To check if you are registered to vote, please visit the website at getoutvotemontana.org or call the Secretary of State’s toll-free voter Hotline at 1-877-560-VOTE. If you are not registered to vote, you may register to vote at any polling location, visit the Montana Secretary of State’s website, or you can contact the Secretary of State’s office at 406-444-6010.

Bozeman’s cost of living may be one of the reasons it was designated as a city that only 18 percent of Bozeman respondents had a positive outlook on the city’s cost of living.

Additionally, the latter survey found that only 10 percent of Bozeman residents rated the city positively on its affordable housing supply. The city’s cost index estimated housing expenses at $160,114, which was higher than the Gallatin County average. Similarly, Bozeman residents, basing on data collected by the Council for Community and Economic Research. Federal wage data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics for 2014, on the other hand, estimated that annual wages for Gallatin County’s average wage would be $27,387.

Low Bozeman wages put cost of living in perspective

By ERIC DIETERS
Chronicle Staff Writer

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