

Comments: WYE TEDD Plan

TIFs and TEDDs can be very effective in identifying infrastructure deficiencies and mitigating those shortcomings in a particular area. By design, this encourages and promotes the addition of value-adding industries in a community. Well planned and managed growth should be a positive step for any community. But with this growth comes challenges for local jurisdictions.

For example, an already short-staffed fire department is tasked with handling an increase in emergency dispatches, building reviews, fire and life safety inspections, etc. The fire department is forced to handle this expanded workload without the benefit of increased tax revenue (staffing for the new demand) that normally accompanies growth.

Missoula Rural Fire District (MRFD) has experienced this situation firsthand with the Missoula Development Park TIF. For approximately 20 years, MRFD witnessed the impressive growth of this area. MRFD responded to 1000's of emergency dispatches, performed all of the building reviews and pre-occupancy inspections and conducted 100's of fire and life safety business inspections. This was done without an increase in staffing because MRFD did not receive additional funding provided by an increase in tax revenue above the pre-TIF levels. As stated before, this situation presented a significant burden to an already short-staffed workforce. When the Missoula Development Park TIF reached its sunset date, the City of Missoula annexed all businesses within the TIF boundaries and therefore started collecting the tax revenue.

Regarding the proposed Wye TEDD, a potential remedy has been proposed that would prevent the City of Missoula from annexing for a period of 10 years following the sunset date. This is a well-intentioned, but very inadequate proposal considering the outcome of the Missoula Development Park TIF on local jurisdictions. The no-annex clause for the City of Missoula should be a minimum of 25 years so the County and the local jurisdictions can benefit over time after the sunset date. As Janet Cornish of Community Development Services of Montana stated at the Missoula Consolidated Planning Board Meeting in 2012 regarding the Bonner Mill TIF proposal, "We also meet with the other taxing jurisdictions, because we are essentially delaying their receipt of funds for a period of 15 or more years, and we want to make sure that they can be...understand how they might benefit over time". If the TIF is annexed in less than 25 years by the City of Missoula, the other taxing jurisdictions do not achieve an acceptable "benefit over time".

Sincerely,

Chris Newman, Fire Chief
Missoula Rural Fire District

Joe Calnan, Fire Chief
Frenchtown Rural Fire District