

FINAL REPORT OF THE BEAVERHEAD COUNTY GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION

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Before outlining our findings and recommendations, we want to publicly thank some people. Lynn Clinton served as our Administrative Assistant and provided invaluable help in obtaining information for us and tabulating our questionnaire. We also particularly appreciate the vast amount of information that Al Schultmeyer of Wisdom did for us in gathering a great deal of information about the tax picture in Beaverhead County and preparing visual aids for us to use at our meetings. His attendance at and participation in the public meetings was also appreciated.

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All of the public officials of Beaverhead County were most helpful in providing insight into their duties, responsibilities and problems.

We would also like to thank those who took the time to complete and return our questionnaire and, of course, those who attended the public meetings in Dillon, Lima and Wisdom.

When the final report of the Study Commission is reviewed by the voters, they should be reminded that the commission is not a regulatory or investigative body. It has no powers other than to review the existing county government and make recommendations to the voters as specified under state law.

ISSUES AND CONCERNS IDENTIFIED BY THE STUDY COMMISSION

Probably the major concerns expressed at our public meetings concerned the lack of representation of the outlying areas on the Board of County Commissioners, and problems associated with law enforcement, roads, weed control and taxes. Difficulties in communicating with all of the county officials was expressed at the Lima meeting and in response to those concerns, the Board of County Commissioners established a toll free number so that anyone in the county can contact any county office toll free during usual office hours.

Since operation of the road department, weed control program and the amount of taxes levied all fall under the jurisdiction of the Commissioners we could do nothing more than pass those concerns to them, Please see the list of recommendations that are a part of this report.

The County Study Commission considered a number of ways that the County Commissioners' districts might be changed. It appeared to the Study Commission that, given the State Statutes in effect, no changes could be made unless the voters approved a Charter Form of county government. The Study Commission does not believe such a change would meet with enough voter approval to warrant the costs of writing the Charter and the subsequent election.

In considering the perceived lack of representation of the outlying areas on the Board of county Commissioners, the establishment of "Community Advisory Councils" was suggested. The Board has indicated to the Study Commission that they would favor establishing such councils on a trial bases. Please see recommendation No. 1

After meetings with the Sheriff and the County Attorney, and a review of the recent Board of Crime Control Report on a proposed consolidation of City and County Law Enforcement, it appeared to the Commission that the idea should at least be pursued. Any consideration of consolidation of City and County Law Enforcement would have to be agreed to by both the Dillon City Study Commission and the County Study Commission. Unfortunately, it was apparent to us after meeting with the City Study Commission that they had no interest in the subject. Please see recommendation No. 2

The majority of the respondents to the questionnaire indicated that they favored non-partisan elections for county office positions. The County Study Commission, after considering the costs of an election on this issue did not believe the expenditure for such an election was justified for this one issue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We suggest that the Board of County Commissioners **establish five member "Community Advisory Councils"** for each Commissioner District with membership on those councils coming from citizens living **in the rural areas**. The agenda for the meetings should address concerns expressed by the council to the Board of County Commissioners, as well as items referred to the council by the Board.
2. We strongly urge the Board of County Commissioners and the Dillon City Council to **work out a comprehensive interagency agreement addressing all of the issues** in connection with their joint use of the jail facilities. They should particularly address the issues in connection with **the booking of prisoners after hours**. Further, they should examine other interagency agreements in other communities to see if their agreement could be improved upon.

THE STUDY COMMISSION ALSO RECOMMENDS:

3. A long-range plan for management of the county road system.
4. A long-range plan for management of the county solid waste operation.
5. Abolishment of the office of County Assessor
6. Intensive dialogue between city and county governments with the objective of removing inequities in the operation and/or maintenance of cemeteries, roads and streets, the city library and the county solid waste program.
7. A procedure for central purchasing in order to eliminate duplication.

BEAVERHEAD COUNTY GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION

Chairman: Ted Hazelbaker Member: Susan Rebish Member Charles Cook