

# Group looks to county's future

By Paul Stewart

How should Beaverhead County be governed in the next 10 years?

This is the question being put to the citizenry by the Beaverhead County Government Study Commission. Through a series of public meetings and the distribution of a written survey, the commission will examine the viewpoints, opinions, and concerns of county residents. Depending on its findings, the commission can exercise a number of options that are within the orbit of its powers.

It may recommend changes in the existing plan of government, or recommend a new plan of government. It may also draft a charter or recommend consolidation of municipal-county government, after meeting with the city study commission. The other option open to the commission is to make no recommendations. Whatever recommendations it makes will be put to the electorate in the 1996 general elections.

The survey distributed by the commission asks the public on its opinion on the service delivery and performance of the county's government. A copy of the questionnaire is reprinted on page four of this issue of the Dillon Tribune.

The commission's meeting in Lima last Wednesday drew almost eight times the number of

people who attended the same meeting in Dillon, and they had much to say.

As to the reason for the disparity in public participation between Dillon and Lima, one person attending suggested that 'We probably have more to gain.' The overwhelming feeling among those present is that their distance from Dillon and their relatively sparse population leaves them out in the cold and, "treated like backwater USA."

Albert Schulmeyer, of Wisdom, brought along charts showing that 60% of the county's voters live in Dillon itself. Ted Hazelbaker, of the commission, reported that 65% of voters live within three miles of the city courthouse. Schulmeyer's charts also revealed that only 23% of the county's tax revenue comes from Dillon, while the rest is garnered from the outlying rural areas like Lima.

It was strongly expressed that while the rural community contributes the majority of the tax revenue, their interests are frequently neglected, and they too often do not benefit from county expenditures. The examples given were the city disposal site, road improvements and other job opportunities derived from county projects.

It was pointed out that the city dump is paid for by county funds, but is not used by rural

residents. At the same time the refuge district which had been promised to them had failed to materialize.

Hazelbaker illuminated another anomaly. When a person is arrested and sentenced in Dillon to 30 days in jail and a \$500 fine, the county pays the cost of the 30 days, while only the city receives the benefits of the \$500.

Many of those present felt that projects such as the weed program and other maintenance works would be more efficient and problems anticipated more quickly if they were decentralized and delegated to the communities they immediately af-

fect.

Suggestions as to the structure of county government were posited. Having five commissioners instead of three, it was expressed, might lead to better representation, and reducing commissioners' term limits from six to four years was also proposed, along with realignment of district boundaries. Another suggestion was that all commissioners be mandated to hold regular public forum meetings with their constituents in all of the communities in the county. As one person put it, "It's a long way to go to Dillon when you want to bitch to a county com-

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## County

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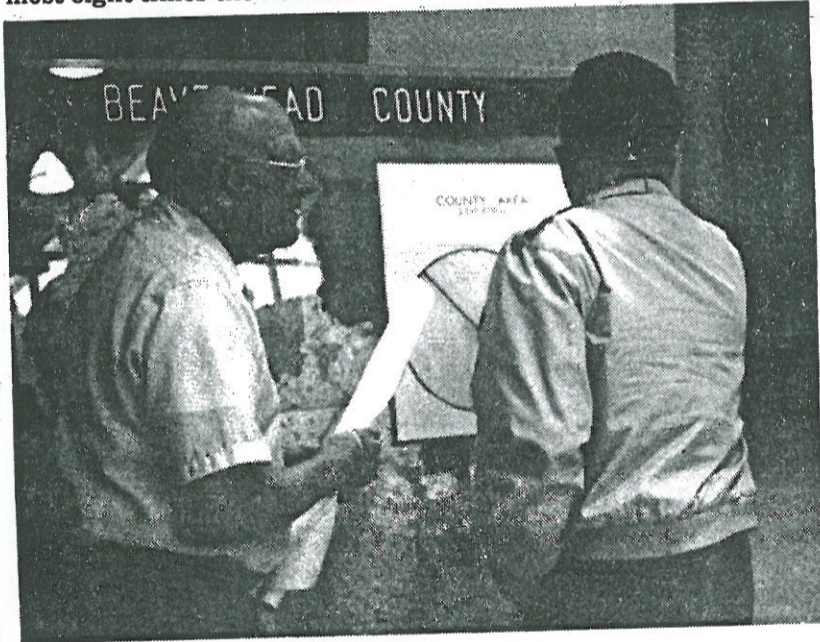
Welfare Director Jim Faye met with the commission Monday to deliver his annual status report. Although the meeting was closed to the public, Haugland did say that the proposed budget is less than the year before when seasonal adjustments are taken into consideration. He also pointed to the forthcoming state revisions of the welfare system. The imposition of time limits, and the implementation of mandated cost containment efforts, would said Haugland, "cause the program to go through extreme changes."

The commission stipulated a number of conditions before the final release is granted on the Hildreth III subdivision. Water shut-offs that are sticking up in the road are hazardous to traffic and must be lowered. Drainage ditches are currently too shallow, allowing for standing water, and must have their capacity increased. Another problem is that two culverts have been plugged, again leaving inadequate drainage, and work must be done on these. Finally, the general approaches are too high and the commission has asked that they be cut down and regaveled.

On another subdivision matter, the issue of road access on the Tolman Subdivision, has apparently been resolved to the satisfaction of everyone. The widening of the road to 60 feet has been accepted and a preliminary right to start work has been assigned. The Peterson Gannet Minor Sub-division proposal, in Jackson, has also been approved by the commission.

The commission reported that John Morris has resigned from the Airport Board. His appointed replacement is Dennis DeVivo, who is the service manager at Big Sky Motors and a private pilot.

Finally, Haugland reported that the commissioners will be undertaking a budgetary review of every department in the county administration. "Basically, we're asking them to justify how every penny is spent. It's a somewhat cumbersome process, but it's essential for us to know just how the public money is spent," he said.



It's like this

Albert Schulmeyer explains some of his charts and exhibits concerning county government at the study commission meeting last week in Lima. Paul Stewart Photo