

Study commission to hold second hearing

One of two proposed amendments to the Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Charter would eliminate the last partisan race for a major county elective office, while the other would more rigidly define the duties of the chief of law enforcement.

The two proposed amendments are in the second set of Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Government Study Commission recommendations which will be discussed at a public hearing at 7:30 p.m. Thursday in the courthouse courtroom.

The first public hearing on the first set of three recommendations was April 3.

Proposed Amendment No. 4 will ask that voters elect the county attorney on a non-partisan ballot. Currently, the position is chosen on

a partisan basis. No other local government elective office is currently chosen by party.

Since there has rarely been a Republican candidate for county attorney in recent times, two Democrats end up facing off in the June primary, essentially pre-determining the outcome of the November general election.

In 1992, Ed Beaudette successfully defeated the incumbent, Sherry Petrovich-Staedler, in the Democratic primary. As a result, in order to challenge Beaudette in the general election that year, she was forced to run an independent write-in campaign; however, she was defeated a second time.

Proposed Amendment No. 5 will ask that voters approve that the

chief law enforcement officer's duties be specified in the city-county charter. The description for the position is now rather broadly written.

Among other things, defining the position could limit or eliminate the law chief's option of assuming coronator duties. Jim Connors, who currently holds the chief's post, also acts and city-county coroner.

"Anaconda-Deer Lodge County voters again will be given the opportunity at a public hearing to express their opinions and discuss the recommendations of the study commission," Study Commission Chairman Jake Maciag said.

"We encourage citizens to participate in the public hearings. Ad-

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ditional public hearings will be scheduled in the future. Final recommendations will be presented for the voters to make a decision," he said. "The ultimate decision on these recommendations rests with the voters when they go to the polls in November."

The study commission mem-

bers have been meeting the past 18 months. They have interviewed city-county employees, department heads, board members, former commissioners, former study commissioners, former city-county manager, and the present commissioners and chief executive. The study commission also conducted a public survey and three additional public hear-

ings to attain citizen participation.

The first three proposals discussed on April 3 were (1) that county boards be created by ordinance with specific requirements; (2) that veto power be given to the chief executive subject to commission override; and (3) that the joint advisory council be eliminated and that the method of filling vacancies on the county commission be changed.

Written comments on the five proposals will be accepted until Wednesday, April 24.

Mike Grayson, Ed McCarthy Jr. and Shirley Kelly.