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Most wouldn't notice change

Voters to decide Dillon government

BY PERRY BACKUS
of The Montana Standard

DILLON — The issue of whether to change Dillon's form of government hasn't created much of stir among residents.

That may be because "The average citizen won't see any change unless they are specifically involved with city government" under a proposal recommended by the Dillon City Study Commission, commission member Keith Reeder said.

A referendum will be held Nov. 5 on the commission's proposal for a charter form of government with self-governing powers. Voters will also decide whether to eliminate the current practice of electing city officials by political party designation.

The commission's recommendations came after two years of study, which included a number of public hearings, meetings and

a survey. Besides changing the form of government and having nonpartisan municipal elections, the recommendations include realignment of executive/legislative powers and the continuation and enhancement of city ward meetings to inform and involve citizens about city government.

The commission's final report, which outlines the differences between the city's present form of government with its recommendations, is available at a number of outlets including the city library, City Hall, State Bank & Trust Co., Northwest Bank, Pioneer Federal Savings and Loan and the J.C. Penney Co. catalog store.

The report says that by adopting self-government powers, allowed under the 1972 Montana Constitution, city government would be allowed greater flexibility in shaping its governmen-

tal structure, greater power to solve the city's problems and more responsibility to recognize and deal with those problems.

Dillon government has operated under a council-mayor structure since 1885. The commission said the needs of the city have changed since then. The population has grown, demanding more services. At the same time, funding for federal and state programs is waning.

By adopting self-governing powers, the city would gain greater flexibility and the ability to deal with changing needs, the commission's report said.

Under Montana law, a local governmental body operating under self-governing powers has the authority to provide any service or perform any function not expressly prohibited by the constitution or state law.

Currently, the city of Dillon possesses "general government powers," which allows it to exercise only those powers granted to it by the state Legislature, the report said.

"In short, a city with general powers may exercise only those powers and perform only those functions extended to it by an act of the state Legislature," the report said.

Under the proposal, the city would operate under a charter, which is a written document that defines city government and redistribute some council and mayoral powers, "creating a more equalized governing body."

"The commission just felt this was a better form of government that will help provide the flexibility the city of Dillon needs to prepare for future," Reeder said.