

BOZEMAN  
**CITY GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION**

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RE: News release for the Voter Review News

Enclosed is the Bozeman City Government Study Commission's "Summary of Recommendations". The entire Tentative Report was published in a large newspaper ad and received wide public and media attention. The study commission's last Public Hearing was July 17th, and their final report will be submitted in August for the November general election ballot.

Sincerely,

BOZEMAN CITY GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. Findings

Findings are based on:

- interviews with city department heads, manager, attorney, clerk, and commissioners;
- questionnaires sent to and received from city employees, former and current commissioners, and former and current advisory and administrative boards members;
- citizen opinions obtained from public hearings, joint meetings with the County Study Commission, public participation at our meetings, questionnaires, correspondence and focus groups;
- a scientific statistical telephone survey conducted by a independent professional firm; and
- study of alternative forms of government and individual study commissioner investigations and experience.

The Study Commission's findings are:

1. Bozeman's needs have changed since the adoption of its current form of government in 1923. The city faces increased growth in and immediately outside its boundaries. This will continue to challenge the ability of government to meet demands for needed services and to replace its aging infrastructure. These problems might best be addressed by a consolidated city/county government. However, there is insufficient support for consolidation. As a result, Bozeman needs to anticipate and solve these problems itself, or cooperate in new ways with other local governments. Presently city government is little more than an administrative arm of the state government. Bozeman needs the ability to legislate its own solutions to its own problems.
2. Most voters surveyed felt the city commission understands the workings of the city and sets policy effectively. Most voters surveyed also felt city administration manages city operations effectively. However, at least one third of voters surveyed did not think the commission or the management treated the public like a valued customer. A large majority (86%) of surveyed voters wanted to be surveyed periodically about how the city is being managed and operated.
3. Many citizens do not feel represented by city commissioners. Voters have lost that "local" feeling which should be in local government. "At large" elections inhibit adequate debate between individual candidates, decrease the ability of voters to differentiate between candidates, and increase the money and time needed to campaign. Historically, commissioners tend to reside in one section of the city. Many commissioners do not choose to campaign for, or serve, a second term. When surveyed, voters felt lack of consistency was the biggest weakness of the commission.
4. Once elected, commissioners spend 20-30 hours a week at their part-time positions. Even with this large demand on their time, commissioners find it difficult to supervise their staff, coordinate with advisory and administrative boards, spend enough time in long range planning for the city, and meet other demands of the position. Many board members felt access to, and communication, with the commission was limited. A commissioner no longer serves on the city/county planning board, a board which addresses the subject most surveyed voters felt was both a priority and the area needing most improvement.
5. Bozeman's present governmental structure does not allow voters to directly select their mayor. This critical leadership position has often been held by people not seeking that office. Most voters surveyed and most public input indicated that citizens want to directly elect their mayor.

6. A large majority of voters surveyed (85%) wanted to vote on all or some new taxes and fees. Some fees have increased drastically. The city has implemented many new taxes including impact fees, surcharges, garbage tag fees and city-wide special improvement maintenance districts. These new taxes appeared to divide the city deeply and cause criticism and distrust of government, in addition to their obvious financial impacts on taxpayers.

In order to address these findings, the study commission recommends: a charter form of government with self-governing powers; maintaining the commission-manager structure; increasing the size of the commission; electing the commissioners by districts; directly electing the mayor; and setting limits on taxes and fees by requiring voter approval.

### **B. Key Provisions of the Proposal**

The proposed charter has the following key provisions:

1. Self-Government Powers: Adopting self-governing powers giving greater flexibility in shaping our governmental structure, more responsibility to recognize and deal with our own problems, and greater power to solve these problems. This option became available under the 1972 Montana Constitution.
2. Commission-Manager Structure: The current commission-manager structure will be maintained with the following minor adjustments. The manager, a professional administrator hired by the commission, shall be subject to a non-binding referendum after every six years of service. Subject to the commission's general direction, the manager controls the hiring and firing of city personnel, directs and supervises the administration of all departments, prepares the budget, and is in charge of the business affairs of city government. The city attorney shall be hired by the commission.
3. Increased Representation: Creating a commission of seven (7) part-time members will provide a legislative body large enough to insure adequate representation and yet small enough to be efficient. Electing the commission by district and directly electing the mayor at-large will encourage citizen participation and provide a city-wide perspective.
4. Taxes & Fees: Limit all city tax and fee increases to 5% per year unless approved by the voters. Sunset all new and increased taxes and fees not approved by the voters.