

176 Study panel proposes changes for Anaconda

BY BILL HEISEL JR.
of The Montana Standard

ANACONDA — Amendments to the local charter proposed by the Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Study Commission could give the chief executive veto power over the county commission, eliminate the Joint Advisory Council and stamp an expiration date on any new county boards.

The elected members of the commission have the power to write ballot issues without the approval of the city-county commission, and they will hold a public hearing on their preliminary ideas at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday in the courthouse courtroom.

The study commission has interviewed county officials and employees and has conducted a citizens survey while crafting five possible ballot issues for the November election, three of which will be discussed Wednesday.

"After 17 months of studying, these are what we have found to be problem areas," Chairman Jake Maciag said.

Currently, the chief executive can make suggestions to the commission but has no vote in making most policies.

If the chief executive was granted the veto, the five-person commission could override the veto with a 4-1 vote.

"This would open up the government for more discussion and compromise" Maciag

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Study panel . . .

said.

The commission also is looking at a ballot proposal to eliminate the 15-person Joint Advisory Council, which was designed as a link between the county commission and its constituents. In recent years, it has suffered from a shortage of members and served mainly to provide replacement commissioners when someone dies or leaves the elected post, said Advisory Council Chairwoman Shirley Kelly.

Currently there are 10 mem-

Hearing set

What: Public hearing on proposals by the Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Study Commission.

When: 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 3.

Where: County courthouse courtroom.

bers who attend meetings, Kelly said, and just seven people have filed for the 15 seats on the council.

"Personally, I hate to see it

go," said Kelly, who also is a study commission member. "But if that's what the majority wants, then we'll have to go along."

If the council was eliminated, the commission would fill vacancies by appointing a person who had finished as runner-up in the most recent general election.

The third proposal to be discussed Wednesday would be a charter amendment that would require all county boards be created by ordinance with spe-

cific guidelines.

"Right now, we have found so many boards that haven't met in as many as eight years," Maciag said. "We'd like to see boards created for a specific purpose and with a timeline, if necessary."

Maciag encouraged the public to attend Wednesday's forum, saying the changes made this year might be the only chance the public has to change government until 2004 when the study commission is scheduled to be placed on the ballot again.