

176 Amendment would define Anaconda's county boards

BY BILL HEISEL
of *The Montana Standard*

ANACONDA — When dogs run rag-tag through someone's yard or keep someone awake with an off-key chorus of howls, Peggy Ravndal can expect a few phone calls the next day.

She and other members of the Animal Control Board usually send folks with complaints to the chief of law enforcement or the animal control warden, but they'd like to handle some of the problems themselves.

"If we suggest a change, we're crucified," Ravndal said, noting that the board doesn't have clear guidelines or chain of command.

The five elected members of the Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Study Commission hope to address the definition and duties of county boards in a proposed amendment to the local charter, one of three amendments discussed Wednesday night in a public hearing at the courthouse. The amendments are being considered by the commission as possible ballot issues for the November general election.

Of the 56 boards now listed in the county's books, 25 are inactive and some have not met for nearly a decade.

Under the commission's tentative proposal, boards would be created by the commission with specific objectives, rules for carrying out its duties and a dead-

Hearing Thursday

The Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Study Commission will hold a public hearing at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 18, at the county courthouse on proposals to make the county attorney a nonpartisan post and to give specific duties to the chief of law enforcement.

Written comments on these or other study commission proposals can be sent to the commission until April 24 at the Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Courthouse, 800 S. Main St., Anaconda, MT 59711.

line.

Sid Beausoleil said he's tried for years to get on the Airport Board to no avail and suggested a better method of filling vacancies on boards.

"If they don't belong to the chamber of commerce or one of the boys, it don't count," Beausoleil said.

One of the boards that, in the opinion of Beausoleil and others at the hearing, has outlived its usefulness is the Joint Advisory Council, which was designed to funnel the public's ideas to the commission.

The study commission recommends eliminating the council, saying it doesn't generate enough public interest nor does it hold enough sway with the commission.

The council has served as a

pool of candidates to fill vacancies on the county commission, but the study commission says temporary county commissioners could be picked from the runners-up of the last general election or, if the runner-up is unavailable, from people who respond to an advertisement of the vacancy.

Study commission member Mike Grayson said the idea of appointing the runner-up is innovative and logical. "We thought that person actually wants the position and campaigned for it," Grayson said.

The third proposal would give the chief executive the power to veto commission decisions on resolutions or ordinances, allowing the five-member commission to override the veto by a vote of at least 4-0.

Many other commission decisions, such as board appointments or staff hiring, would not be subject to a veto.

Currently, the chief executive can only make recommendations to the commission and has no final say on resolutions or ordinances.

Chief Executive Cheryl Beatty said she would use the veto power sparingly, such as when she disagreed with the commission's budget. And Grayson noted that the commission needs three votes to pass an ordinance, meaning it would only need one more vote to override a veto.

"I don't think that's that big of a burden," Grayson said.