

Study group to work on recommendations

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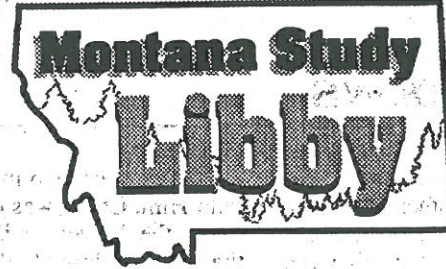
At what was supposed to be its last meeting Monday night, the Libby Montana Study group decided it needed one more get-together before involving the whole community.

Study members decided another session was needed to finalize recommended action items that will be presented to the community.

"We've done a terrific job of coming together and discussing things," said Andy Nelson, a third-year college student. "If somebody in the community came up to you and asked, 'What have you accomplished?' what would we say?"

Jeff Gruber, a Libby High School teacher whose Principles of Democracy class has pushed for the community analysis, put it in more philosophical terms.

"If you look in the dictionary and look at the definition of the word democracy you'll see it's the free exchange of ideas," he said. "That's what we've been doing for 10 weeks."



Lincoln County Commissioner Jerry Criner said that has been advantageous to him as a resident of the area.

"I've been here for 28 years and I've learned quite a bit from this," Criner said. "It's opened my eyes to a lot of different reasons and things that have been done in the past. It's almost like a circle and it's coming back around again."

In 1947, the original 10-week Montana Study undertaken by 12-15 people resulted in 18 recommendations that were discussed at a town meeting of 400 community members.

From that meeting the Greater Libby Association began working to bring those 18 goals to reality.

That change didn't happen overnight, said Mayor Fred Brown.

"Some of those recommendations weren't accomplished or addressed until the early 1970s and some never were," he noted.

"Libby was the only community of the 12 participating in the original Montana Study to form a group and to follow up on recommendations," Gruber said.

"Stevensville put on a play celebrating their heritage, Lonepine built a library and Wibaux decided it was disappearing."

Teacher Rose Goyen said too much emphasis today is put on accomplishing something "now" without planning and effort.

"We are more impatient in society today than ever before," Goyen said. "At least an awareness has begun from this effort."

She said the community worries so much about change coming from the outside but that is the history of Libby. Change in Libby's past often was introduced from the outside, by outside people. She used the "dam people" as an exam-

ple.

"It's going to be hard to change," said Mark White, Forest Service archaeologist.

"I get that perception, too," said Dave Friedman, a Plum Creek employee. "The only thing that is certain is change."

Larry Cron, another Forest Service employee and long-time community member, suggested more tolerance for those unwilling to change even though it is the right thing for the community.

"If we don't change how are we going to get more business here?" Criner asked. "We have to change."

Gruber suggested that Libby is not alone in dealing with change and that many communities could be studied to learn more.

"All of this implies community, all of which is antithetical to what Montana is about: individualism," said Pastor Les Nelson of Christ Lutheran Church. "I don't know if we've addressed this. Until we discuss what is community and how much is the individual willing to sacrifice

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for the good of the whole, we're at Jordan."

The group discussed how to present a set of recommendations to the community when it was difficult to bring people together. Some study members suggested publicizing more controversial aspects of the recommendations, others said the study group would have to go to other organizational meetings to make a presentation.

"Do we want to be the core group that brings other groups together?" Gruber asked.

More than 20 people agreed another meeting was needed to dis-

cuss final recommendations that will be presented to the community.

A committee from the study group will work on the recommendations, paring them down to a working list.

Then Gruber will announce the final meeting.

The study group's list of recommended actions includes utility infrastructure needs for Libby and the surrounding area, community projects such as a swimming pool, walking paths, horse facilities, a performing arts center, opportunities for young people to work in the community, to remain in the community and more.