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More appointees in Anaconda urged

By Aulica Rutland
Standard Staff Writer

ANACONDA — Most speakers at two public hearings seem pleased with Anaconda-Deer Lodge County's form of government, but many say that more public officials should be appointed rather than elected.

About 20 persons attended Monday's public hearing before the Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Government Review Study Commission, which also held a hearing Thursday. Most who spoke Monday extolled the flexible charter form of government.

But most also suggested that the chief executive and chief of law enforcement be appointed by the county commission, rather than

elected by the people.

The governments of the city of Anaconda and Deer Lodge County were consolidated under a charter form of government in 1977. Two years ago, the charter was amended to change how the chief executive and chief of law enforcement are selected. The city-county government now has an elected chief executive and an elected chief of law enforcement.

Milo Manning, planning director for the county, said he thinks the present government is efficient, but that changes could be made.

"I worked under the old system," he said. "I worked under the city government, and I worked under the consolidated government. I think that without our consolidated government, we would not have survived the smelter closure, but I

think it was a mistake to go to the elected officials."

Manning suggested that the chief executive and chief of law enforcement be appointed by the commission and that all city-county department heads be responsible to the chief executive or manager.

Jim Davison, executive director of the Anaconda Local Development Corp., agreed with Manning. "I would very much advise that we go back to an appointed manager, and the same for the chief of law enforcement," he said. "If there is a desire for more elected positions, I would see expanding the commission to seven instead of five."

But the hearing didn't pass without some argument. Commissioner Jane Anderson argued that major department heads and the chief executive should all be elected.

"I don't think we should have an appointed manager. No way," she said. "People should have a right to choose their chief of law enforcement and their chief executive. That way, the people feel that they have a part of the person they elected."

Bill Converse agreed with Anderson. "The elected officials are the checks and balances of this country," he said. "You have good and bad in everything."

Study commission Chairman Jake Maciag said written comments on Anaconda-Deer Lodge County's form of government will be accepted at the courthouse until March 15.

If the commission recommends changes in government, the recommendations will be placed on the November 1996 ballot.