

TESTIMONY PRESENTED AT A
PUBLIC HEARING
conducted by the
Bozeman Local Government Study Commission
8 September 1975

Chairman Torlief Aasheim opened the public hearing at 7:35 p.m. in the Commission Room of the Municipal Building. Those present were:

Torlief S. Aasheim	Helen Lockwood
Joyce Greenough	Monte Lockwood
Judy Mathre	H. L. Dusenberry
Ken Jones	Don M. Langohr
Keith Swanson	Doris Ward
Linda Praye	Tora Diteman
Howard Nelson	Duncan S. MacNab
Robert A. Taylor	George McClure Jr.
E. Van Dyken	John P. Parker
Eleanor Pratt	Herb Hruska
Grace Bates	Hazel Brandt
Paul Trout	Ed Mohler
Florence Trout	Erwin Lachenmaier

The following discussion and testimony was had.

Hazel Brandt began by asking the Study Commission about possibilities for consolidation. If Bozeman disincorporates who will take over? Will regional government occur? Mr. Aasheim answered that some consolidation with the county might result in greater efficiency. Keith Swanson and Ken Jones said there was no regional government being considered.

George McClure stated that he wanted Study Commissioners to consider election of city commissioners by district. He suggested that city commission meetings be held in the evening so that those who work during the day could attend. In addition, he hoped the City Commission would set aside one meeting per month for questions from the public to commissioners and/or department heads. Mr. McClure explained that he had experienced difficulty in getting answers from city officials and thought this would help remedy that. It would make government more responsive.

Howard Nelson said that he supported the city manager form of government. The manager is free to consider the needs of the city while the mayor is available to citizens to respond to their needs. Mr. Nelson favored nonpartisan elections and said he thought consolidation of certain areas should be considered such as the ambulance and law enforcement. Greater efficiency might be achieved.

City commissioner Robert Taylor stated that the city was lucky to have such few problems. He suggested that the mayor might run for that position and that the current method of electing the mayor was not the best.

Eleanor Pratt suggested that city commission meetings be held in the evening so that more people could attend and supported having city commissioners opinions recorded. Elections should continue to be non partisan. Terms of office should be four years and staggered. The number of commissioners should be increased to seven to increase representation. The city should be divided into districts and people who live in the districts should run for the district position. Mrs. Pratt said citizens of Bozeman would feel that they were better represented this way. The method of electing the mayor is not the best but Mr. Taylor's suggestion might not be the best method either. Mrs. Pratt thought only one person might run for the position of mayor. Mrs. Pratt asked the Study Commission how much change was needed to constitute an alternative. Ken Jones answered that very little change was needed and that three suboptions could be offered.

Ken Jones asked George McClure to clarify what he meant by the administrative changes he suggested. How could they be made structural? Mr. McClure said he thought some changes that were administrative could be made structural.

John Parker asked George McClure if he wished for people to vote for city commission candidates by district. Dr. Parker objected to voting by districts because he thinks all city voters should have a chance to vote for all city commission positions, even if candidates run from districts. Mr. McClure said he was not strongly in favor of voting by district, but he was in favor of running from districts.

Herb Hruska stated that he thought some areas of town had transient populations which would make a difference in voting patterns. He supported at-large elections.

Bob Taylor said he favored at-large elections. He also did not want to elect commissioners by district. Such a system would lend itself to chaos. Commissioners would represent only their district and Bozeman is too small for district representation.

Howard Nelson suggested that political precincts could be used to encourage good people to run for office. Also with more consolidation there might be less government. He said he did not want too much government dealing with one area of town.

Torlief Aasheim pointed out that the citizen's questionnaire indicated people were pretty evenly divided on whether commissioners should be elected by district or at-large.

Paul Trout asked why opinion was even. He thought it indicated that something was wrong. It indicated that people wanted a more responsive government. They need someone to talk to. Mr. Trout suggested that an ombudsman who would listen to people might help. The present form of government is not serving.

Don Langohr stated that he was frustrated by being allowed to vote for only one state representative and senator. Voting at-large has worked well for the city and should be retained.

Florence Trout said that she was concerned that because commission meetings were held in the day time certain people could not attend. In addition, only those whose work schedule was flexible enough could even run for office. The current schedule of meetings during the day encourages only those who have an axe to grind to attend.

Mr. Aasheim asked if any people in attendance were opposed to the city manager form of government.

Mrs. Brandt said she thought city services might improve with the mayor alderman form. She lives on the north side and thought the city slighted services there. The mayor at one time lived close by and the services were better.

John Parker retorted that the mayor lived across from him and that the snow was as deep in front of the mayor's house as in front of his.

Mr. Aasheim asked if anyone favored partisan elections. None did. He then asked about term of office.

Robin McNab favored four (4) year terms because they allow commissioners to learn the first two years and then act from experience the last two years.

George McClure said he was not sure that staggered terms were needed. Fewer elections would be needed if all commissioners were elected for concurrent four (4) year terms. Citizens could vote out all commissioners if they really wanted to clean house.

Doris Ward explained that it would be difficult to find enough well qualified challengers if all ran at the same time.

Mr. Aasheim asked if the size of the commission was too small. Tora Diteman asked if five commissioners are overworked.

Bob Taylor said he favored five commissioners. Two more would add expense. There would be more exposure to the public but he could not see what it would accomplish in Bozeman.

Mrs. Brandt suggested that the public should select the city manager.