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Keep it like it is Troy says

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The people of Troy like county government just the way it is and there is little support for fundamental changes in the current system. That was the overwhelming feeling at the County Government Study Commission meeting in Troy Tuesday night.

However, with only five local people attending the meeting the commission mainly questioned Troy Mayor Rod Johnson and Lincoln County Commissioner Larry Dolezal. The study commission had hoped to get more public input on county government.

Running the city of Troy would be much simpler with city-county consolidation, but Johnson said he believed the issue would die in Troy.

Although it would decrease the cost of government, consolidation with the county would give local power to the courthouse in Libby. That would probably be unacceptable to Troy voters, he said.

"We wouldn't want Libby residents voting on what's going on in Troy, and Troy voters voting on what's goes on in Libby," said Johnson.

Troy voters also feel that they would be subject to the will of the large population in the Libby area. "It's not necessarily the case, but it's the feeling," Johnson added.

"I think most of the people in Troy want to keep it a small town," with a small town atmosphere, Johnson said. Locals might feel that letting the county run things compromises that feeling.

He also didn't feel Troy would benefit as much as Libby because, unlike Libby, Troy

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does not have a population sprawl. Most people in the area live in or near town, he said.

The benefit for the Libby area would mainly come in the more even distribution of taxes between city and county residents. Currently, city dwellers pay more in taxes than county residents. However, the large population around Libby also uses city services, most noticeably water and sewer. And as the need for sewer and water increases, the burden, some say, falls disproportionately onto the backs of city taxpayers.

But Johnson did agree with Libby study commission member Earl Lovick that the matter should be studied, if not for the immediate future, to see what the benefits might be years from now.

Discussing equal representation, Dolezal said there is feeling in the Troy and Eureka areas that there is a power base in Libby. He felt however, that the current system works the best to meet the needs of the entire county. The county was required by law to consider redistricting in 1991, after the 1990 census. District Court Judge Robert Keller, whose approval was required in the process, decided that the current system is the most fair.

Commissioners must be nominated or application filed by a resident of the district they would represent,

then the entire county votes on the result. Keller believed that while this violated the one-man-one-vote rule, it allowed for the historical and geographical differences within the county.

Still, that left a feeling that Libby is underrepresented, Chairman Larry Sverdrup and Lovick agreed.