

**DAWSON COUNTY STUDY COMMISSION  
TENTATIVE REPORT**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- I. LETTER TO THE CITIZENS OF DAWSON COUNTY
  
- II. EXISTING FORM OF GOVERNMENT
  - Exhibit A: Certificate Establishing the Plan of the Existing Form - Description of General Characteristics
  
- III. DAWSON COUNTY GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION REPORT
  - Exhibit B: Timeline of Study Commission Activities
  
- IV. DAWSON COUNTY VOTER SURVEY
  - Exhibit C: Questionnaire Sent to Random Sampling of Registered Voters
  
- V. ANALYSIS OF DAWSON COUNTY VOTER SURVEY
  - Exhibit D: Frequencies & Marginal Percentages
  
- VI. DAWSON COUNTY COMMISSIONER TERM LIMIT DETERMINATION
  - Exhibit E: Motions/Minutes of Meeting Discussion Regarding Term Limits
  
- VII. BALLOT MEASURE FOR PROPOSED CHANGE TO NONPARTISAN COUNTY ELECTIONS
  - Exhibit F: Motions/Minutes of Meeting Partisan VS Nonpartisan Elections
  
- VIII. CERTIFICATE ESTABLISHING OFFICIAL BALLOT FOR A PROPOSED CHANGE TO THE PLAN OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT
  - Exhibit G: Ballot Measure Form

**DAWSON COUNTY STUDY COMMISSION  
TENTATIVE REPORT**

To the Citizens of Dawson County:

The Dawson County Study Commission elected by the voters on November 5, 2024, or thereafter appointed, present this tentative report to you, the citizens of this county.

The purpose of the study commission, as defined in state law, is "to study the existing form and powers of local government and procedures for delivery of local government services and to compare them with other forms available under the laws of the state." After completing these two phases of the study it is the responsibility of the study commission to submit a final report recommending no change, propose an amendment to the existing form of government, or offer an alternative form of government to the qualified electors. If some change is deemed necessary, the study commission may submit such proposed change to the electors.

In the conduct of their review the study commission sought advice and information from a number of people in the county. They solicited opinions and recommendations from local government officials, community organizations, and citizens. All study commission meetings were open to the public. Commission members appeared before various community organizations to explain the work of the commission and to hear the viewpoints, ideas, and concerns of those present. The study commission held public hearings and conducted a survey of citizen attitudes to determine community opinion.

Our recommendations reflect the thoughts and opinions of those who participated in the public hearings, those who attended our regular meetings, and those who responded to the survey, in addition to the independent efforts of this study commission.

In this tentative report, the Dawson County Study Commission concludes that there is general consensus that the existing county commission form of government has served this county well since its organization in 1889 and will continue to do so in the future. Our concern has been to provide a form of government that will be responsive to local citizens and provide the opportunity for devising solutions to local problems. We feel the citizens of Dawson County can best achieve these goals by retaining the current form. We therefore recommend no change to this form of government.

However, after listening to public opinion, the Dawson County Study Commission proposes a change to the plan of government to modify the type of elections held for elected county officials. Under the existing plan of government, Dawson County elections for county officials are conducted on a partisan basis. The proposed change would provide that elections for elected county officials be conducted on a nonpartisan basis. The study commission will submit the proposed change as a ballot measure to the qualified electors of Dawson County at the November general election.

If the proposed change to the plan of government fails to receive a majority of the votes cast on the question, the existing plan of government remains in effect.

Respectfully submitted,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Vice Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Member

Dawson County Study Commissioners

Attest:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary

## EXHIBIT A

### Certificate Establishing the Plan of the Existing Form of Government for Dawson County

If retained by the voters, the government of Dawson County shall be organized under the following provisions of 7-3-111, MCA which authorize the Elected County Official form of government:

#### **7-3-111. Statutory basis for elected county official government.**

(1) For the purpose of determining the statutory basis of existing units of local government after May 2, 1977, each unit of local government organized under the general statutes authorizing the elected county official form of government shall be governed by the following sections:

- (a) 7-3-401;
  - (b) 7-3-402;
  - (c) 7-3-412(3);
  - (d) 7-3-413(1);
  - (e) 7-3-414(1);
  - (f) 7-3-415(2);
  - (g) 7-3-416(2);
  - (h) 7-3-417(2);
  - (i) 7-3-418;
  - (j) 7-3-432(1);
  - (k) 7-3-433(1);
  - (l) 7-3-434(1);
  - (m) 7-3-435(1);
  - (n) 7-3-436(1);
  - (o) 7-3-437(1);
  - (p) 7-3-438(1);
  - (q) 7-3-439(1);
  - (r) 7-3-440(1);
  - (s) 7-3-441(1);
  - (t) 7-3-442(1) if the county has elected an auditor;
  - (u) 7-3-442(6) if the county has not elected an auditor;
- (2) This form has terms of 4 years for all elected officials except commissioners who are elected to 6-year terms. The commission consists of three members.

These sections establish the following form of government which shall be called the COMMISSION FORM.

#### **7-3-401. Commission form.**

The commission form consists of an elected commission (which may also be called the council) and other elected officers as provided in this part. All legislative, executive, and administrative powers and duties of the local government not specifically reserved by law or ordinance to other elected officers shall reside in the commission. The commission shall appoint the heads of departments and other employees, except for those appointed by other elected officials. Cities and towns which adopt this form may distribute by ordinance the executive and administrative powers and duties into departments headed by individual commissioners.

#### **7-3-402. Nature of government.**

Local governments that adopt this form shall have general government powers.

#### **7-3-412 Selection of commission members.**

(3) The commission shall be elected at large and nominated by a plan of nomination that may not preclude the possibility of the majority of the electors nominated candidates for the majority of the seats on the commission from persons residing in the district or districts where the majority of the electors reside.

**7-3-413 Type of election.**

(1) Local government elections shall be conducted on a partisan basis.

**7-3-414 Chairman of commission.**

(1) The chairman of the commission shall be elected by the members of the commission from their own number for a term established by ordinance.

**7-3-415 Administrative assistants.**

(2) The commission may appoint one or more administrative assistants to assist them in the supervision and operation of the local government.

**7-3-416 Terms of the commission members.**

(2) Commission members shall be elected for overlapping terms of office.

**7-3-417 Size of commission and community councils.**

(2) The size of the commission, shall be three, and community councils to advise commissioners may be authorized by ordinance.

**7-3-418. Terms of elected officials.**

The term of office of elected officials may not exceed 4 years, except the term of office for commissioners in counties adopting the form authorized by Article XI, section 3(2), of the Montana constitution may not exceed 6 years. Terms of office shall be established when the form is adopted by the voters.

**7-3-432 Legal officer.**

(1) A legal officer (who may be called the county attorney) shall be elected.

**7-3-433 Law enforcement officer.**

(1) A law enforcement officer (who may be called the sheriff) shall be elected.

**7-3-434 Clerk and recorder.**

(1) A clerk and recorder shall be elected.

**7-3-435 Clerk of district court.**

(1) A clerk of district court shall be elected.

**7-3-436 Treasurer.**

(1) A treasurer shall be elected.

**7-3-437 Surveyor.**

(1) A surveyor shall be elected.

**7-3-438 Superintendent of schools.**

(1) A superintendent of schools shall be elected.

**7-3-439 Assessor**

(1) An assessor shall be elected.

**7-3-440 Coroner.**

(1) A coroner shall be elected.

**7-3-441 Public administrator.**

(1) A public administrator shall be elected.

**7-3-442 Auditor.**

(1) An auditor shall be elected if the county has elected an auditor.

**1-a-442 Auditor.**

(6) An auditor shall not be included in this form as a separate office if the county has not elected an auditor.

We, the Study Commissioners of Dawson County do hereby certify that this is the existing Plan of Government as established by Section 7-3-111, MCA.

In testimony whereof, we set our hands.

Done at \_\_\_\_\_ this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

LOCAL GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSIONERS

SEAL

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
CLERK & RECORDER OF DAWSON COUNTY

## EXHIBIT B

### **County Government Study Commission**

Summary 11-17-2025

Presented by Chairman Ric Holden

1. November 28, 2024, the Commission is Certified
2. December 10, 2024, In-person Training
3. December 17, 2024, Commission Elections & Bylaws Established
4. December 23, 2024, Commission Review of Forms of Government
5. January 7, 2025, Interviews with County Attorney, Sheriff, Clerk of Court-absent
6. January 21, 2025, Interviews with Clerk and Recorder, Treasurer & County Assessor-absent
7. February 4, 2025, Superintendent of Schools, County Coroner-absent
8. February 18, 2025, Open interviews of county employees, Public Involvement Survey
9. March 4, 2025, Community education & Engagement-specialized articles in the Ranger Review
10. March 18, 2025, County Commissioners – All Three Present, VC Schaaf Development of Education Articles
11. April 1, 2025, Article – General vs Self-Governing
12. April 15, 2025, Commission Form Article, Discussion on General vs Self-Governing Powers
13. May 6, 2025, Commission-Executive Article, Discussion on Commission Form Government
14. May 20, 2025, Commission-Manager Article, Charter Form Article, Discussion on Executive and Presiding Officer Form of Government
15. June 3, 2025, Discussion on Manager-Manager Form of Government
16. June 17, 2025, Create Public Survey Subcommittee
17. July 1, 2025, Survey plan established, County Commissioner Concurrent terms-public comments
18. July 15, 2025 Survey Preparation
19. August 5, 2025, Survey Contract Review
20. August 19, 2025, Survey Distribution
21. November 4, 2025, Survey Results Review
22. November 4, 2025, Adoption of motion to recommend remaining with the same/current form of County Government with 3 full-time Commissioners
23. November 17, 2025, Public Hearing of Resolutions/Motions
24. December 2, 2025, Review of Public Hearing
25. December 16, 2025, Review of Term Limits-Local Government Center, Term limits Motion Rescinded
26. January 6, 2026, Motion to Amend Current Form Discussion, Tentative Report Subcommittee
27. January 20, 2026, Motion for Nonpartisan Elections Ballot Inclusion Passes, Subcommittee Formed
28. February 3, 2026, Presentation of Ballot Measure for language approval
29. February 17, 2026, Presentation of Tentative Report to Study Commission Members for review before Public Hearing

# Dawson County Study Commission Community Questionnaire

**PURPOSE:**

- i. The purpose of 7-3-171 through 7-3-193 is to provide a mechanism for local government review as required by Article XI, section 9, of the Montana constitution.
- ii. 7-3-172. Purpose of study commission. The purpose of a study commission is to study the existing form and powers of a local government and procedures for delivery of local government services and compare them with other forms available under the laws of the state.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please fill in the appropriate boxes and then return the completed survey in the enclosed postage-paid envelope or drop off at the Clerk & Records office in the Dawson County Courthouse. **Clearly mark only one response for each question. You may include comments or thoughts where indicated.**

1. Where do you primarily reside?

- City of Glendive
- Town of Richey
- Dawson County
- Other:

2. If I had to vote tomorrow, I would vote to:

- Keep County government the same as it is now
- Make a few changes in the County government
- Completely change the form and powers of the County government
- No opinion or don't know
- Not eligible to vote in Dawson County
- Other:

3. Would you support limiting County commissioner's terms to two consecutive six year terms?

- Yes
- No
- Other:

4. Would a change in the number of commissioners improve effective representation of Dawson County?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Comments:

5. How do you feel about the representation of County residents under part-time versus full-time County Commissioners?

- I believe part-time Commissioners provide more opportunities for representation.
- I believe full-time Commissioners provide more opportunities for representation.

Other:

6. What are your thoughts on the length of County Commissioner terms? Do you believe they should remain at six years or be reduced to four years?

- Keep terms at six years
- Reduce terms to four years
- Some other term limit (*please specify*):

7. In general, how responsive is your County government to your needs?

- Very responsive
- Responsive
- Unresponsive
- Very unresponsive
- Not applicable/don't know

8. Do you believe the structure of the Dawson County government will continue to provide effective government operations regardless of the strengths and weaknesses of individual elected county officials?

- Yes
- No

Comments:

9. Do you feel the Study Commission should research:

- City/County consolidation
- Other City/County consolidation services
- Both of the above
- None of the above

Comments:

10. Do you feel it would be beneficial for the County to have a dedicated professional manager to oversee daily operations?

- Yes
- No

Comments:

11. Do you feel that on commissioner should be appointed to serve exclusively in the executive capacity?

- Yes
- No

Comments:

12. Should the elected officials of your County run for office on a partisan (with political party label) or on a nonpartisan ballot?

- Partisan
- Nonpartisan

Comments:

13. Should the elected officials of your County run for office in districted or at-large elections?

- Districted
- At large
- Other:

14. Do you have any other comments or recommendations you want the Local Government Review Study Commission to consider?

# Dawson County Local Government Study Commission

## 2025 Dawson County Voter Survey

### Codebook

#### Survey Information

**Data collection period:**

August 13 - October 17, 2025

**Data entry conducted by:**

Social Data Collection and Analysis Services (Social Data), Montana State University Bozeman

**Notes:**

Out of 350 questionnaires mailed, 4 questionnaires could not be delivered as addressed. The survey yielded 95 responses. The corresponding response rate is 95 out of 346, or 27.5%.

The Dawson County Study Commission randomly selected 350 voters from the voter roll and mailed the surveys directly. The surveys were returned to the Clerk & Recorder’s office in sealed envelopes, and all envelopes were mailed to Social Data Collection and Analysis Services at Montana State University for data entry, data cleaning, and preparation of the data codebook and descriptive statistics.

#### Summary of Variables

**Variable Name: *reside***

**Variable Type:** Numeric

**Question Text:** Where do you primarily reside?

**Response Codes and Options:**

*Table 1: Response Codes and Options for **reside** variable*

<b>CODE</b>	<b>OPTION</b>
1	City of Glendive
2	Town of Richey
3	Dawson County
33	Other:

**Variable Name: *residetx***

**Variable Type:** String

**Question Text:** Where do you primarily reside? - Other: - Text

**Response Codes and Options:** Not Applicable

### Variable Name: **vote**

**Variable Type:** Numeric

**Question Text:** If I had to vote tomorrow, I would vote to:

**Response Codes and Options:**

*Table 2: Response Codes and Options for **vote** variable*

CODE	OPTION
1	Keep County government the same as it is now
2	Make a few changes in the County government
3	Completely change the form and powers of the County government
4	No opinion or don't know
5	Not eligible to vote in Dawson County
33	Other:

### Variable Name: **votetx**

**Variable Type:** String

**Question Text:** If I had to vote tomorrow, I would vote to: - Other: - Text

**Response Codes and Options:** Not Applicable

### Variable Name: **termlim**

**Variable Type:** Numeric

**Question Text:** Would you support limiting County commissioner's terms to two consecutive six year terms?

**Response Codes and Options:**

*Table 3: Response Codes and Options for **termlim** variable*

CODE	OPTION
0	No
1	Yes
33	Other:

### Variable Name: **termlmtx**

**Variable Type:** String

**Question Text:** Would you support limiting County commissioner's terms to two consecutive six year terms? - Other: - Text

**Response Codes and Options:** Not Applicable

### Variable Name: numcom

**Variable Type:** Numeric

**Question Text:** Would a change in the number of commissioners improve effective representation of Dawson County?

**Response Codes and Options:**

*Table 4: Response Codes and Options for numcom variable*

CODE	OPTION
0	No
1	Yes
66	Don't know

### Variable Name: numcomtx

**Variable Type:** String

**Question Text:** Would a change in the number of commissioners improve effective representation of Dawson County? Comments:

**Response Codes and Options:** Not Applicable

### Variable Name: feelrep

**Variable Type:** Numeric

**Question Text:** How do you feel about the representation of County residents under part-time versus full-time County Commissioners?

**Response Codes and Options:**

*Table 5: Response Codes and Options for feelrep variable*

CO DE	OPTION
1	I believe part-time Commissioners provide more opportunities for representation.
2	I believe full-time Commissioners provide more opportunities for representation.
33	Other:

### Variable Name: feelrptx

**Variable Type:** String

**Question Text:** How do you feel about the representation of County residents under part-time versus full-time County Commissioners? - Other: - Text

**Response Codes and Options:** Not Applicable

### Variable Name: **termlen**

**Variable Type:** Numeric

**Question Text:** What are your thoughts on the length of County Commissioner terms? Do you believe they should remain at six years or be reduced to four years?

**Response Codes and Options:**

*Table 6: Response Codes and Options for **termlen** variable*

CODE	OPTION
1	Keep terms at six years
2	Reduce terms to four years
33	Some other term limit (please specify):

### Variable Name: **termlntx**

**Variable Type:** String

**Question Text:** What are your thoughts on the length of County Commissioner terms? Do you believe they should remain at six years or be reduced to four years? - Some other term limit (please specify): - Text

**Response Codes and Options:** Not Applicable

### Variable Name: **response**

**Variable Type:** Numeric

**Question Text:** In general, how responsive is your County government to your needs?

**Response Codes and Options:**

*Table 7: Response Codes and Options for **response** variable*

CODE	OPTION
1	Very responsive
2	Responsive
3	Unresponsive
4	Very unresponsive
66	Not applicable/don't know

### Variable Name: **struct**

**Variable Type:** Numeric

**Question Text:** Do you believe the structure of the Dawson County government will continue to provide effective government operations regardless of the strengths and weaknesses of individual elected county officials?

**Response Codes and Options:**

*Table 8: Response Codes and Options for **struct** variable*

CODE	OPTION
0	No
1	Yes

**Variable Name: structtxt**

**Variable Type:** String

**Question Text:** Do you believe the structure of the Dawson County government will continue to provide effective government operations regardless of the strengths and weaknesses of individual elected county officials? Comments:

**Response Codes and Options:** Not Applicable

**Variable Name: study**

**Variable Type:** Numeric

**Question Text:** Do you feel the Study Commission should research:

**Response Codes and Options:**

*Table 9: Response Codes and Options for **study** variable*

CODE	OPTION
1	City/County consolidation
2	Other City/County consolidation services
3	Both of the above
4	None of the above

**Variable Name: studytxt**

**Variable Type:** String

**Question Text:** Do you feel the Study Commission should research: Comments:

**Response Codes and Options:** Not Applicable

**Variable Name: proman**

**Variable Type:** Numeric

**Question Text:** Do you feel it would be beneficial for the County to have a dedicated professional manager to oversee daily operations?

**Response Codes and Options:**

*Table 10: Response Codes and Options for **proman** variable*

CODE	OPTION
0	No
1	Yes

**Variable Name: promantx**

**Variable Type:** String

**Question Text:** Do you feel it would be beneficial for the County to have a dedicated professional manager to oversee daily operations? Comments:

**Response Codes and Options:** Not Applicable

**Variable Name: *exec***

**Variable Type:** Numeric

**Question Text:** Do you feel that on commissioner should be appointed to serve exclusively in the executive capacity?

**Response Codes and Options:**

*Table 11: Response Codes and Options for **exec** variable*

CODE	OPTION
0	No
1	Yes

**Variable Name: *exec txt***

**Variable Type:** String

**Question Text:** Do you feel that on commissioner should be appointed to serve exclusively in the executive capacity? Comments:

**Response Codes and Options:** Not Applicable

**Variable Name: *ballot***

**Variable Type:** Numeric

**Question Text:** Should the elected officials of your County run for office on a partisan (with political party label) or on a nonpartisan ballot?

**Response Codes and Options:**

*Table 12: Response Codes and Options for **ballot** variable*

CODE	OPTION
1	Partisan
2	Nonpartisan

**Variable Name: *ballot txt***

**Variable Type:** String

**Question Text:** Should the elected officials of your County run for office on a partisan (with political party label) or on a nonpartisan ballot? Comments:

**Response Codes and Options:** Not Applicable

**Variable Name: runoff**

**Variable Type:** Numeric

**Question Text:** Should the elected officials of your County run for office in districted or at-large elections?

**Response Codes and Options:**

*Table 13: Response Codes and Options for runoff variable*

CODE	OPTION
1	Districted
2	At large
33	Other:

**Variable Name: runofftx**

**Variable Type:** String

**Question Text:** Should the elected officials of your County run for office in districted or at-large elections? - Other: - Text

**Response Codes and Options:** Not Applicable

**Variable Name: comment**

**Variable Type:** String

**Question Text:** Do you have any other comments or recommendations you want the Local Government Review Study Commission to consider?

**Response Codes and Options:** Not Applicable

# Dawson County Local Government Study Commission

## 2025 Dawson County Voter Survey

### Frequencies and Marginal Percentages

#### Survey Information

**Data collection period:**

August 13 - October 17, 2025

**Data entry conducted by:**

Social Data Collection and Analysis Services (Social Data), Montana State University Bozeman

**Notes:**

Out of 350 questionnaires mailed, 4 questionnaires could not be delivered as addressed. The survey yielded 95 responses. The corresponding response rate is 95 out of 346, or 27.5%.

The Dawson County Study Commission randomly selected 350 voters from the voter roll and mailed the surveys directly. The surveys were returned to the Clerk & Recorder's office in sealed envelopes, and all envelopes were mailed to Social Data Collection and Analysis Services at Montana State University for data entry, data cleaning, and preparation of the data codebook and descriptive statistics.

Open-ended comments are included here as part of the public record because the survey is publicly funded. These comments are not tied to the response to the associated survey question.

The corresponding Excel workbook provided includes all of the data, however, to protect the identity of respondents, the data for each question is on a separate tab, and they have been sorted in numeric order based on the value of the choice they selected for that question. This breaks the linkage between rows so it is harder to track responses from one question to the next.

## Summary of Variables

### Variable Name: reside

**Question Text:** Where do you primarily reside?

**Frequencies and Marginal Percentages:**

*Table 1: Frequencies and marginal percentages table for **reside** variable*

<b>RESPONSE OPTION</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENT</b>
City of Glendive	43	45.26%
Town of Richey	3	3.16%
Dawson County	46	48.42%
Other:	3	3.16%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>95</b>	

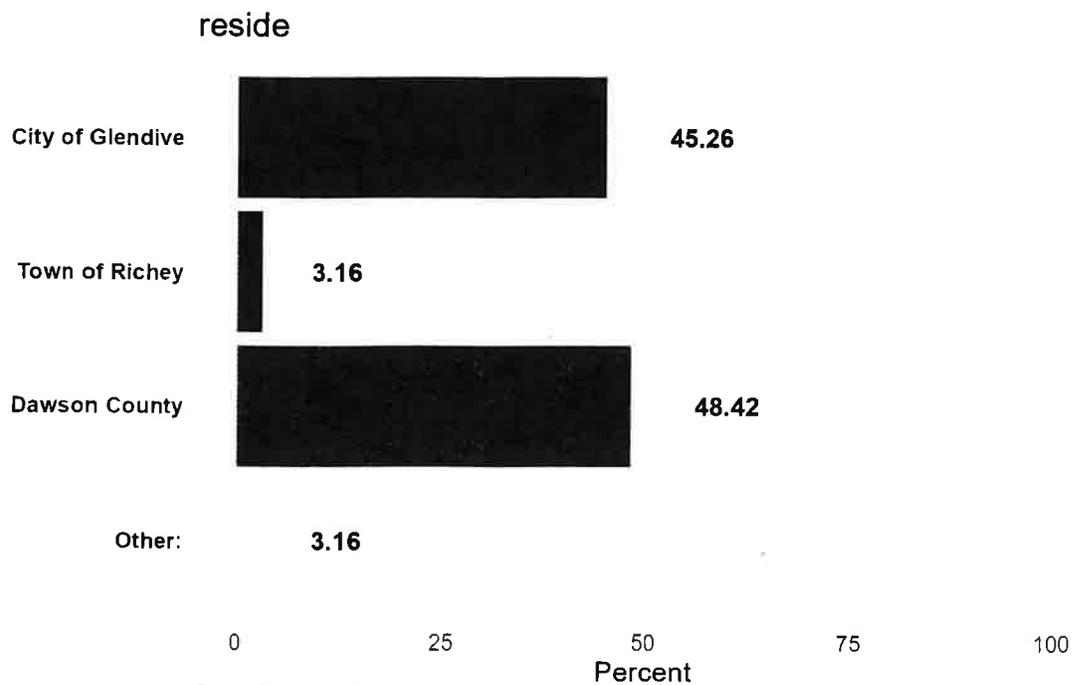


Figure 1: Marginal percentages plot for reside variable

**Variable Name: residetx**

**Question Text:** Where do you primarily reside? - Other: - Text

**Responses:**

*Table 2: Responses for **residetx** variable*

**RESPONSES**

---

Forest Park

Forest Park

Garrfield but vote here + live here 3 days/week

**Variable Name: vote**

**Question Text: If I had to vote tomorrow, I would vote to:**

**Frequencies and Marginal Percentages:**

*Table 3: Frequencies and marginal percentages table for **vote** variable*

<b>RESPONSE OPTION</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENT</b>
Keep County government the same as it is now	32	35.56%
Make a few changes in the County government	31	34.44%
Completely change the form and powers of the County government	10	11.11%
No opinion or don't know	14	15.56%
Not eligible to vote in Dawson County	0	0.00%
Other:	3	3.33%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>90</b>	

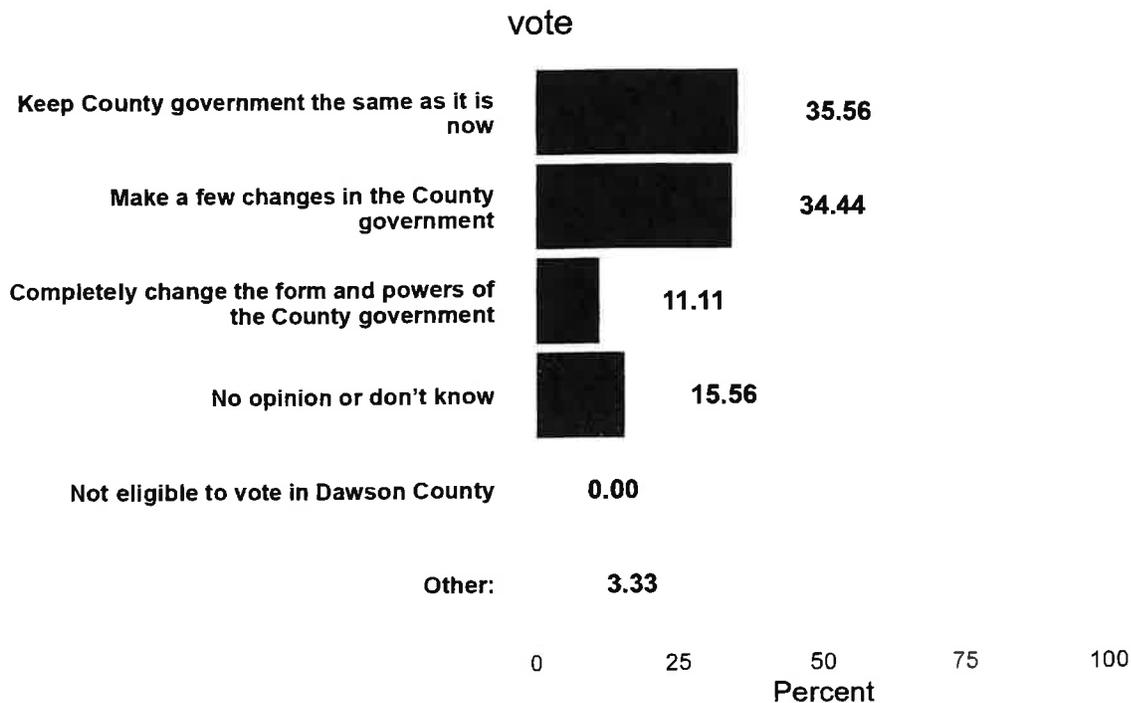


Figure 3: Marginal percentages plot for vote variable

**Variable Name: votetx**

**Question Text:** If I had to vote tomorrow, I would vote to: - Other: - Text

**Responses:**

*Table 4: Responses for **votetx** variable*

**RESPONSES**

---

Combine county and city of Glendive governments

Annex!!

Not sure

**Variable Name: termlim**

**Question Text:** Would you support limiting County commissioner’s terms to two consecutive six year terms?

**Frequencies and Marginal Percentages:**

*Table 5: Frequencies and marginal percentages table for **termlim** variable*

<b>RESPONSE OPTION</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENT</b>
No	24	25.53%
Yes	61	64.89%
Other:	9	9.57%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>94</b>	

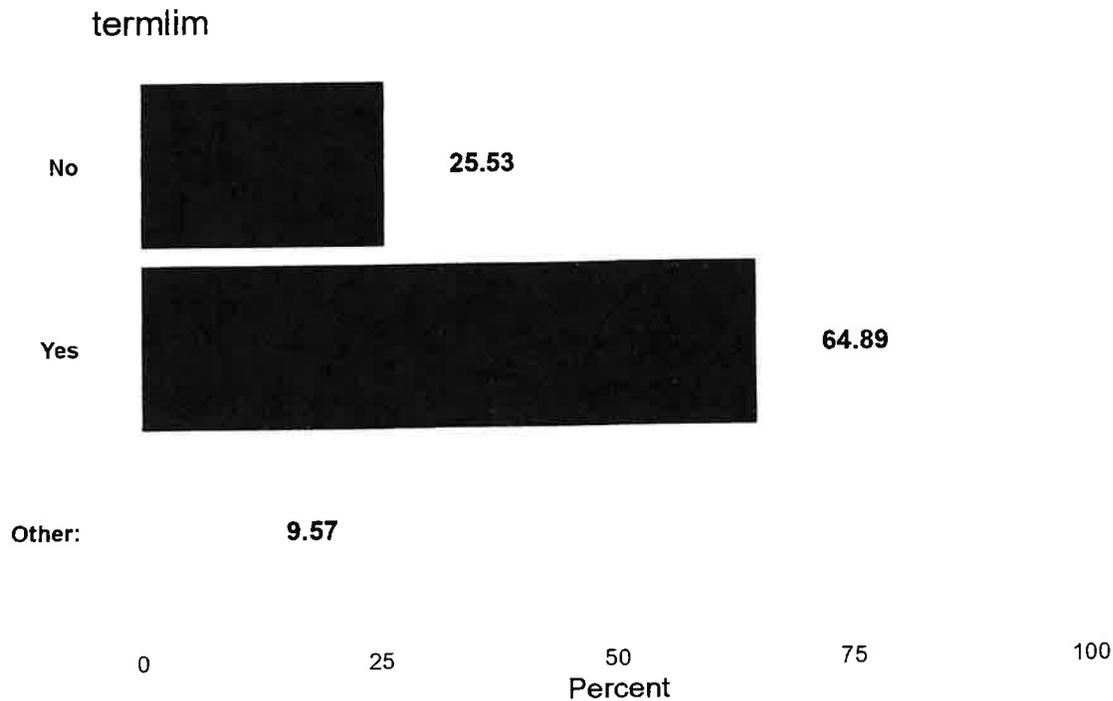


Figure 5: Marginal percentages plot for **termlim** variable

**Variable Name: term1mtx**

**Question Text:** Would you support limiting County commissioner’s terms to two consecutive six year terms? - Other: - Text

**Responses:**

*Table 6: Responses for term1mtx variable*

**RESPONSES**

---

2 year terms

Kinda depends on the job they do

One four year term.

Four year terms

2-4 year terms

Undecided

Yes; If they were honest about there decisions on Dawson co.

**Variable Name: numcom**

**Question Text:** Would a change in the number of commissioners improve effective representation of Dawson County?

**Frequencies and Marginal Percentages:**

*Table 7: Frequencies and marginal percentages table for numcom variable*

<b>RESPONSE OPTION</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENT</b>
No	56	59.57%
Yes	13	13.83%
Don't know	25	26.60%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>94</b>	

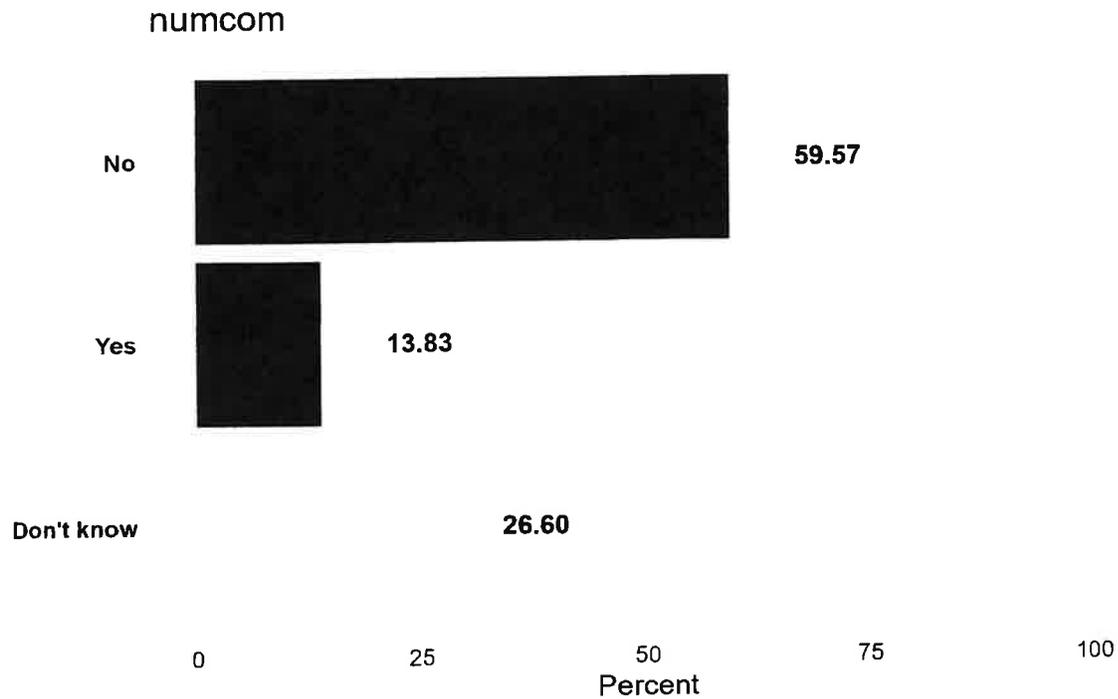


Figure 7: Marginal percentages plot for numcom variable

**Variable Name: numcomtx**

**Question Text:** Would a change in the number of commissioners improve effective representation of Dawson County? Comments:

**Responses:**

*Table 8: Responses for numcomtx variable*

**RESPONSES**

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Similarly sized counties in Montana have 3 part time commissioners. Our commissioners work part time but are listed and paid as full time.

It's hard enough to find a qualified pool of candidates to serve in 3 districts currently held.

Citizens would be better represented, 3 commissioners do not do a fair representation of DC. The city has multiple councilmembers, county should too.

Maybe 4 with a northern representative.

1 or 2 more

**Variable Name: feelrep**

**Question Text:** How do you feel about the representation of County residents under part-time versus full-time County Commissioners?

**Frequencies and Marginal Percentages:**

*Table 9: Frequencies and marginal percentages table for **feelrep** variable*

<b>RESPONSE OPTION</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENT</b>
I believe part-time Commissioners provide more opportunities for representation.	32	35.56%
I believe full-time Commissioners provide more opportunities for representation.	43	47.78%
Other:	15	16.67%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>90</b>	

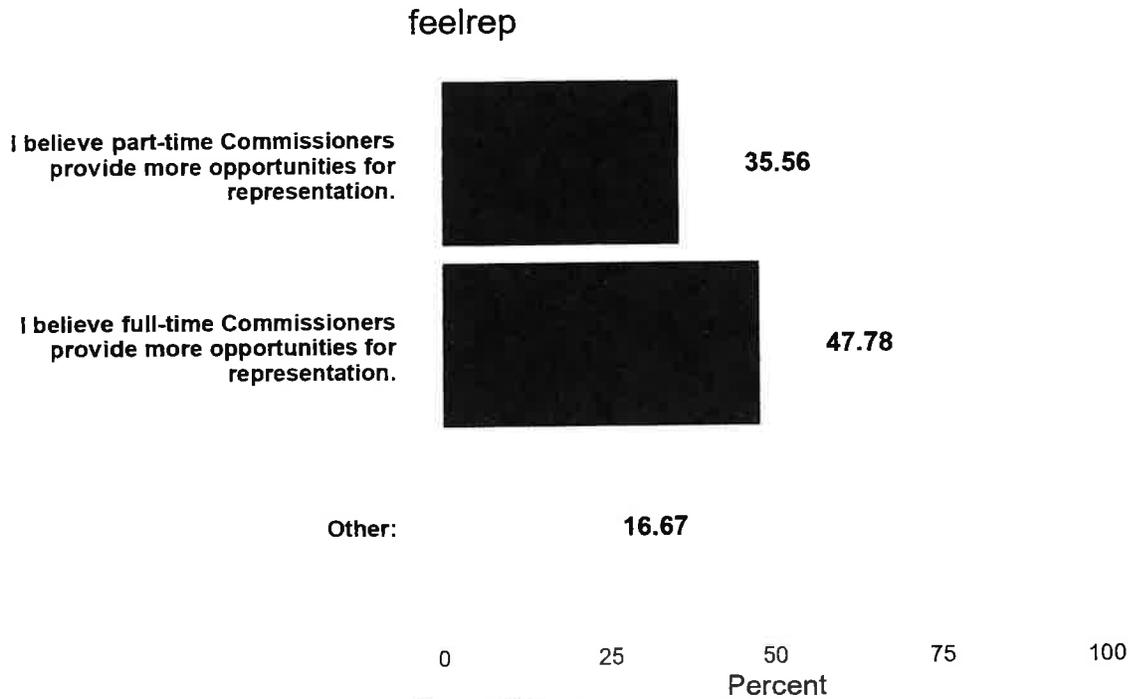


Figure 9: Marginal percentages plot for **feelrep** variable

**Variable Name: feelrptx**

**Question Text:** How do you feel about the representation of County residents under part-time versus full-time County Commissioners? - Other: - Text

**Responses:**

*Table 10: Responses for **feelrptx** variable*

**RESPONSES**

---

Not sure

If the job is PT now what are they doing different at FT

A mix of full time and part time commissioners

Full time w/ split schedules Illegal for all 3 to be there at same time anyhow.

DO YOUR JOB

No opinion

Other counties wth part time commissioners are way more successful than DC is. It also saves taxpayer dollars.

I don't feel strongly about PT or FT but more representation is better for the community.

Unknown- many variables.

I believe part-time Commissioners provide more opportunities for representation, They aren't there Full-time now

If they say they are going to come and see you they need to show up

Not sure

Depends on saving Tax Payers money

Maybe 1 or 2 ft would help to fullfil duty

**Variable Name: term1en**

**Question Text:** What are your thoughts on the length of County Commissioner terms? Do you believe they should remain at six years or be reduced to four years?

**Frequencies and Marginal Percentages:**

*Table 11: Frequencies and marginal percentages table for term1en variable*

RESPONSE OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Keep terms at six years	34	36.96%
Reduce terms to four years	53	57.61%
Some other term limit (please specify):	5	5.43%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>92</b>	

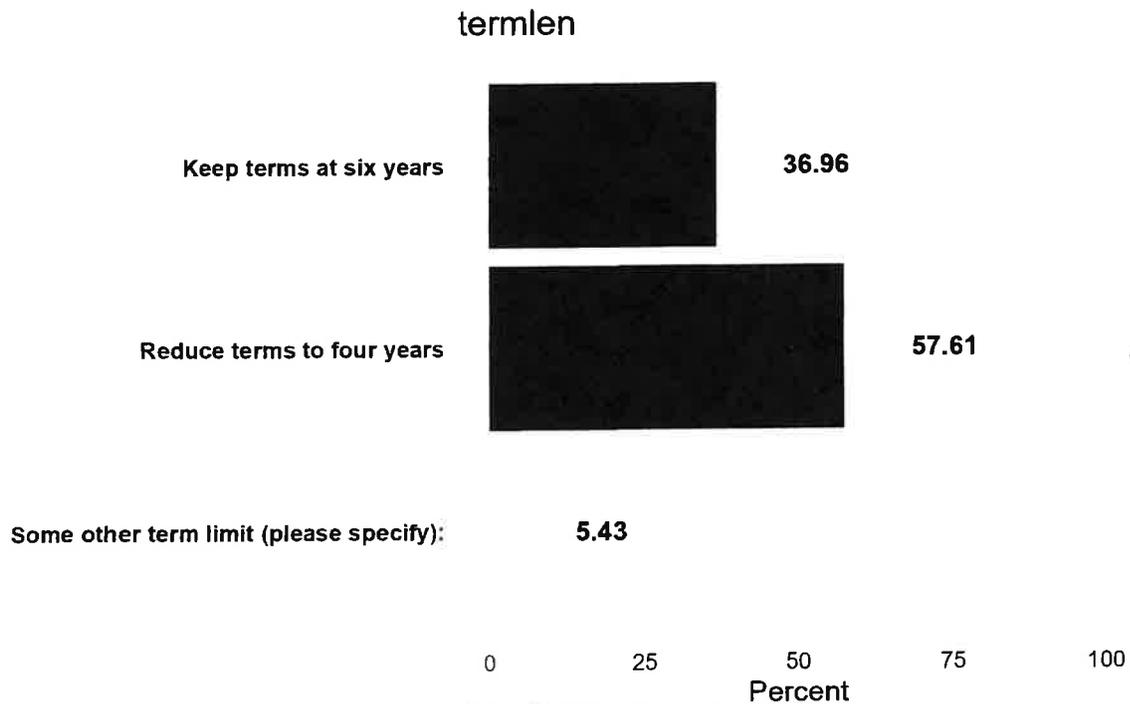


Figure 11: Marginal percentages plot for term1en variable

**Variable Name: termIntx**

**Question Text:** What are your thoughts on the length of County Commissioner terms? Do you believe they should remain at six years or be reduced to four years? - Some other term limit (please specify): -  
Text

**Responses:**

*Table 12: Responses for termIntx variable*

**RESPONSES**

---

2 years- I believe they become comfortable in long term appointments

5 year term limit

A lot of times people run is only to get retirement since they would be vested after 5 years.

2-3 years

5 years or 4 years

**Variable Name: response**

**Question Text: In general, how responsive is your County government to your needs?  
Frequencies and Marginal Percentages:**

*Table 13: Frequencies and marginal percentages table for **response** variable*

<b>RESPONSE OPTION</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENT</b>
Very responsive	5	5.43%
Responsive	39	42.39%
Unresponsive	15	16.30%
Very unresponsive	10	10.87%
Not applicable/don't know	23	25.00%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>92</b>	

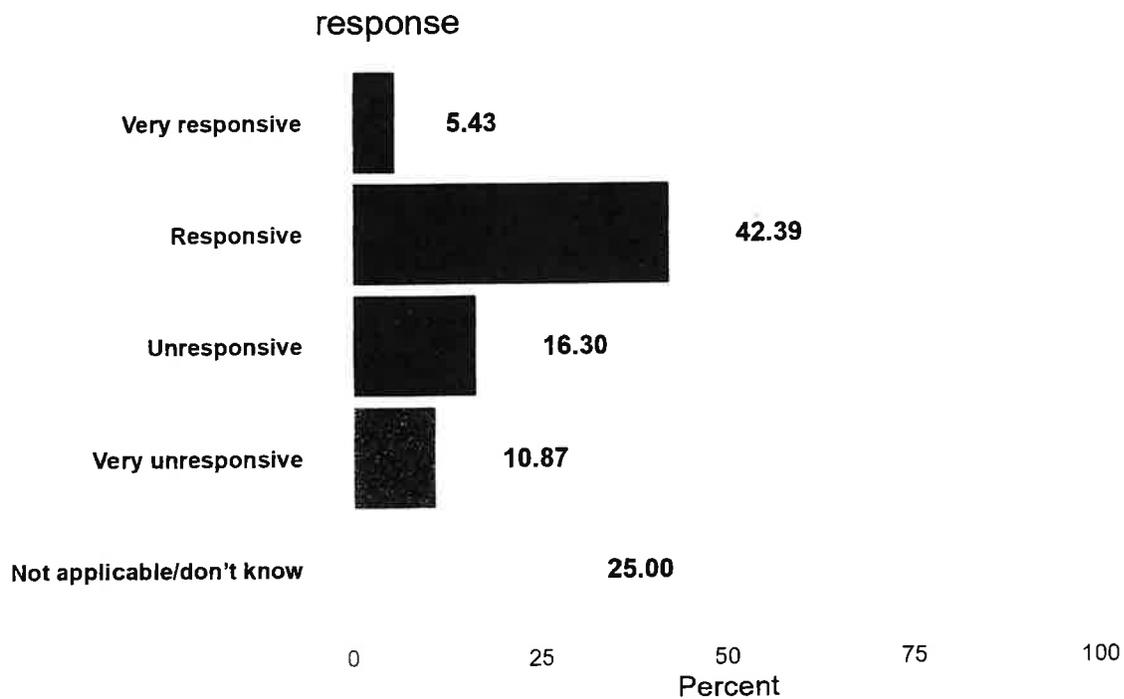


Figure 13: Marginal percentages plot for response variable

**Variable Name: struct**

**Question Text:** Do you believe the structure of the Dawson County government will continue to provide effective government operations regardless of the strengths and weaknesses of individual elected county officials?

**Frequencies and Marginal Percentages:**

*Table 14: Frequencies and marginal percentages table for **struct** variable*

<b>RESPONSE OPTION</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENT</b>
No	37	44.05%
Yes	47	55.95%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>84</b>	

struct

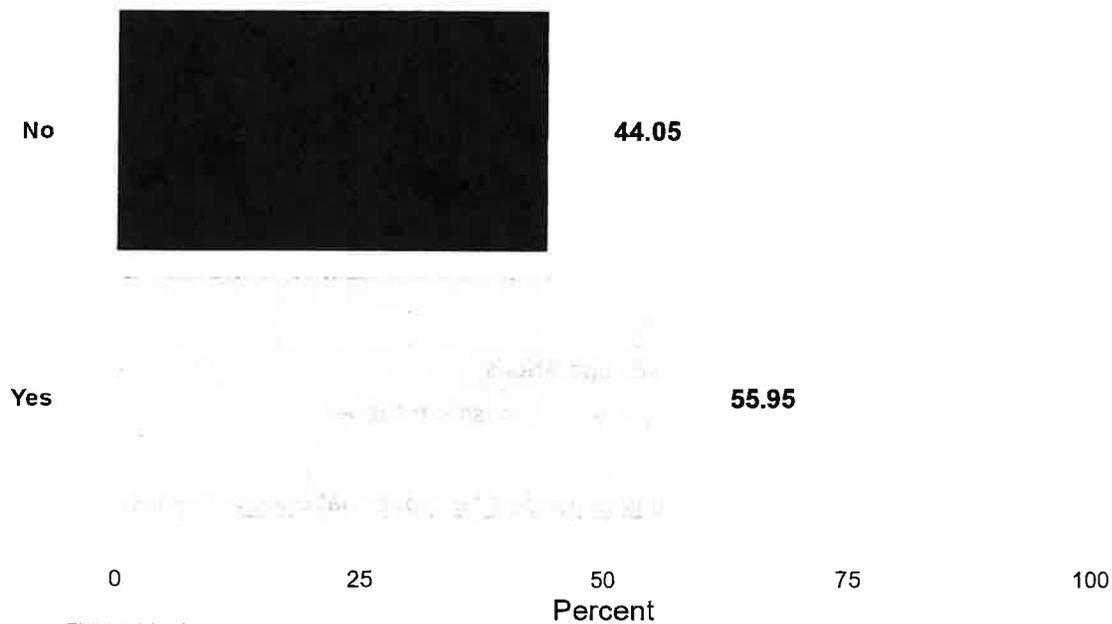


Figure 14: Marginal percentages plot for **struct** variable

**Variable Name: structtxt**

**Question Text:** Do you believe the structure of the Dawson County government will continue to provide effective government operations regardless of the strengths and weaknesses of individual elected county officials? Comments:

**Responses:**

*Table 15: Responses for structtxt variable*

**RESPONSES**

---

Weak elected officials equal weak government

Not sure

If they talk to one another and come up with good ideas

Poor SUPERVISION LEADERSHIP

Only strong leaders are effective.

Don't know

Effectiveness of DC is limited to almost nonexistent due to full time only 3 commissioners.

We have very good commissioners now but worried about future commission.

I haven't worked closely enough to say for certain either way, but there seems to be a general lack of oversight.

Needs to be re-organized.

You need qualified people for the job

They need to do what they say they are going to do

If we have a dedicated professional to oversee daily operations

I think we have good variety of comm. Not sure why a woman isn't in there?

Don't know.

We are only as good as our leaders. We have had good leaders but hope that doesn't change.

Country Attorney is a joke!

**Variable Name: study**

**Question Text: Do you feel the Study Commission should research:  
Frequencies and Marginal Percentages:**

*Table 16: Frequencies and marginal percentages table for study variable*

<b>RESPONSE OPTION</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENT</b>
City/County consolidation	10	11.49%
Other City/County consolidation services	10	11.49%
Both of the above	34	39.08%
None of the above	33	37.93%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>87</b>	

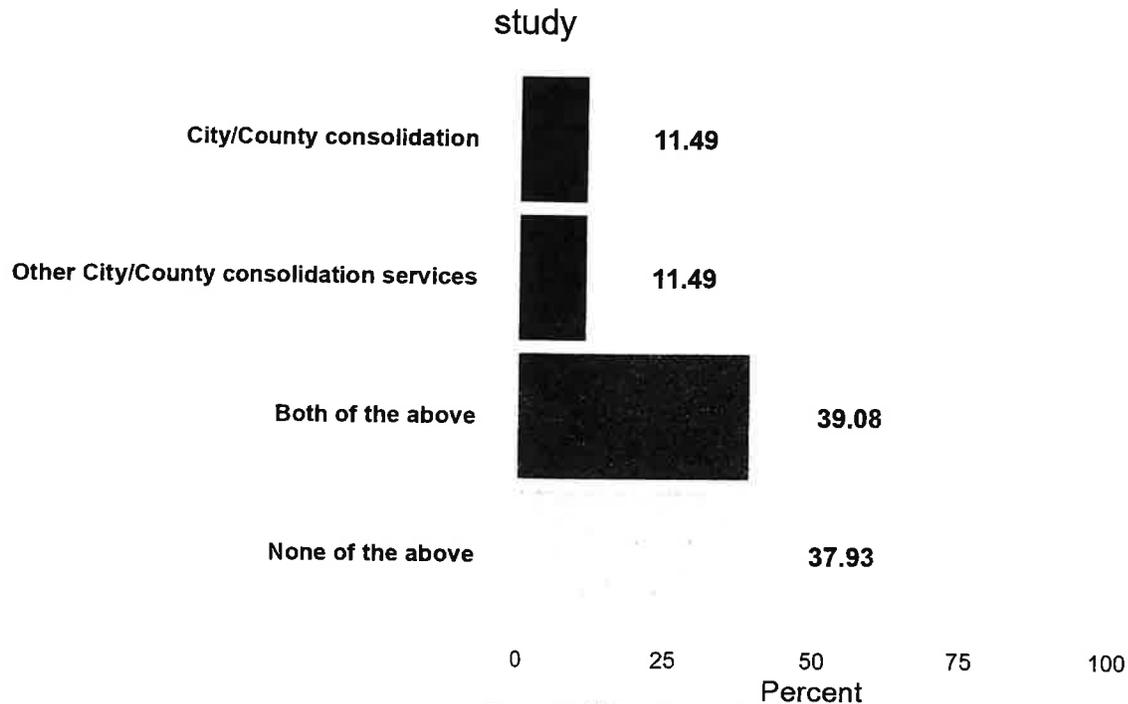


Figure 16: Marginal percentages plot for study variable

**Variable Name: studytxt**

**Question Text:** Do you feel the Study Commission should research: Comments:

**Responses:**

*Table 17: Responses for **studytxt** variable*

**RESPONSES**

---

Incorporate forest park and highland park into city limits

neither one can manage

abolishing city FD + contract services to County Fire District

**ORGANIZE FOR MOST IMPORTANT NEEDS**

Consolidation of services means poorer service.

No comment

Keep the separate

Currently in Dawson County there is no ambulance service except to highway, little service from sheriffs

Yes!!

Not consolidation west Glendive with the city

**NO ANNEXATION**

City can't run itself despite adequate resources

**Variable Name: proman**

**Question Text:** Do you feel it would be beneficial for the County to have a dedicated professional manager to oversee daily operations?

**Frequencies and Marginal Percentages:**

*Table 18: Frequencies and marginal percentages table for **proman** variable*

<b>RESPONSE OPTION</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENT</b>
No	46	51.69%
Yes	43	48.31%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>89</b>	

proman

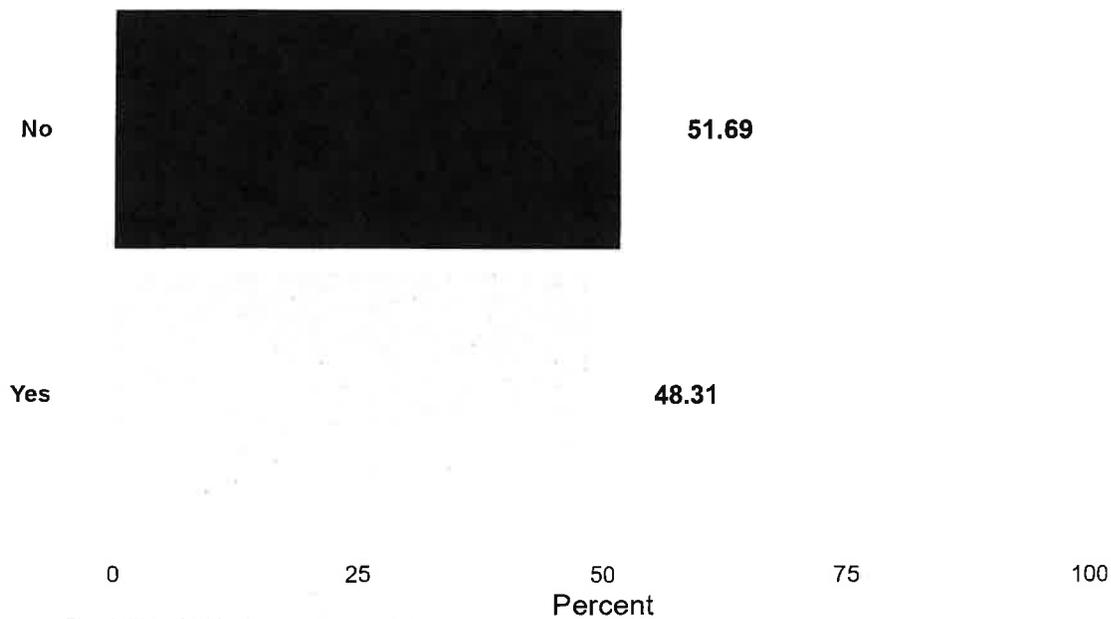


Figure 18: Marginal percentages plot for proman variable

**Variable Name: promantx**

**Question Text:** Do you feel it would be beneficial for the County to have a dedicated professional manager to oversee daily operations? Comments:

**Responses:**

*Table 19: Responses for **promantx** variable*

**RESPONSES**

---

As long as there is oversight and accountability built in

Depends on cost and no debt

Let commisioners direct dept. heads

ONLY THE RIGHT PERSON

But only if the person is qualified, conservative.

That is not a commissioner or appointed by commissioners. Needs to be elected.

More expensive. No.

Depends on the qualifications of the individual.

Traffic engineer roads

In leu of commissioners

But not a new position!

Seems that would be an added expense.

Yes if commissioners are part-time.

If it flows good now, why change

moves the power base

**Variable Name: exec**

**Question Text:** Do you feel that on commissioner should be appointed to serve exclusively in the executive capacity?

**Frequencies and Marginal Percentages:**

*Table 20: Frequencies and marginal percentages table for exec variable*

<b>RESPONSE OPTION</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENT</b>
No	63	76.83%
Yes	19	23.17%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>82</b>	

exec

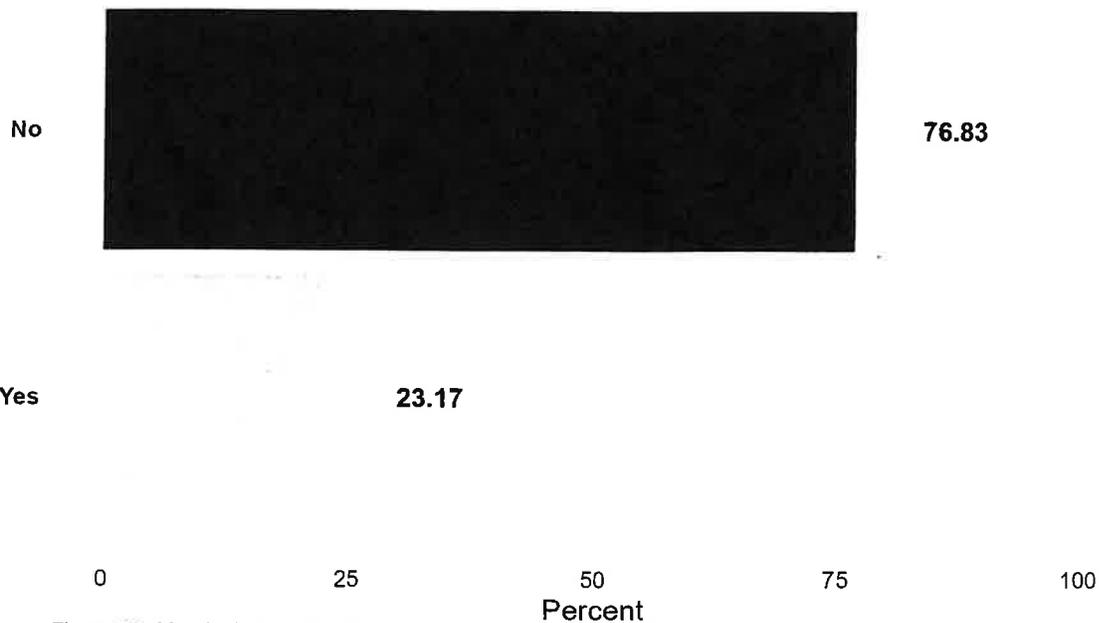


Figure 20: Marginal percentages plot for exec variable

**Variable Name: exectxt**

**Question Text:** Do you feel that on commissioner should be appointed to serve exclusively in the executive capacity? Comments:

**Responses:**

*Table 21: Responses for **exectxt** variable*

**RESPONSES**

---

Too much power.

Not sure

Needs to be qualified and strong.

No idea

Maybe.

Potentially

Not sure

move from democracy to dictatorship

**Variable Name: ballot**

**Question Text:** Should the elected officials of your County run for office on a partisan (with political party label) or on a nonpartisan ballot?

**Frequencies and Marginal Percentages:**

*Table 22: Frequencies and marginal percentages table for **ballot** variable*

<b>RESPONSE OPTION</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENT</b>
Partisan	30	32.26%
Nonpartisan	63	67.74%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>93</b>	

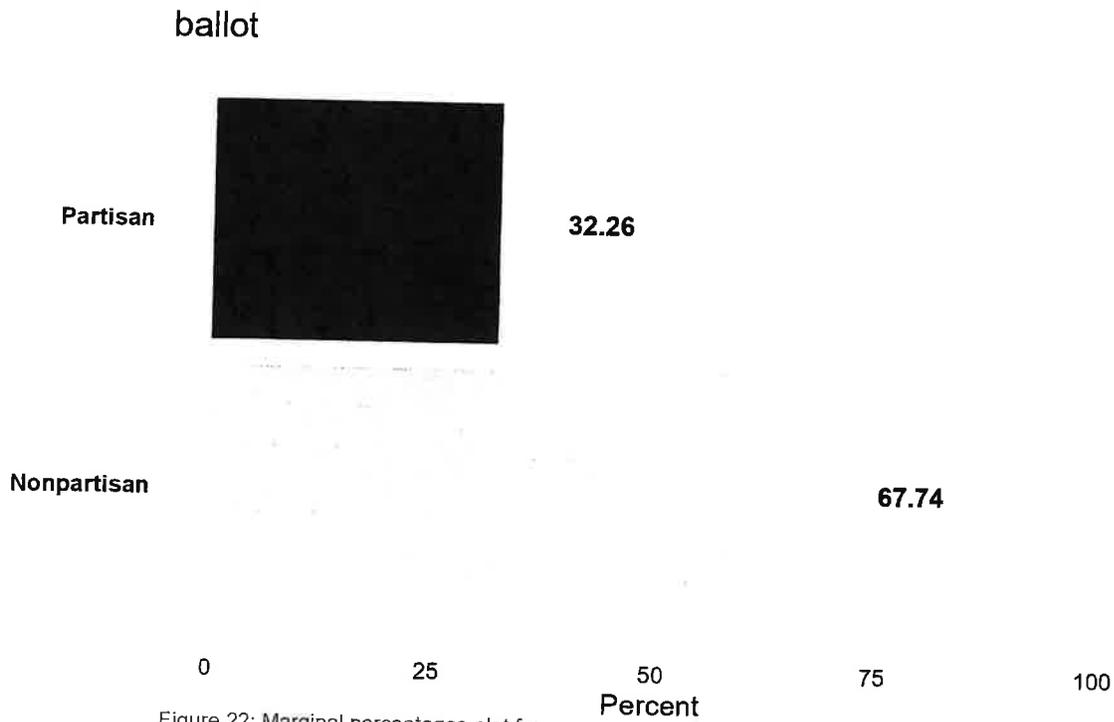


Figure 22: Marginal percentages plot for ballot variable

**Variable Name: ballottx**

**Question Text:** Should the elected officials of your County run for office on a partisan (with political party label) or on a nonpartisan ballot? Comments:

**Responses:**

*Table 23: Responses for **ballottx** variable*

**RESPONSES**

---

Allows us to better know their perspective

IDENTIFY AGENDAS IF ANY

Current commissioners are RINOs since they know running their true party-democrat- would not get them elected.

The closer you are locally the less imp. party is

Lets me know how they think

**Variable Name: runoff**

**Question Text:** Should the elected officials of your County run for office in districted or at-large elections?

**Frequencies and Marginal Percentages:**

*Table 24: Frequencies and marginal percentages table for runoff variable*

RESPONSE OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Districted	49	54.44%
At large	33	36.67%
Other:	8	8.89%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>90</b>	

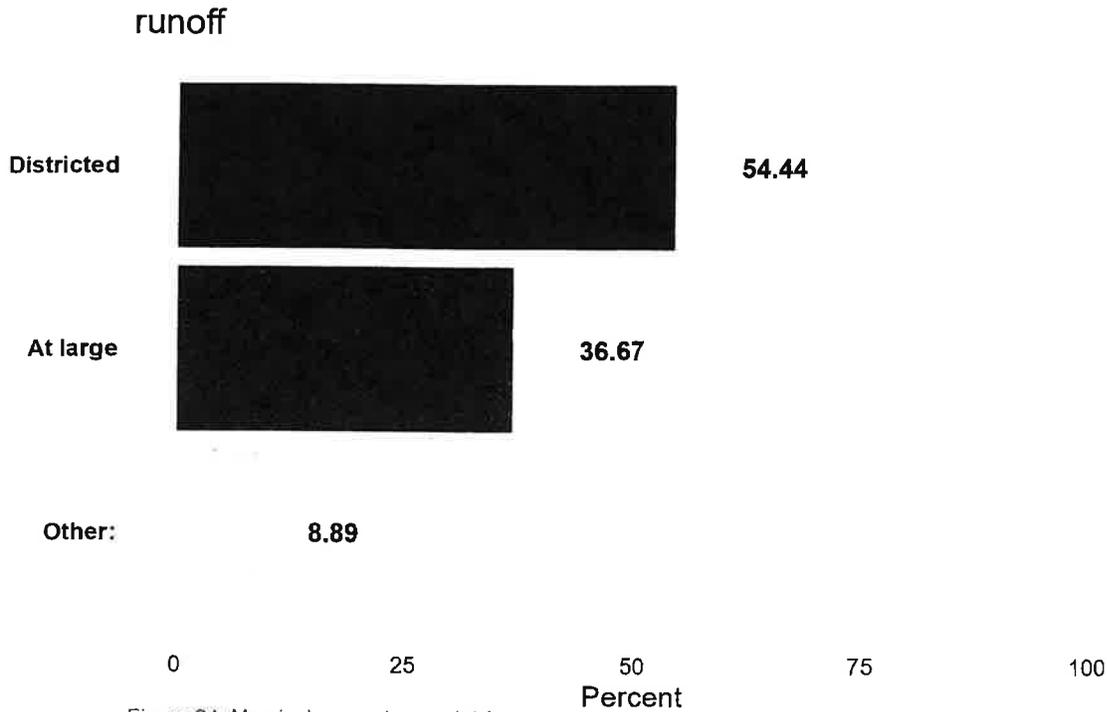


Figure 24: Marginal percentages plot for runoff variable

**Variable Name: runofftx**

**Question Text:** Should the elected officials of your County run for office in districted or at-large elections? - Other: - Text

**Responses:**

*Table 25: Responses for runofftx variable*

**RESPONSES**

---

Not sure

DISTRICT FOR LOCAL NEEDS

Commissioners represent entire county, no need for districts.

Should have a manager not commissioner

At large, only at elections as scheduled

Not sure

With whole country voting

try for district but if not at large ok

**Variable Name: comment**

**Question Text:** Do you have any other comments or recommendations you want the Local Government Review Study Commission to consider?

**Responses:**

*Table 26: Responses for **comment** variable*

**RESPONSES**

---

Not at this time

A better judge

City needs to include 2 subdivisions into city limits, would put population increase more like Miles City and Sydney. Some important people in Glendive don't seem to want Glendive to grow and prosper.

I know consolidation can be difficult but will be worth it.

One of the main issues I have is that our county roads are terrible and it doesn't matter how many times we talk to the commissioners- nothing changes. On some roads, I could count the pieces of gravel on them... because there is none. The commissioners need to get out of their offices and get out in the county and look at the roads!

There should be at least one commissioner in the office all day every day, the other two commissioners should be checking on their district on a regular routine of once per month. Personal duties should be on off duty days and at least show up for important meetings like the one for the flood plain with the Army Corps of Engineers, all three commissioners were absent.

1: Staying in a budget. 2: Doing what is best for the county and its residents. 3: Educating the residents on what county government does and why. 4: Consolidation of services - budget! Population goes down taxes go up and things like street repair and other maintenance issues go undone.

Anything that would prevent a wind farm

I know virtually nothing about the county government. One thing I was told that a family needed law enforcement in Richey, they were real slow to come. But after telling the county commissioner about it, the next time they needed law enforcement, someone was here in Richey real quick. I heard it right from the family member so it was not gossip. Also I think they care more about Glendive than Richey. No one in Glendive gives a rip about Richey.

Yes I do! 2025 (open Bern Permit) revised for competent individuals. Did not have a problem with it in 2024 or earlier

County officials are doing great with resources available. I do feel that consolidating city emergency response services to the county fire district would save city resources that could be applied elsewhere + still provide efficient fire + emergency response to city residents.

'- NEED A TRAFFIC & ROADWAY PROFESSIONAL - NEED TO INCOURAGE OPENESS AND COMMUNICATION - OPEN FORUMS W/ PUBLIC - FIX ROADS & STRUCTURES (I WAS A HIGHWAY ENG. IN COLO.)

I'm not sure what salaries are currently, but a part-time commission paid per diem for meetings and official functions would be a savings. Commissioner should not be eligible for pensions.

We don't have people running for all positions, we realize this commission dislikes their representation but this is a waste of time, money, and goodwill.

## RESPONSES

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Richey did not vote for local gov review. Glendive should stay separate but west glendive should annex into Glendive.

I believe West Glendive should be annexed into Glendive. It no longer serves the community to have them separate.

Properly fix roads and signs. Improve emergency services.

Question #2- needs more options/legal info to accurately answer question. thank you!

All Dawson County employees need to live in Dawson County

Richey now pays to have more of a presence in Dawson County at large. My experience has been negative. Slow response times, no follow-up with resident(s) having a problem by Sheriff's Dept. The ambulance service is really nonexistent for rural residents. Accidents (vehicular) appear to be covered on a consistent basis by Richland County (at times) low trained young people who have a bias for certain residents who have been involved in accidents (favoritism). There's a lot more but no room to get to it.

Annex, annex, annex NOW!!!

To bring more revenue to Glendive

We seem to want nice things But push out any industry that wants to move in. Need to be more progressive, maybe less reactive

5 part time commissioners, 1 county manager, 1 comisioner responsible for helping the manager with a specific dept. Road Public Safety, City county (Illedgible) 1 Richy Aera 1 Lindsey Area 2 At large from within the Co.

I oppose consolidation of town + county!!

Many commissioners are not paid—maybe something to consider for Dawson County - unpaid - elected but - do us a service.

## EXHIBIT E

### Dawson County Government Study Commission

Courthouse Community Room

Date: December 16, 2025

Present: Ric Holden, Jesse Schaaf, Linda Baker, Alan McRae, Teresea Olson, Lori Whalen-Secretary, Jaime Crisafulli-Ranger Review Reporter

Chair Holden called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Roll Call – Ric Holden, Jesse Schaaf, Linda Baker, Alan McRae, Teresea Olson present

Chair Ric Holden asked the commission if they had any questions or concerns regarding the minutes from their last scheduled meeting. Seeing none. J. Schaaf motioned to approve the minutes from December 2, 2025. L. Baker seconded. All voted in favor. Motion carried.

#### **Old Business:**

#### **Term Limits-Local Government Center Report**

A. McRae stated he started with researching some historical data noting there was a charter scheduled to be implemented in May of 1977. He thought this was important because the commission spoke of the necessity to have a charter for term limits. After several attempts he did reach Dan Clark and was informed the voters rejected the charter in 1977. In speaking with Dan Clark from the Government Center further, Clark pointed to MCA 7-1-114 (1)(d) as the reason city and county attorneys advise study commissions not to include term limits to a charter. Self-governing powers are subject to all laws regulating the election of local officials, adding term limits to a charter in effect, can be a regulation of local officials and that power is reserved for the state legislature. A. McRae felt this answered the question of term limits and did not pursue this any further and thanked Dan Clarke for his time. He and L. Baker briefly met with the Commissioners about several things including charters and also inquired as to how they work with staff being a group of three. The Commissioners stated they always meet with staff together so information is not passed commissioner to commissioner.

Chair Holden said after reviewing the previous meetings minutes, he did his own research regarding 7-1-114 (1)(d) and his research leads in a different direction. MCA 7-1-114 (1)(d) is a theory, yes we would be the first county to do this. There is no state statute that says you can't do this. Chair Holden says the reasoning for Dan Clark's explanation is: term limits are in place already so you can vote the person in or out. That argument failed at the Supreme Court. When the people of Montana voted for term limits for the legislators and Governor, the opponents used that argument but the court did not find it valid. When it is voted by the people, it is weighed heavier than theory. Chair Holden feels the statute is not current. Several places in the law tell us that we can and can't do things – using the handout from their training in Sidney, *Scope of Montana's Local Government Review* it informs them of their powers. They are able to exercise any power and authority that is not specifically denied by legislature. The paper lists the 6 forms of government but you need to look at the the plan for each form. Going to state statute, there are two places that give to the people permissible recommendations for changing government MCA 7-3-141 (1) by petition the people themselves can alter county government (a) using Amendments it must be on the ballot by a vote of the people. Another, more useful for our purposes, is MCA 7-3-185 states the *Scope of the Study Commission* (hand out to the members) basically identical to what the people can do by petition (i) using amendments to the existing plan. Further looking at the Final Recommendations Report from last meeting outlining the statute and final report requirements, the Final Report can take two forms 1. Recommending no change or 2. Using an alternative form of government or amending an existing form.

Chair Holden was unclear about Vice Chair Schaaf's comments during last meeting regarding going to the Commissioners with their report before going to ballot. J. Schaaf stated there is no need for formal approval by the Commissioners as far as he understands. Chair Holden also could not find anything that it has to go to the Commissioners or the County Attorney. Vice Chair Schaaf stating the final report falls under MCA 7-3-187 two copies of the Final Report is to be submitted to the records administrator (County Clerk and Recorder).

Chair Holden said the Commission has the ability to put forward what they discussed in June (Term Limits), and stated in his opinion, they would be derelict in our duties to not do this. He then asked for member thoughts...

Vice Chair Schaaf stated he does not feel comfortable putting our county through this. He mentioned that the County Attorney agrees with Dan Clark – it has never been tested. Chair Holden asked if he thought this would bring litigation? Vice Chair Schaaf stated if we are given advice (even informal advice) to not do it, why should we ignore the advice? And after reading through the literature and listening to advice, Vice Chair Schaaf does not feel the commission has

the authority to put term limits forward. Specifically, 7-1-114 (1)(d) Chapter 7 is *Local Government*, Part 1 is *Nature of self-governing and Local Government Prohibitions (d) all laws regulating election of local officials*.

T. Olson reiterated that although it was not a formal opinion, the County Attorney stated if it was on the ballot and it did pass it could be challenged and there is no current case law to back it up. Vice Chair recognized that there is no case law however, he does not want our County to be the example. A. McRae brought up, if we do have the authority, and we are choosing only commissioners for this to apply or would this be for all elected officials? How will this affect us in the future?

Chair Holden noted at the last meeting the motion made in June was tabled (pending further information). Chair Holden then motioned for a Ballot Measure submitted to the electors of Dawson County in substantially the following form:

**For** County Commissioners to be elected for no more than two consecutive 6 year terms, in any 18-year period.

**Against** Imposing the election of County Commissioner to limitations on the terms of office.

A. McRae seconded the motion. Discussion followed

A. McRae stated, he is not a lawyer. Should we get an opinion further? Perhaps contact the AG of Montana?

Vice Chair Schaaf again stated, we are inviting problems. Vice Chair Schaaf is clear that we do not have the authority to change term limits. Vice Chair Schaaf asked A. McRae's regarding his discussion with Dan Clark, did Clark say we had to go to Charter Form of Government? A. McRae pointed back to the original email from Clark, stating 7.1.114 as the reason city/county attorneys advise the way they do, interpreting it to say it would require a change to self-governing charter. This is also from the original email from July, reiterating the same thought.

Vice Chair Schaaf also noted all options can be found in MCA 7.3.4 Title 7 *Local Government*, Chapter 3 *Alternative Forms of Local Government* Part 4 *Commission Form* there are many options 412-418 Partisan vs Non-partisan, Presiding Officer etc. that the Study Commission can do but not term limits, we must stay within what the legislature has provided for us. Chair Holden disagrees, it is what you read into it. He states that they can do amendments, which is what he thinks term limits would be. A. McRae said we are not the experts and suggested a group meeting with Dan Clark for an opinion to clear up any confusion. Vice Chair Schaaf stated there is no confusion per MCA-it is clear, even under a Charter form, MCA states they do not have the authority to alter election regulations-that is reserved for the legislature. Chair Holden stated when something goes to the vote of the people, it is nearly impossible to be overturned. T. Olson asked Chair Holden, why are we targeting the County Commissioners? We have 8 elected positions? Chair Holden said that the people are focusing on them, they do not want career County Commissioners. The Commissioners set the tone for the whole county.

Vice Chair Schaaf noted that Chair Holden mentioned the term limits for the legislature. He stated in 1992 the legislature passed term limits for Montana State legislators, it wouldn't matter if they fought it but because it was by the people as an amendment to the Montana Constitution. A change to the Montana Constitution is not what you are proposing. We would be in direct conflict with the state legislatures authority. The argument using term limits voted on for others in Montana history upheld by the courts is not a good one, because this is a local issue not an amendment to the constitution. Chair Holden does not see it as a prohibited option for the Study Commission-that the State Legislators have given the Commission the authority. Vice Chair Schaaf sees it as prohibited, that they do not have the authority, that we must only use the options provided per MCA and term limits are not an option. L. Baker stated term limits are up to the state legislators, most people have little interest in politics.

Roll call vote on the motion

Ballot Measure submitted to the electors of Dawson County in substantially the following form:

**For** County Commissioners to be elected for no more than two consecutive 6-year terms, in any 18-year period.

**Against** Imposing the election of County Commissioner to limitations on the terms of office.

Holden-Aye Schaaf-Nay Baker-Nay McRae-Nay Olson-Nay Motion failed 1-4.

Vice Chair Schaaf motioned to rescind the original term limit proposal that was previously approved in June. T. Olson seconded the motion. Any discussion? Seeing none. Chair Holden re read the original motion.

County Commissioners shall be limited to two consecutive terms. A County Commissioner may run again after 6-years time has lapsed. Effective starting date November 2027.

Roll call vote on the motion

Holden-No Schaaf-Aye Baker-Aye McRae-Aye Olson-Aye Motion passed, June proposal rescinded.

**New Business:**

**Schedule/Timeline for Study Commission:**

Vice Chair Schaaf handed out a new timeline/schedule for the Study Commission with dates for public hearings. Secretary Whalen will check with dates for public hearing and notify the Commission members.

**Formation of Sub Committee for Tentative Report:**

Chair Holden formed a sub-committee of A. McRae and L. Baker to write the tentative report and bring back to the members at the next scheduled meeting. Chair Holden requested for historical purposes the timeline from the previous public hearing stating what the Study Commission has been doing as well as the motions that were defeated be included in the report. A. McRae also suggested including the survey results. Vice Chair Schaaf stated additional documents can be added to the appendix on the report.

**Public Comment: None**

A. McRae motioned to adjourn. L. Baker seconded. All voted in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:35pm

Next meeting scheduled for January 6, 2026



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Ric Holden  
Chair

Respectfully submitted:



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Lori Whalen  
Secretary

# Montana Code Annotated 2023

## TITLE 7. LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### CHAPTER 3. ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

#### Part 1. General Provisions

## Permissible Recommendations

**7-3-141. Permissible recommendations.** (1) A petition proposing to alter an existing county government may:

- (a) recommend amendments to the existing plan of government;
- (b) recommend any form of government authorized by Title 7, chapter 3, parts 1 through 5;
- (c) draft a charter;
- (d) recommend municipal-county consolidation or amendments to an existing consolidation; or
- (e) in cooperation with a similar petition calling for an election on county merger circulated in an adjoining county, recommend county merger.

(2) A petition proposing to alter a municipal government may:

- (a) recommend amendments to the existing plan of government;
- (b) recommend any form of government authorized by Title 7, chapter 3, parts 1 through 6;
- (c) draft a charter; or
- (d) recommend disincorporation.

**History:** En. Sec. 6, Ch. 675, L. 1979; amd. Sec. 21, Ch. 575, L. 1981; amd. Sec. 2, Ch. 521, L. 2007.

**vacancies — compensation.** (1) The term of office of study commission is declared on the day of their appointment and ends on the day of the vote on the plan is adopted. The term continues for 90 days after the plan is adopted. If the commission recommends an alternative plan, the term of the final report in accordance with 7-3-187.

mission, including an ex officio member vacancy, shall be filled by appointment by the governing body of the local government. The appointment shall be made within 30 days of the vacancy in municipal office as provided in 7-4-411. A mission may receive no compensation other than for actual their official capacity. L. 1983; and Sec. 8, Ch. 435, L. 1985.

**mission.** (1) Not later than 10 days after all members of the study commission shall meet and be elected or appointed; the study commission shall meet and be elected or appointed by the governing body of the local government which the study commission, the study commission may elect a permanent chairman is selected. L. 1983.

**study commissions.** (1) Any two or more study commissions their studies. A majority vote by each of the affected study study. preclude each study commission from making a separate L. 1983.

(1) Meetings of the study commission must be held upon the vice presiding officer in the absence or inability of the members. The presiding officer shall announce the time of the study commission. All maintain a written record of its proceedings and its selection by a person at the office of the study commission by the governing body by resolution after a public hearing by the governing officer.

of the study commission constitutes a quorum for the recommendation of a study commission does not have legal effect whole number of members of the study commission. adopt rules for its own organization and procedure L. 1983; and Sec. 1, Ch. 216, L. 1995.

**public involvement.** All meetings of the study commission as provided in Title 2, chapter 3, part 2. The study commissions and community forums and may use other suitable receive suggestions and comments, and stimulate public conclusions, and recommendations. L. 1983.

(1) A study commission may employ and fix the salary staff. State, municipal, and county officers and study commission and with the consent of the employing

as it considers necessary for assistance in carrying out the purposes for which the commission was established. Upon request of the chairman of the study commission, state agencies, counties and other local governments and the officers and employees thereof shall furnish or make available to the commission such information as may be necessary for carrying out the commission's function. L. 1983.

(3) A study commission may (a) establish advisory boards and committees, including on them persons who are not members of the study commission; (b) retain consultants; and (c) do any other act consistent with and reasonably required to perform its function. History: En. Sec. 15, Ch. 697, L. 1983.

**7-3-184. Financial administration.** (1) A study commission shall prepare a budget for each fiscal year if it is in existence and submit it to the local governing body for approval. (2) (a) Subject to 15-10-220, for each fiscal year the study commission is in existence, each local government under study may appropriate an amount necessary to fund the study. (b) The local government shall provide office and meeting space and clerical assistance to the study commission. The cost of clerical assistance and other in kind services provided by the local government may be used to partially fulfill the appropriation provision of subsection (2)(a).

(1) (c) The local government may provide additional funds and other assistance. (3) The study commission may apply for and accept available private, state, and federal money and may accept donations from any source. (4) All money received by the study commission must be deposited with the local government's finance administrator. The finance administrator is authorized to disburse appropriated money of the study commission on the study commission's order after approval of the budget by the governing body. Unexpended money of the study commission does not revert to the general fund of the local government at the end of the fiscal year but carries over to the study commission's appropriation for the following fiscal year. Upon termination of the study commission, unexpended money reverts to the general fund of the local government. History: En. Sec. 16, Ch. 697, L. 1983; and Sec. 1, Ch. 396, L. 1991; and Sec. 2, Ch. 584, L. 1999.

**7-3-185. Scope of study commission recommendations.** (1) (a) A study commission examining the government of a county may (i) recommend amendments to the existing plan of government; (ii) recommend any plan of government authorized by Title 7, chapter 3, parts 1 through 6; (iii) draft a charter for the government; (iv) recommend municipal consolidation or amendments to an existing consolidation; (v) cooperate with a study commission in an adjoining county, recommend county merger, or the consolidation of two or more counties; (vi) submit no recommendation; (b) In addition to one of the items in subsection (1)(a), a county study commission may recommend service consolidation or transfer in cooperation with a study commission of another county or with a study commission examining the government of a municipality. (2) (a) A study commission examining the government of a municipality may (i) recommend amendments to the existing plan of government; (ii) recommend any plan of government authorized by Title 7, chapter 3, parts 1 through 6; (iii) draft a charter; (iv) recommend municipal consolidation; (v) recommend discontinuation of (vi) submit no recommendation.

(1) (a) A study commission examining the government of a municipality may (i) recommend amendments to the existing plan of government; (ii) recommend any plan of government authorized by Title 7, chapter 3, parts 1 through 6; (iii) draft a charter; (iv) recommend municipal consolidation; (v) recommend discontinuation of (vi) submit no recommendation.

Per Montana Code 7-3-121, 7-3-141, 7-3-185

Holden Study Commission Motion

Ballot Measure Submitted to the electors of Dawson County in substantially the following form:

**Motion:** For County Commissioners to be elected for no more than two consecutive 6 year terms, in any 18-year period.

Against imposing the election of County Commissioner to limitations on the terms of office.

**Explainer:** Effective starting date of this provision is election day November 2026.

## Proposed Schedule for County Study Commission 12/16/25

### **12/16/2025 Meeting**

1. Review guidance from Local Government Center regarding Term Limit Proposal
2. Discuss next steps regarding the Term Limit Proposal. Approve/Reject Term Limit Proposal Changes if any are needed.
3. Discuss need for time at next meeting to bring forward motions for any additional changes or recommendations to be included in Tentative Proposal
  - a. If there is a desire from the commission to make any additional motions, then the meeting dates would need to be pushed back
4. If there is not support for including on the agenda at the next meeting any additional motions for changes or recommendations...
  - a. Establish a sub-committee to draft a Tentative Proposal that meets the legal requirements identified in MCA using the outline/template provided by the Local Government Center

### **Future Meeting #1 (1/6/2025)**

1. If there are additional motions for changes or recommendations...
  - a. Motions taken, discussion, and vote
  - b. Establish Tentative Proposal Sub-Committee
  - c. The rest of the schedule will be pushed back by one meeting date
2. If there are no additional motions for changes or recommendations...
  - a. Present Tentative Proposal to Commission for Discussion
  - b. Provide opportunity for Minority Report to be Drafted, if necessary
    - i. Additional time may be needed to ensure the Minority Report has the opportunity to develop a report and make it accessible to the public.
  - c. Set date for formal public hearing on Tentative Proposal

### **Future Meeting #2 (1/20/2026)**

1. Formal Public Hearing to Gather Feedback on Tentative Proposal that meets the legal requirements outlined in **7-3-186** and **7-3-187 MCA**

### **Future Meeting #3 (2/3/2026)**

1. Discuss feedback from Public Hearing.
2. Approve/Modify Final Report based on feedback

### **Future Meeting #4 (2/17/2026)**

1. Formal Public Hearing on Final Report

### **Future Meeting #5 (3/3/2026)**

1. Discuss final steps of Study Commission
  - a. Establish responsibilities to provide copies of Final Report to necessary parties
2. Set Date for Election if changes are proposed. (within 120 days of approval of Final Report)

### **Additional Meeting Dates if Necessary**

1. 3/17, 4/7, 4/21, 5/5, 5/19

## EXHIBIT F

### Dawson County Government Study Commission

Courthouse Community Room

Date: January 20, 2026

Present: Ric Holden, Jesse Schaaf, Linda Baker, Alan McRae, Teresea Olson, Lori Whalen-Secretary, Jamie Crisafulli-Ranger Review Reporter, Public-Pat Mischel, Brenda Mischel, Colette Wilburn, Lonnie Cross, Justin Cross, Al Heidt, Laurie Sazama, Sue Peterson.

Chair Ric Holden called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Roll Call – Ric Holden, Jesse Schaaf, Linda Baker, Alan McRae, Teresea Olson present

J. Schaaf made a motion to approve the minutes from January 6, 2026. A. McRae seconded. All voted in favor. Motion carried.

#### **Old Business:**

#### **Amendment to the plan of the Current Form of Government Type of Election**

T. Olson made a motion to remove from being tabled her previous motion made at last meeting *that the Dawson County Local Government Review Study Commission recommend submitting to the electors of Dawson County a ballot measure to amend the current plan of government to allow for nonpartisan elections for all elected county officials.* The motion is to take it off the table so they can further discuss. A. McRae seconded. All voted in favor. Motion carried.

T. Olson made a motion *that the Dawson County Local Government Review Study Commission recommend submitting to the electors of Dawson County a ballot measure to amend the current plan of government to allow for nonpartisan elections for all elected county officials.* J. Schaaf seconded the motion. Discussion ensued.

T. Olson stated she was tasked with gathering more information from the Local Government Center and bring back that information to the Study Commission members. T. Olson informed the study commission she was able to connect with Dan Clark at MSU Local Government Center. She distributed copies of their email correspondence and went over details regarding the non-partisan election amendment to the current form of government. She noted that it is not possible to choose specific elected positions for this to apply to, it needs to be all elected positions (unless you changed to Charter form) but she still wants to present to the commission for it to be on the ballot for the voters.

R. Holden asked why does she think this is important. T. Olson replies that per the survey, 67% of the respondents stated they would prefer a nonpartisan election and again stated the task of the study commission is to present to the electors, after the commission does the research to see what the electors want. The study commission produced a survey and the results indicated interest in nonpartisan elections. R. Holden inquired what are the merits of nonpartisan elections? Why would it be good for Dawson County? T. Olson replied that it gives the voters the option to choose based on the voter survey results. They must bring it forward and allow the voters to decide. J. Schaaf reiterated the results of the survey is what counts, regardless of our personal preferences. L. Baker brought up that the survey also had a significant response to term limits and the commission voted against putting that to the ballot. J. Schaaf noted – the commission does not have the legal authority to impose term limits but partisan/nonpartisan elections are one of the mentioned possibilities for local government review to put to a ballot. A. McRae mentioned having to go to Charter or Commission form to split some positions partisan/nonpartisan. J. Schaaf agreed but having all elected positions as nonpartisan would be possible with our current form of government. A. McRae stated what we are proposing is giving the electorates the choice of partisan/nonpartisan elections.

R. Holden stated that basing what we present to voters solely on the survey results is an error. With 350 surveys mailed out, and 95 returned, although 95 is a good return on 350, it still only represents a very small fraction of county residents. It does not take into consideration all of the registered voters in Dawson County. Any changes they present should be based on the merits. You should not govern by survey. Give the people what is good for them. We should be debating it on the topic of partisan/nonpartisan and how that will benefit the people. J. Schaaf stated its our job to present to the county to vote, if it passes or if it fails would be up to the electorate. Our role is to present to the voters. R. Holden noted that is not our role, we should deliberate on the merits of the proposal. J. Schaaf noted it was a random sampling of 350 registered voters, we didn't hand pick the 350 people. He argues it is a good sample of what county voters would like to see.

Chair Holden asked T. Olson what the costs to run this on the ballot would be? T. Olson responded with an email from Shirley Kreiman, Elections Administrator. T. Olson distributed copies of her email to the study commission members.

She briefly indicated potential costs with the commission members. The cost would be determined by several factors: 1) if both the City and County place it on the ballot 2) if this causes the ballot to have an additional page 3) whether the ballot would be placed on the Primary or General Election. Currently, the Study Commission has a balance of \$13,365.18. The approximate estimate would be \$6000.00 if both County and City place on Primary Ballot, \$9000.00 if only the County put it on the Primary or \$3000 if both County and City place on the General Election Ballot and \$5000 if only the County placed in on the General Ballot. R. Holden then asked T. Olson how many candidates are on a nonpartisan ballot and how do they break a tie? T. Olson responded she has no specific knowledge of how that part of an election works. J. Schaaf stated, probably the same as any other ballot – they are not changing how an election runs, simply proposing a nonpartisan election ballot. R. Holden then brought up the *Candidate Filing Form* from last meeting reminding the members—a person can already file as nonpartisan. A nonpartisan race does not mean its an impartial race, people get confused. He thinks it harms the voters to not know where the candidates stand on issues. If a person runs under Democrat or Republican or any other party, at least the voter has an idea of what that person stands for. J. Schaaf disagrees, he thinks listing Republican or Democrat on the ballot, you are putting a bias in place. At the local level, you should get to know more about the person not the party label. T. Olson stated if we trust voters to elect official positions, we should give them the choice of nonpartisan/partisan- leave it up to the voter. We should not filter out their choice. Again R. Holden said by having a nonpartisan election, you are taking away their candidates' choice. T. Olson stated its not about a candidate is about letting the voter choose based on the study commissions process and the survey results of 67% asking for this. J. Schaaf added the parties can still participate, still endorse, campaign and be involved – the difference will be on the ballot-it will not state a party affiliation. The voter will be voting for the individual candidate. R. Holden stated the motion must be put into the correct form for the ballot. Then asked if there was any further discussion. A. McRae inquired - we are not changing the form of government-just an amendment to that form allowing for nonpartisan/partisan ballots. It must be clear for the voter to know what they are voting for. The survey came back that they want to see something different. Let's let the electorate make the decision. All we do is propose. The survey gives us the pulse of the people. L. Baked added – currently our two political parties are so diametrically opposed – it's very important to know where a person stands. Chair Holden opened it up to public comment.

**Sue Peterson** - Thanks to the Study Commission members for their time and energy they have put into this, she filled out a survey and appreciated that the commission valued her opinion! She took it seriously, she took the time to look up all the forms of government. She appreciated all the survey questions-thought they were well thought-out. Asked the commission to put it on the ballot, otherwise what is the point of doing the survey? She contacted some retired elected officials and was told nothing is partisan or nonpartisan at the local level, just follow the statutes.

**Brenda Mischel** - She supports the motion to present to voters. All elected positions listed should be nonpartisan. She has read the paper, checked out the survey results. As a past county employee at no time did she feel the commissioners used politics on the job. Some people only vote for candidates of specific parties. So I think we have a lot of people that won't vote because they don't want to choose a party. I think having a nonpartisan election could open up to more voters! She values the time and energy the Commission members have spent going over everything. Supports the vote of the people!

**Justin Cross** – Looking at this logically, he received a survey. He understands the argument about the number of surveys returned but with this sample survey the return was actually a good return rate, 67% - you can't argue that. Ultimately its up to the voters. You should not ignore the respondents of the survey. Allow them to make the decision. Thank you for what you do.

**Al Heidt** - He supports the motion to put nonpartisan elections on the ballot. The Study Commission did not analyze the survey, MSU did. He likes nonpartisan elections in that it's nice to know the sheriff and commissioners are not looking at someone to see if they are republican or democrat rather than as a Dawson County representative. So it would not be considered discriminatory.

**Pat Mischel** – All the meetings of the Study Commission are well documented and he appreciates that. He is in full support of the motion to put nonpartisan elections of all election officials on the ballot. The adoption of nonpartisan elections will allow our County officials to do the jobs that they described to you, the Study Commission, during their interviews. Sheriff Ross Canen stated more than anything in his department, most things are in statute. County Attorney Brett Irigoien stated most of his office falls under the law. Duties of Clerk & Recorder are found in Montana code and the Superintendent of Schools Deanne Smith, when asked what percentage of her workload is by law, she stated that almost all is regulatory. The Commissioners stated they operate under MCA law, it works well. So electing all County officials on a nonpartisan ballot will not change their authority or duties. He asks for the support of the motion.

**Laurie Sazsma** – Thank you to the Study Commission members for all they do. She supports putting it on the ballot. Especially due to the survey results. Perhaps a pamphlet that explains the different topics on the ballot could be done.

Chair Holden called for a roll call vote on the motion *that the Dawson County Local Government Review Study Commission recommend submitting to the electors of Dawson County a ballot measure to amend the current plan of government to allow for nonpartisan elections for all elected county officials*

R. Holden – No J. Schaaf – Yes L. Baker – No A. McRae – Yes T. Olson – Yes

Motion passes with two no votes, three yes votes.

Chair Holden appointed T. Olson and Vice Chair J. Schaaf to a subcommittee to construct the ballot language and to bring it back to the Study Commission at the next meeting. Once the ballot measure is agreed upon, we can set up tentative report (and potential minority report) public hearing dates.

**Correspondence**

Attached to the minutes are all handouts distributed at the meeting.

**Public Comment:**

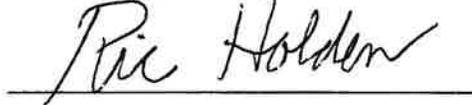
**Pat Mischel** – Has reviewed the previous Study Commissions results. He indicated that the Commission should endorse continuing education/development for the Commissioners in their final report.

A. McRae noted to the commission members that they may have to at some point meet weekly to be certain we make all the deadlines.

Chair Holden stated we will work on the schedule at our next meeting.

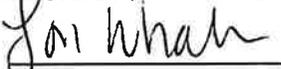
L. Baker motioned to adjourn. A. McRae seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned.

Meeting adjourned at 7:48 p.m.



Ric Holden  
Chair

Respectfully submitted:



Lori Whalen  
Secretary

## Lori Jo Whalen

---

**From:** Teresea Olson <tolsonpac@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 12, 2026 8:01 PM  
**To:** Ric Holden (rich@midrivers.com); Jesse Schaaf (schaafjesse@gmail.com); Linda Baker (bim59330@msn.com); Alan McRae (amcrae885@gmail.com); Lori Jo Whalen; Brad Mitchell  
**Subject:** Fw: Plan of government clarification- Dawson County Government Review

Hello all,  
Here is all of the information that I received from Dan Clark, and the whole string of email.

Teresea

---

**From:** Clark, Daniel <daniel.clark@montana.edu>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 12:16 PM  
**To:** Teresea Olson <tolsonpac@hotmail.com>; Kent, Ashley <ashleykent@montana.edu>; Maunz, Lydia <lydia.maunz@montana.edu>  
**Subject:** RE: Plan of government clarification- Dawson County Government Review

Teresea,

Sorry for the delay in getting back to you. We all took last week off and have been traveling all this week.

In response to your questions, let me start by establishing a baseline and build out from there.

Dawson county is operating with the **Elected County Officials Form** of government or ECOF and has not been changed or modified since 1977. The statutory basis for the form of government is outlined in 7-3-111 MCA. To change a suboption in the ECOF plan of government, i.e. appointing rather than electing the county treasurer (changing from 7-3-436(1) MCA to 7-3-436(2)) would require the voters to adopt the **Commission** form of government. The Commission form is an "alternative" form of government and must be adopted by the voters, otherwise, the county is operating with it "existing form" which is ECOF.

The only suboption that can change without changing the form of government from ECOF to Commission is partisan or nonpartisan elections as outlined in 7-3-103(4) MCA.

**7-3-103. Amendment of self-government charter or adopted alternative form of government — proposed change in type of election — election.** (1) An amendment to a self-government charter or an adopted alternative form of government may only be made by submitting the question of amendment to the electors of the local government as provided in 7-3-149. An amendment approved by the electors becomes effective on the first day of the local government fiscal year following the fiscal year of approval unless the question submitted to the electors provides otherwise.

(2) An amendment to a self-government charter or an adopted alternative form of government may be proposed by:

- (a) petition as provided in 7-3-125;
- (b) the local government by ordinance; or
- (c) a study commission recommendation pursuant to 7-3-192.

(3) The local government, by ordinance, may provide procedures for the submission and verification of initiative petitions.

(4) The question to change the type of election held under an elected county official government provided for in 7-3-111 from being conducted on a partisan basis to being conducted on a nonpartisan basis or from being conducted on a nonpartisan basis to being conducted on a partisan basis may, by ordinance, be submitted to the electorate of the local government as provided in 7-3-149. A change to the type of election requires an affirmative vote of a simple majority of those voting on the question, pursuant to 7-3-149.

History: En. 47A-3-209 by Sec. 4, Ch. 477, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 47A-3-209; amd. Sec. 2, Ch. 319, L. 1993; amd. Sec. 7, Ch. 387, L. 1995; amd. Sec. 33, Ch. 49, L. 2015; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 242, L. 2017; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 345, L. 2019.

Now, to your question, can you have some offices partisan and others nonpartisan? The answer is no, the type of elections applies to all elected officers, UNLESS the county were to adopt a Charter form of government. The charter would allow the ability to customize the type of election by office.

Here is an explanation I gave to another county study commission that was trying to understand the difference between ECOF and Commission forms of government.

The basis of the MT voter review of local government is found in Article XI, Section 9, of the MT Constitution. Where in subsection (1) is states: "The legislature shall, within four years of the ratification of this constitution, provide procedures requiring each local government unit or combination of units to review its structure and submit one alternative form of government to the qualified electors at the next general or special election." (emphasis added)

During the first voter review in 1974-76, every county and municipality was required to participate and place an "alternative" form of government on the ballot alongside the "existing" form. At that time, except for Petroleum County, all Montana counties operated under the existing form of government outlined in MCA § 7-3-111, which provided "the statutory basis of existing units of local government after May 2, 1977" (emphasis added). This statute specifies the elected county officials form of government, including the selection of specific suboptions (a) through (u) that define its plan of government.

**7-3-101. Compliance with constitution.** (1) The purpose of parts 1 through 7 is to comply with Article XI, section 3(1), of the Montana constitution, which provides: "The legislature shall provide such optional or alternative forms of government that each unit or combination of units may adopt, amend, or abandon an optional or alternative form by a majority of those voting on the question."

(2) Parts 1 through 7 establish the alternative forms of government for cities, towns, counties, and consolidated governments. These parts shall be liberally construed to facilitate the adoption of a form of local government.

History: En. 47A-3-201 by Sec. 1, Ch. 344, L. 1975; R.C.M. 1947, 47A-3-201; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 262, L. 1979.

**7-3-102. Adoption of alternative form.** Each local government in the state shall adopt one of the alternative forms of government provided for in parts 1 through 7, including one of each suboption authorized:

- (1) the commission-executive form (which may also be called the council-executive, the council-mayor, or the commission-mayor form);
- (2) the commission-manager form (which may also be called the council-manager form);
- (3) the commission form;
- (4) the commission-presiding officer form;
- (5) the town meeting form; or
- (6) the charter form.

History: En. 47A-3-202 by Sec. 1, Ch. 344, L. 1975; R.C.M. 1947, 47A-3-202; amd. Sec. 291, Ch. 61, L. 2007.

These two statutes identify the commission form of government as an "alternative form". In the statute below, the elected county officials form is defined as the "existing" form of government.

**7-3-111. Statutory basis for elected county official government.** (1) For the purpose of determining the statutory basis of existing units of local government after May 2, 1977, each unit of local government organized under the general statutes authorizing the elected county official form of government shall be governed by the following sections:

- (a) 7-3-401;

- (b) 7-3-402;
  - (c) 7-3-412(3);
  - (d) 7-3-413;
  - (e) 7-3-414(1);
  - (f) 7-3-415(2);
  - (g) 7-3-416(2);
  - (h) 7-3-417(2);
  - (i) 7-3-418;
  - (j) 7-3-432(1);
  - (k) 7-3-433(1);
  - (l) 7-3-434(1);
  - (m) 7-3-435(1);
  - (n) 7-3-436(1);
  - (o) 7-3-437(1);
  - (p) 7-3-438(1);
  - (q) 7-3-439(1);
  - (r) 7-3-440(1);
  - (s) 7-3-441(1);
  - (t) 7-3-442(1) if the county has elected an auditor;
  - (u) 7-3-442(6) if the county has not elected an auditor.
- (2) This form has terms of 4 years for all elected officials except commissioners who are elected to 6-year terms.

The commission consists of three members.

History: En. 16-5115.1 by Sec. 4, Ch. 513, L. 1975; R.C.M. 1947, 16-5115.1(3); amd. Sec. 2, Ch. 345, L. 2019.

So think of the suboptions (a) through (u) listed in MCA § 7-3-111 as being rigid and to change a suboption, the voters would need to abandon their existing ECOF and adopt an alternative form, i.e., the “commission form” to incorporate the change. For reference MCA § 7-3-103 explains how to adopt or amend an alternative form of government.

In 1976 and again in 1996, the voters rejected a proposal to adopt a charter form with the commission-manager structure of government. In 1986, 2006 and 2016, the voters chose not to participate in the local government review. Since no changes have been adopted by the voters since 1976 when the voters confirmed the existing form of government, Dawson County has been operating with the Elected County Officials Form.

I hope this helps answer your question.

Dan



**Local Government Center**

**Dan Clark**

Director, Local Government Center  
 Montana State University Extension  
 235 Culbertson Hall  
 (406) 994-6694  
[montana.edu/extension](http://montana.edu/extension)

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and EDUCATION for  
Montana's Local Governments  
**1985-2025**

**From:** Teresea Olson <tolsonpac@hotmail.com>

**Sent:** Thursday, January 1, 2026 11:02 AM

**To:** Clark, Daniel <daniel.clark@montana.edu>; Kent, Ashley <ashleykent@montana.edu>; Maunz, Lydia <lydia.maunz@montana.edu>

**Subject:** Plan of government clarification- Dawson County Government Review

**\*\*External Sender\*\***

Dear Dan and Local Government Center Team,

I hope you all had a safe and Happy New Year Day.

I'm writing on behalf of the Dawson County Local Government Review Commission with a clarifying question related to the scope of permissible plan changes under a **general governing powers, Commission form of county government**.

Specifically, I am trying to understand whether a proposed **change in the plan of government related to partisan vs. nonpartisan elections** may be structured to apply to **only certain elected county offices**, rather than uniformly to all elected positions.

By way of example, could a plan amendment lawfully distinguish between:

- Elected officials commonly viewed as **policy-setting or policy-influencing roles** (such as county commissioners and the county attorney), and
- Elected officials whose roles are primarily **administrative** in nature (such as clerk and recorder, clerk of district court, treasurer, or coroner),

and apply a nonpartisan election structure only to the former category?

Or, under Title 7—particularly MCA 7-3-413—does a change to partisan/nonpartisan elections within the Commission form necessarily apply **globally to all elected county offices**, without differentiation by role or function?

Our intent is to ensure that any recommendation:

- Remains clearly within the authority of a plan change (not a change in form or powers),

- Aligns with statutory suboptions available under the Commission form, and
- Is presented to voters in a legally defensible and transparent manner.

I appreciate your guidance on whether role-based differentiation is permissible, or whether uniform application is required.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support and technical assistance throughout this process.

Best regards,  
Teresea Olson

Question 1: Can you predict or estimate what it may cost to put an item on the County ballot for a change in the plan of the county government?

Question 2: Would we have funding in our budget to offset the cost of one ballot item?

Thank you,  
Teresea Olson

---

**From:** Ric Holden <[rich@midrivers.com](mailto:rich@midrivers.com)>  
**Sent:** Friday, January 9, 2026 7:56 AM  
**To:** Teresea Olson <[tolsonpac@hotmail.com](mailto:tolsonpac@hotmail.com)>  
**Subject:** Ballot measure cost

Teresa,  
Before our next meeting.  
Ask the Clerk & Recorder if there are any additional costs to consider if we place the "non-partisan" issue on the ballot for a vote.

Thanks,  
Ric

--  
Ric Holden  
101 Road 253  
Glendive, MT 59330  
406-486-5644

## Lori Jo Whalen

---

**From:** Teresea Olson <tolsonpac@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 20, 2026 6:49 PM  
**To:** Lori Jo Whalen  
**Subject:** Fw: Ballot measure cost

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**From:** Teresea Olson <tolsonpac@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 12, 2026 12:40 PM  
**To:** Shirley Kreiman <KreimanS@dawsonmt.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: Ballot measure cost

Thank you so much for following up!

Teresea

---

**From:** Shirley Kreiman <KreimanS@dawsonmt.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 12, 2026 12:20 PM  
**To:** Teresea Olson <tolsonpac@hotmail.com>  
**Subject:** RE: Ballot measure cost

Teresea-

1. I am going to attach a response I sent to the City Gov't Review committee in regards to the cost of an issue on the ballot. In determining what I would actually charge, to either govt review committee, first it would be determined by who placed it on the ballot, City or County or both. If either, or both, causes the ballot to have an additional page, I would take the total cost of printed ballots only charging the entity for the 2<sup>nd</sup> page. The total cost of ballots would be split if both entities placed an issue on the ballot. The county would pay all the costs for the 2<sup>nd</sup> page for precincts 5,6, & 7 (unless a portion of it is state or federal), plus a portion of precincts 1,2,3,4. Split 50/50 with city committee. When I looked at the costs, I only looked at the cost for the printing of ballots. In reality, the company we use to program tabulators and express votes, would charge more for programming as well. My spreadsheet on the election costs did not show a base rate and additional fee, just a total for programming. If I charged for that I would have to look at each ballot and how many candidates and issues or room on the ballot they took, so I did not dig that deep. We are all county taxpayers so I didn't try to get that nit picky about it.

I would look at the actual # of ballots returned in a precinct to determine the portion of time for counting board election Judges. 50/50 feeding 1 page vs 2 pages (with split between entities based on ballots returned in a precinct)

I print at least 1 ballot for each registered voter in an election and 10-15% additional ballots for re-issues, voids, additional registrants, etc.

- 2. Currently there is \$13,365.18 left in the FY26 budget for the local gov't review committee.

Looking at that estimate I would hope \$6,000 would cover the cost for the County if both had something on the Primary ballot. \$9,000 if only the County Review had it on the Primary, or ~~\$5,000~~ if only the County Review had it on the Primary Election and \$3,000 if it was the General Election. Costs generally go up every election, and I didn't put much inflation wiggle room in there.

vs General not shared

if shared if not shared

i-23 Primary

Shirley

13000 2000

Prior response to city regarding costs.

- 4. What are the approximate costs of administering the June Primary compared to the November General Election for two ballot measures?

The 2024 primary had 3 party ballots

2024 Total Election cost primary election was \$30,874

2024 Total Election cost for general election \$22,288

If the ballot issues do not push the size of the ballot on to an additional page, there wouldn't really be any additional costs. It would involve more time on my part for setting it up. If it throws any precinct (for precincts 1-4 which coincide with city wards) over on to an additional page there would be additional ballot printing costs and it takes the judges twice as long to feed an additional ballot through the tabulator. The same goes with if there is a countywide issue from the county government review. That issue would potentially be on all ballots. It is difficult to determine until I see what all is on the ballot, including state and federal candidates and issues, whether it would require an extra page.

In the Primary Election, the ballots cost \$7,407.20 6,000 ballots or 1.23 ea Again in a primary each voter received a ballot for each party so 3 times as many are printed

Precinct 1- 825 ballots Precinct 2 -700 Ballots Precinct 3 - 800 Ballots Precinct 4 - 625 Ballots = 2,950 Ballots 2,950\*1.23 = \$3,628 (city portion) (\$3,779.00 County portion)

Counting Board Judges cost \$836

In the General Election, the ballots cost \$2,647 6,600 printed or .40 ea

Precinct 1 975-Ballots Precinct 2-825 Ballots Precinct 3-875 Ballots Precinct 4-700 Ballots Total of 3,375 x .4=\$1,350 (city portion) \$1,297 (county portion)

Counting Board Judges \$1,108

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**From:** Teresea Olson <tolsonpac@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 12, 2026 9:38 AM  
**To:** Shirley Kreiman <KreimanS@dawsonmt.gov>  
**Subject:** Fw: Ballot measure cost

Good morning Shirley!

I am attaching a question from Ric Holden regarding our County Government Review.

EXHIBIT G

**CERTIFICATE ESTABLISHING THE OFFICIAL BALLOT  
FOR A PROPOSED CHANGE TO THE PLAN OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT  
DAWSON COUNTY, MONTANA**

Instructions to Voters:

Vote for one.

If the proposed change to the plan of government fails to receive a majority of the votes cast on the question, the existing plan of government remains in effect.

**OFFICIAL BALLOT**

**PROPOSED CHANGE TO THE PLAN OF GOVERNMENT**

**TYPE OF COUNTY ELECTIONS**

The Dawson County Study Commission proposes a change to the plan of government to modify the type of elections held for elected county officials.

Under the existing plan of government, Dawson County elections for county officials are conducted on a partisan basis. The proposed change would provide that elections for elected county officials be conducted on a nonpartisan basis.

Vote for one:

FOR adoption of nonpartisan elections for elected county officials of Dawson County, Montana, as proposed by the Dawson County Study Commission.

FOR the existing partisan elections for elected county officials of Dawson County, Montana.

We, the members of the Dawson County Local Government Review Commission, do hereby certify that this is the official ballot approved by the Commission for submission to the qualified electors of Dawson County, Montana.

Done at \_\_\_\_\_, Montana, this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2026.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

DAWSON COUNTY LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW COMMISSION

SEAL

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk and Recorder, Dawson County