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# Anaconda-Deer Lodge faces choice

*Editor's Note — The column below was signed by the following members of the Anaconda-Deer Lodge Study Commission: Tom Radonich, vice chair, and members Shirley Kelly, Michael B. Grayson and Ed McCarthy, Jr.)*

In 1994, the voters of Anaconda-Deer Lodge County decided to elect us (the A.D.L.C. Study Commission) to review our local government. After two years of study, over 50 public meetings, several hearings, and hundreds of hours of work, we have drafted five proposed changes to our City-County Charter. These proposals will be on the ballot on Nov. 5 for your consideration.

Charter Amendment No. 1 would require each Board to be created by an ordinance with specific requirements, such as defining power and duties, duration, frequency of meetings, etc. It would provide a standardized method of creating boards. All boards will know their purpose, responsibilities and duties. Currently there is no standardized method of creating boards, and many have no clear

lines of authority. This amendment will insure consistency and proper structure for each county board.

Charter Amendment No. 2 would allow the chief executive to veto ordinances and resolutions. The County Commission may override the veto by a vote of four commissioners. It would provide checks and balances between the commission and chief executive. Now that the chief executive is elected, veto power will promote better cooperation between the Executive and Legislative Branches. Currently, the chief executive has no veto power or vote on ordinances or resolutions.

Charter Amendment No. 3 would eliminate the Advisory Council. Commission vacancies would be filled by the candidate for that District who received the second highest vote total in the previous election. If that candidate is not eligible, the commission would take applications and appoint a qualified person. Currently, the Advisory Council has no real authority, and there is a lack of citizen interest, as

shown by seven vacant seats on the current council. This amendment would create a procedure for filling vacancies that would be more precise. Vacancies would be filled by someone who actually ran for office, instead of from a non-functioning, half-empty advisory council.

Charter Amendment No. 4 would have the county attorney elected on a non-partisan basis. Currently, the county attorney is elected on a party vote, and the outcome of the last three elections was determined in the June primary, when voter turnout is lower. All other county elected officials are already elected on a non-partisan basis. This proposal would give all citizens a chance to vote for county attorney, regardless of party affiliation, and would make the election procedure for county attorney the same as for other local offices.

Charter Amendment No. 5 would clearly define specific duties and limitations of the Chief of Law Enforcement. The chief would be prohibited from heading other

departments except as specified in the Charter. Now that the Chief of Law Enforcement is elected, we believe duties should be defined in the Charter as other county officials' duties are defined. The Chief of Law Enforcement position already has numerous responsibilities: police, jail, 911 center, animal control and search and rescue. We believe any additional duties over-extend the position and should be handled by other officials.

Finally, we urge you to read the ballot very carefully. State law requires the issues be phrased "for adoption of the amendment" or "for retention of the existing form of government." If you are in favor of the amendment, vote "for adoption of the amendment." If you are against our proposal, vote "for retention of existing form." Also note that these two choices will be rotated around on the ballots, so carefully read before you vote.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve the community. We have learned a great deal and enjoyed the experience.