

STEVENSVILLE STUDY COMMISSION

FINAL REPORT

AUGUST 1985

MEMBERS

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BRUCE NELSON  
JAMES TESLOW  
ANNE LANGE; EX-OFFICIO

TOWN COUNCIL

RICHARD SIPES; MAYOR  
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STEVENSVILLE GOVERNMENT STUDY  
COMMISSION

CONTENTS :

Summary . . . . .	1
Introduction . . . . .	2
Majority report. . . . .	4
Minority report. . . . .	5

STEVENSVILLE GOVERNMENT STUDY  
COMMISSION  
summary

The Stevensville government study commission voted on March 7, 1985 for no recommendation by a vote of two to one.

A vote of no recommendation means that the commission recommends retention of the existing form of government.

## STEVENSVILLE GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION

### Introduction

Stevensville, the oldest town in Montana, has experienced two sharp decades of growth as shown on the accompanying table. The decades between 1900 - 1910 and 1970 -1980 were the City's rapid growth period. The town more than doubled in size in the first growth decade and grew nearly 50% in the later decade. Virtually no growth occurred between 1910 and 1970 and little if any growth has occurred since 1980.

Stevensville was not unique in this growth pattern. The growth pattern mirrored that of Ravalli county. The percentage of the County's population has remained quite stable for over 80 years, remaining at about five percent. There is no reason to expect that future growth patterns of the Town will vary from past experience. Therefore, the form of government that is appropriate for today should serve the community well at least until the next required election on government review in 1994.

While it is generally understood that the agricultural base upon which the town was originated has dwindled, it is still a major economic force for the valley. Wood products and manufacturing make up the other base industries with other employment opportunities consisting of the service industries. In many respects the town of Stevensville is a bedroom community. Over 36% of the Town's residents do not work within Stevensville

It is ironic that Stevensville experienced rapid growth during the seventies when the gas crisis was at its height. One can only surmise that the quality of life presented by the small friendly community is what has attracted the new residents to the Town. It also presents quite an attraction to older residents due to its proximity to a larger urban area. This allows access to extensive services when needed while maintaining distant serenity when desired.

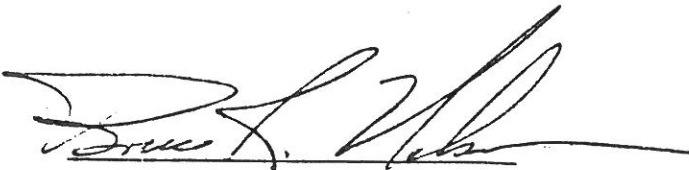


June 4, 1984

To: President, Town Council, Stevensville, Montana.

Subj: Majority Report of the Stevensville, Mt. Local Government Study Commission.

1. On March 7, 1985, the Stevensville, Mt. Local Government Study Commission voted two to one in favor of a "No Recommendation" in regard to any changes to the form of the existing local government. A "No Recommendation" means that the majority of the commission recommends retention of the existing form of government as it is.
2. The above recommendation was arrived at after interviewing elected town officials and appointed department heads and local citizens, and after comparing the existing local government form with those permitted by Montana State Law. It should be noted that the commission did not receive any input from anyone remotely suggesting a change to the current government form.
3. A minority report is to be submitted under separate cover by the study commission chairman, Mr. John Verberg.
4. Respectfully submitted.



Bruce R. Nelson



James R. Teslow

STEVENSVILLE GOVERNMENT STUDY  
COMMISSION MINORITY REPORT

March 28, 1985

On March 7, 1985 the study commission voted two to one to discontinue the study and to forward a recommendation of no change to the town council. The motion read "in view of the total lack of interest on the part of the public, nominal interest on the part of the City Fathers and Department heads, I move that we forward a no recommendation." I, John Verburg, voted against that motion and therefore writing this minority report.

During the primary election the citizens of Stevensville voted to establish a study commission for the sole purpose of studying the form of government. I, along with a majority of citizens voted for the study even though it meant additional taxes would have to be levied to fund the study. At that time, serving on the commission was not my intent nor even contemplated by me. The vote, once tallied, cannot be presumed to be irrational. Governments as well as individuals should occasionally reflect on their methods and goals while striving for improvement. This does not imply that something is wrong, but one cannot find other improved ways without reflection and analysis of what is and what is not possible. My vote for the study was simply for analysis. I did not anticipate participating in the process.

There are many competing worthwhile and entertaining activities to engage us. It is simply impossible for anyone to do them all. Therefore, we elect representatives to represent our interests. When we vote for a representative, in any forum, we vote for that individual to represent our interest to the best of their ability. We place our trust and deserve to be represented without having to watch that persons every move. Rarely do I attend a proceeding of any representative body which represents my collective interests. I trust they will carry out their duties dilligently.

In voting for the study commission, I did not intend nor would I have attended any of the study commissions hearings or sessions had I not been elected a study commission member. I would have expected my elected representative to represent me and my presence would not be necessary. This is most particularly true in a complicated issue such as forms of government. To participate meaningfully in that process would have required considerable time. Most, including myself prior to being elected, are not even aware of what is available, let alone the relative strengths and weaknesses of each.

Therefore, receiving no public participation was not a surprise. Participation would have made the job easier, but an easy job was not promised nor should it have been anticipated. But that does not relieve the commission from performing the function it was elected and appointed to perform. The study commission was charged with studying the existing and possible forms of government for the town. And until that study has been performed, regardless of the outcome, the commission has not fulfilled its obligation to the community. Below is the commission's originally adopted study schedule for the varied forms of government and subsets there to. As the list indicates, the range is extensive, requiring considerable investigation for adequate review.

Jan. 31	Develop short history and socio-economic data for final report.
Feb. 7	Develop short history and socio-economic data for final report.
Feb. 21	Take testimony from officials past and present.
Feb. 28	1st public hearing on general form, function and problems.
Mar. 7	Pro and con of partisan vs nonpartisan and district vs at large.
Mar. 14	Pro and con of concurrent vs overlapping terms and size of council.
Mar. 21	Pro and con of Commission Executive form.
Mar. 28	Pro and con of Commission Manager form.
Apr. 4	Pro and con of Commission form.
Apr. 11	Pro and con of Commission Chairman form.
Apr. 18	Pro and con of Town Meeting form.
Apr. 25	Pro and con of Charter form.
May 2	Adopt FY86 budget.
May 9	1st review of draft tentative report.



June 6 2nd review of draft tentative report.  
 June 13 Adoption of tentative report.  
 Aug. 8 Public hearing on tentative report.  
 Aug. 15 Discussion to modify tentative report.  
 Aug. 22 1st review of final draft.  
 Aug. 29 2nd review of final draft.  
 Sept. 5 Adoption of final report and modify agenda if  
 necessary.  
 Oct. 3 Report must be distributed by the 5th. Set ad  
 dates.  
 Oct. 24 Public informational hearing on final report.  
 Nov. 5 Tuesday election.

While the study commission did hold several organizational meetings, prior to those shown on the schedule, those meetings did not entail specific discussions or review of any of the available forms of government. Those previous meetings were just that, organizational. Then on March 7, before any of the alternatives had been thoroughly reviewed, the committee voted for no recommendation. In reality, as a review of the minutes and tape recording of the meetings will verify, no study was performed. The voters were not well served. They will have been lead to believe that a study found no better alternative form of government. But since no real study ensued, the recommendation is meaningless. By the same token, this minority report can not make any recommendation, to retain the existing form or to adopt any of the alternatives. Instead, a recommendation is made that the City Council consider performing a bona-fide study at the next opportunity.

Should such an opportunity to vote for a study again arise, I will vote for it. I sincerely hope that if such a measure passes, the citizens voting for the measure are not cheated. Should that study commission recommend no change after a thorough study, we will have been well served. Unfortunately, there will be some skepticism. Has the commission assured us that we have the best form of government for Stevensville, or simply refused to complete their job?