








Anaconda-Deer Lodge Study Commission Poll

Five hundred county residents were asked 28 questions about local government and services. Here are the results of selected questions.

▼ In general, do you feel the Anaconda-Deer Lodge government is doing a:

Good job		38%
Adequate job		48%
Poor job		11%
Don't know		3%

▼ Would you agree or disagree? "Our city-county generally spends our tax dollars wisely."

Agree		57%
Disagree		35%
No opinion		8%

Commission poll

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Anacondans happy with government

By BILL HEISEL JR.
of The Montana Standard

ANACONDA — Not even taxes — a predictable sore spot for the typical homeowner — raised the ire of local residents polled by volunteers in a Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Study Commission survey.

When asked whether their government is doing a good or adequate job, most people said yes, by a wide margin of about 86 percent.

"That is significantly higher than I've seen in a dozen or so surveys in communities around the state," said Ken Weaver, a veteran pollster with the Montana State University Local Government Center. He spoke to

the study commission at its meeting Thursday night.

To see how deep that satisfaction ran, the poll volunteers — 16 of Anaconda's election judges — also asked whether the government is spending taxes wisely. About 57 percent said yes, while 35 percent disagreed. The rest didn't have an answer.

"In this case we raised the bar by throwing in a big red flag word — taxes," Weaver said. "Only 35 percent disagreed, and we're talking about taxes here."

The poll, designed by the study commission and refined by the MSU center, checked the opinions of 356 people in October and November. The margin of error was 5 percent.

Study Commission Chairman

Jake Maciag said now that the commission knows what people like, it can begin digging into the finer points of the government charter established in 1976 to propose ballot issues for the November election. The study, paid for by local tax dollars, cost \$2,000.

Both Maciag and Weaver expressed surprise that more people didn't want to change the number of positions in the county that are elected. When asked whether the county treasurer and clerk and recorder positions — traditionally elected in most counties — should become elected rather than appointed posts, the numbers were fairly close,

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Anaconda . . .

Weaver said, indicating that people like the appointed positions.

"Generally, Montanans like to elect their local officials," Weaver said. "In Powell County, for example, I'd bet the numbers would be in the 75 percent range for election of treasurer and clerk and recorder."

In this poll, however, 58 percent wanted to elect the treasurer and 55 percent the clerk and recorder.

The vote for the status quo was more decisive against giving the chief executive a veto power, Weaver said.

County Chief Executive Cheryl Beatty said people ha-

ven't changed their minds since 1993, when the position was first changed to an elected one and the veto question was voted down by the public.

"They want to elect the position, but they don't want to give the person any power," Beatty said.

Other elected officials seemed to get positive approval ratings, although the people in those positions were not specifically named in the poll.

About 92 percent of those polled said the chief of law enforcement was doing a good or adequate job; and 88 percent approved of emergency services. Weaver said the numbers

are predictable in both cases, because they are highly visible and the average person feels pretty comfortable with the quality of protection the community receives.

Weaver attributed lower numbers for the county attorney, the planning department and advisory council to people's general unfamiliarity of what goes on in those departments.

The real shocker, as far as Weaver was concerned, was a whopping 89 percent approval for the treasurer's office.

In most such polls he has seen, Weaver said, the law enforcement chief generally gets the highest rating, while the

treasurer, who is in charge of vehicle registration and other unpleasant financial matters, typically fairs poorly.

The study commission will meet to discuss the results of the poll at 7:30 p.m. next Thursday at the county courthouse.

Copies of the poll results are available for public inspection at the public library, Metcalf Senior Citizens Center and at the chief executive's office in the courthouse.

The study commission was elected to review the government charter and has the authority to put proposed changes on the election ballot.