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First part nearly done

Government review readies citizen poll

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The Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Local Government Review Commission, elected in November 1994 to study the current form of government and decide whether any changes are recommended, is wrapping up its first phase of study and preparing to poll the community on its views of local government and county officials.

For the past several months, the commission has been meeting with county department heads and employees as well as volunteer boards and organizations to get an "insider's view" of how well the

county's current form of government is operating.

The next step, Review Commission Chairman Jake Maciag said, is to conduct a community survey. That survey will ask residents whether they favor the current government or would like to see changes made, and what those changes might be.

After two public hearings this spring, the study commission decided to suggest 10 changes in the county's charter form of government and its self-governing powers.

A charter is essentially a local constitution that spells out the struc-

ture, powers and duties of local government and is very flexible, as different ideas and structure from other forms of government may be used within the charter. The establishment of self-governing powers means that local government has any powers not specifically denied by federal and state constitutions and laws.

Changes being considered now concern primarily whether most department heads and county officials are elected or appointed and whether the county continues its commission-executive form of government, under which both the commission and the chief executive are elected and all other department heads are appointed.

Anaconda-Deer Lodge County differs from that form of government slightly because the chief of law enforcement also is elected rather than appointed.

Following the survey, the study commission will focus on one form of local government for further study and will probably conduct several public hearings on how that governmental form can best serve the community.

If changes are recommended in the study commission's final report, those recommendations will be placed before the voters on the November 1996 ballot.