

**September 30, 2015**

The Lincoln County Board of Commissioners met for a regular session on September 30, 2015, in the Commissioner's Office of the Lincoln County Courthouse. Present were Commissioner Mike Cole, Commissioner Greg Larson, Commissioner Mark Peck and Clerk & Recorder Robin Benson.

**1:30 PM Dan Clark/Lincoln County Study Commission:** Present are Guests Alvin Benitz, John Righter and Donna White; Reporter Alan Gerstenecker, Rita Windom, Steve Curtiss and Commissioner Peck was absent.

Dan Clark is here to visit with the Lincoln County Study Commission and the Board of County Commissioner to educate and answer questions. Currently, Lincoln County is an Elected County Officials Form of Government and is statutorily defined. Dan explained the history of the existing form of government and how it is different than alternative forms of government. Pursuant to 7-3-172 MCA, the purpose of the 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. Rita brought up discussion regarding having department supervisors being hired with required qualifications instead of elected officials for some county offices. Alvin questioned how the county would determine salaries for appointed positions if they were no longer elected. Those positions would then become county employees instead of elected positions. There were discussions about other counties and the different structures within their government. Some counties have a Chief Financial Officer and/or County Manager within their county structure, some counties have part time commissioners and combined departments were also discussed.

Dan explained to the group what types of recommendations can be made to the county commission without actually having to change the form of government or without having to place on a ballot. The group discussed ideas and thoughts about how to educate and get information to the public so they can make informed decisions when reading ballot language. Dan said the ballot language is critical for the electors to clearly understand the intent. Ballot language is outlined in 7-3-151 MCA.

It was discussed how the Study Commission would acknowledge to the public if there is a dissenting opinion within the study commission. Dissenting opinions cannot be placed on a ballot, but can be discussed in the media, public hearings and meetings. Also, dissention can be a part of the tentative report or final report to the county from the study commission. A tentative report will come out first followed by public hearings before the adoption of a final report.

There was a discussion about the amount of money that is outsourced in legal services for county business. It is Rita's opinion that legal representation to the Commission is an area for improvement. Commissioner Cole said those discussions are taking place.