

TOWN OF WEST YELLOWSTONE GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION

FINAL REPORT

July 1996

Presented to Town Council September 19, 1996

To the Citizens of West Yellowstone:

The Town of West Yellowstone Study Commission elected by the voters in November 1994, or thereafter appointed present this final report to the citizens of this town.

The purpose of the study commission, as defined in state law, is "to study the existing form and powers of our town government and procedures for delivery of local government services and compare them with other forms available under the laws of the state." If some change is deemed necessary, the study commission may submit such proposed change to the electors.

In conduct of their review the study commission has sought advice and information from a number of people in the town. Opinions and recommendations were solicited from local government officials, employees, community organizations and citizens. All meetings of the local study commission were open to the public. A public hearing was held to determine citizen opinion.

As a result of discussions held with the people and groups mentioned the town of West Yellowstone Study Commission has concluded that there is a general consensus that the existing Charter form of government with self-governing powers has served this town well since its amendment passed November 1994, and will continue to do so in the future. We therefore recommend no change in this form of government.

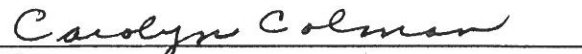
Respectfully submitted,



Chair



Vice Chair



Secretary

West Yellowstone Local Study Commissioners

Supplementary Report to the Town of West Yellowstone
From: Local Government Study Commission
1996

The West Yellowstone Local Government Study Commission spent eighteen months studying the local government. During that time, town employees and local citizens were surveyed. The form of government was studied and compared with others allowed by Montana statute. The delivery of services was examined. A public hearing was advertised and conducted. Minutes of the hearing and the citizen's and employee's questionnaire responses are attached.

The Local Government Study Commission found the lack of communication to be one of the main concerns. The survey responses indicate good accessibility to the elected officials, however, a lack of response to concerns seem to be the prevailing opinion.

Recommendations:

- publish notice of Council meeting agenda in the newspaper and announce on the radio
- report actions taken to radio and newspaper after every meeting
 1. we suggest that the local newspaper and radio station be urged to attend and report on the Council meetings
 2. consider live cable TV coverage and/or radio station coverage (may be able to work in with school-to-work program)
 3. have taped playback at alternative times in the week
- prepare minutes of the Council meeting and have available to the public within three working days after Council meeting
- develop three and five year projections on Capital Improvements and Town Council Goals and publicize for local citizens to read, understand and respond to
- make available current information (i.e. bid specifications, meeting notices, etc.) at the administration office for the public
- recommend the Mayor specifically assume the ceremonial functions representing the town government with the people

The survey and public hearing addressed the need for formal training. Due to the growing complexity of Local Government, all elected officials should feel responsible to attend the Local Government Center training held in Bozeman on an annual basis. This training is held during the slack spring season and the town government pays for the travel, housing, meals and registration expenses.

All departments need formal training in their areas of responsibility. Personnel management seems to need review, evidenced by the recent formation of an employees union and the frequent turnover of employees in one town department.

Considerable feeling in the community was expressed for direct election of a Mayor. This would be a good consideration for a ballot item in the immediate future.

The Local Government Center at MSU could hold an Economic study on efficiency and distribution of duties, with consideration being given to our seasonal needs. Keep in mind that the Center is the organization that helped us understand the need for our Resort Tax and assisted us in accomplishing that benefit for the town.

Due to the concerns about time and work load of the Council, we recommend that the Local Government Center at MSU review ways of changing meeting agenda procedures so the time allocation at Council meetings

will not require micro management at that level. This would encourage more preliminary work be done at the **department** level with **specific well thought out recommendations** to be acted upon by Council.

We have attached a copy of the resort tax act which will help us all remember the reason for the tax.

We ask that these recommendations be given your study and review. We will ask for agenda time in 1997 to see how the report stands.

This concludes our Supplementary Report to the Town Council.

A Final report will follow.

Respectfully submitted,

Chair

Vice Chair

Secretary

West Yellowstone Local Government Study Commissioners
1996

MONTANA LAW 7-6-4466

WHEREAS, tourist income, tending to be spent for services and consumables originating in communities other than the resort community, is not translated into taxable real property: and

WHEREAS, the resort community must provide services not only for tourists but for its own residents, and these services are not commensurate with the taxable value of the resort community as compared with steady income municipalities of similar populations.

THEREFORE, it is the intent of this act to rectify this inequity by providing for a resort tax that may be locally enacted which would tax tourists to reimburse the resort community for the services provided to tourists