

# Voters will decide on government change in November vote

174 By Paul Stewart

The City Study Commission has decided that Dillon residents will decide through the ballot box whether to move to a Charter form of government. Commission member Keith Reeder explained that the group wanted to give the people of Dillon the final say in their form of government.

In reviewing current city government the study commission examined a lot of survey input, and visited with aldermen, city department heads and employees, said Reeder. "The consensus in the community seems to be that some areas could be improved on."

He said that in order to do so, the commission felt that a charter form of government with self-governing powers was the most appropriate way to make the changes.

A charter gives the city self-governing status, as opposed to the current system of operating under general powers through state statute. Reeder has defined this by saying that under general powers a city can do only what the state says it can do within the confines of state law. Self-governing status allow cities to do what they want as long as it is not against a specific state statute.

Reeder has also previously explained that the charter would provide a new constitution which would regulate the powers of officials within the government framework, ameliorating any perceived imbalances between the legislative and executive branches.

Although a final draft of the commission's recommendations for the charter has not yet been arrived at, Reeder has hinted at a

number of changes. A stronger council with approval of appointments and firings may be recommended, as might the institution of non-partisan elections.

Reeder explained that the commission has contracted with the Local Government Center in Bozeman to assist with translating the various ideas and inputs that have been received, into legal charter form. A draft charter was presented to members of the city council in April, and they have had their chance to request changes and amendments. A second draft has been produced, but not finalized by the commission. At a recent meeting with Ken Weaver who heads up the Local Government Center, the matter of whether the City Attorney should be elected or appointed, was discussed. According to Reeder the commission felt after consultation, that under the charter, the council would be a stronger entity and would be better placed to approve or deny such appointments. It was also felt that an electoral selection process might preclude better qualified, but politically less skilled candidates.

Additional public hearings will be held and further input is strongly invited, either in writing or in person, by all three of the study commission members. Reeder also stressed that any groups or organizations that wish the commission to address them on the matter can do so by arrangement. Study Commission members are: Keith Reeder, Cindy Eccleston, and Marty Malesich.

The next meeting of the commission will take place on June 13.