

CASCADE COUNTY STUDY COMMISSION

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

The undersigned members of the Cascade County Study Commission submit this Supplementary Report to all appropriate governing bodies pursuant to Montana Code Annotated, which reads as follows:

"7-3-190. Supplementary reports. A study commission may prepare separate reports in addition to its final report. These reports may recommend consolidation of services and functions and indicate potential areas for intergovernmental local agreements. Such reports shall be submitted to all appropriate governing bodies for reaction within 1 year."

The Cascade County Study Commission formally presents the following recommendations for study, consideration and action by all appropriate governing bodies:

LAW ENFORCEMENT. The Cascade County Study Commission recommends that the governing bodies of all affected governments study, consider and take appropriate action on the feasibility of cooperation and/or unification of law enforcement facilities and functions within Cascade County and the several incorporated cities in the County, namely Belt, Cascade, Great Falls, and Neihart.

The Study Commission believes that greater efficiency and effectiveness can be reached if the various local governments reach cooperative interlocal agreements to share certain facilities and unify certain functions.

Specific areas for consideration include:

a unified central dispatching system for all emergency services including law enforcement, fire and ambulance, with the inclusion of an emergency 911 telephone number and system;

shared booking and holding facilities for area law enforcement agencies;

a shared or unified record-keeping system pertaining to arrests and incidents, etc;

shared or unified law enforcement special departments such as detectives, labs and others.

Comment: The Study Commission met separately with Sheriff Glenn Osborne and former Chief of Police Jack Anderson. As a result of the interviews, the Study Commission members recognize and respect these officials' reluctance to engage in activities which might lead to a consolidation of the two departments and services.

Comments (cont.)

However, the Study Commission does see the need for further cooperation between the departments, as well as unification of certain functions and services.

It seems sensible that emergency services throughout the County should be available to residents by telephoning a single number such as 911. It seems likewise sensible that a single dispatching system should handle all emergency calls. The members of the City of Great Falls Study Commission have also issued a supplementary report urging "a strong continued effort towards the consolidated emergency dispatch center". The County Study Commission likewise urges the County and the City to get together on this issue.

The Study Commission realizes that neither the County nor the City of Great Falls Jails are large enough to accommodate both County and City needs. However, separate booking facilities alone are a needless duplication of efforts. Often, individuals are arrested by the Great Falls Police, booked in the City Jail, and then transferred a day or two later to the County Jail. This means separate fingerprints, photographs, searches, and of course, paperwork. With both facilities aging, new holding facilities may soon be required. The Study Commission encourages the County to pursue a consolidated jail.

Both the County and the City keep numerous records on arrests and incidents. They both refer to files on motor vehicle registrations when state or national information computers cannot be used. In many cases, the information retained by these departments is identical. Record storage and retrieval should be included in the list of shared facilities and functions.

Finally, the Study Commission questions the need for separate detective and crime lab divisions in a county the size of ours. Granted, the various law enforcement agencies often have different jurisdictions, but crime knows no jurisdictions. Law enforcement agencies should share the experience and facilities necessary to solve crimes.

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We, the Study Commissioners of Cascade County, do hereby certify that this is an official supplementary report approved by the Study Commission of Cascade County.


In testimony whereof, we set our hands.

Done at Cascade County this third day of November, 1986.

ATTEST:

Clerk & Recorder
of Cascade County

Sandra K. Watts



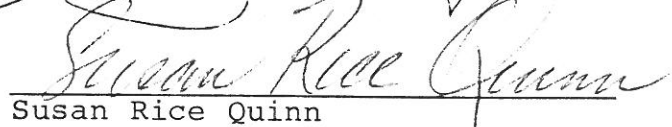
R.K. Haffner



Joan Bennett



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The Cascade County Study Commission formally presents the following recommendations for study, consideration and action by all appropriate governing bodies:

ROAD & STREET DEPARTMENTS. The Cascade County Study Commission recommends that the governing bodies of all affected governments study, consider and take appropriate action on the feasibility of cooperation and/or unification of road, street, highway and public works departments within Cascade County, the several incorporated cities in the County (Belt, Cascade, Great Falls, and Neihart), the State of Montana, and if possible, the government of the United States.

The Study Commission believes that public works-type services can be provided more effectively and efficiently if various governments agree to share facilities, functions and equipment.

Specific areas for consideration include:

shared or unified maintenance shop facilities, or maintenance services of County equipment contracted to the City of Great Falls;

joint purchasing of parts for equipment maintenance, as well as continued efforts toward joint purchasing of road materials, with special emphasis on establishing an inventory system;

continued efforts toward contracting road/street maintenance between governmental jurisdictions as beneficial and cost-effective, including the several incorporated cities in the County, the State of Montana, and if possible, agencies of the United States;

Specific areas (cont.)

shared use of equipment owned by Cascade County, the several incorporated cities in the County, the State of Montana, and if possible, agencies of the United States;

shared or unified sign shop facilities of Cascade County, the City of Great Falls and other incorporated cities, the State of Montana, and if possible, agencies of the United States;

and, any other public works-type facilities and functions which could be contracted, shared or unified.

Comments: The Study Commission toured the maintenance shop facilities of both Cascade County and the City of Great Falls. We also discussed street maintenance problems with officials in Belt and Cascade.

The Study Commission was impressed with the appearance of the City of Great Falls shops. It would appear that the efficiency of the City's operation is aided by a good record-keeping system which controls the inventory and logs maintenance records. The cost of maintaining each vehicle and piece of equipment is recorded.

By contrast, the County Shops at the time of our visit were dirty and disorganized. We were told that there were no inventory controls and that vehicle and equipment maintenance records were minimal.

Street maintenance in both Belt and Cascade have suffered due to aging equipment or a lack of necessary equipment.

In many cases, Cascade County, the City of Great Falls, the State of Montana, and some United States agencies own and use similar or identical equipment. Depending upon the amount of use, this may create unnecessary duplications. Also, some jurisdictions lack specific equipment which they may need only occasionally. Shared use of such equipment may be beneficial.

Cascade County, the City of Great Falls, and the State of Montana all operate separate sign shops. A shared or unified facility might enhance efficiency for all jurisdictions concerned. The same might be possible for other facilities.

The Study Commission feels that public works and vehicle maintenance is an area where the various governmental entities can and should work together.

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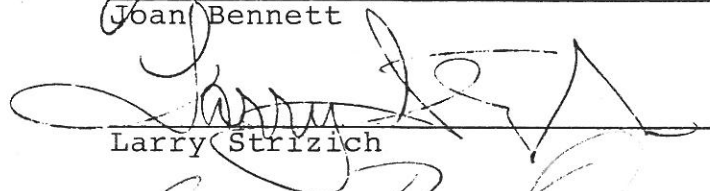
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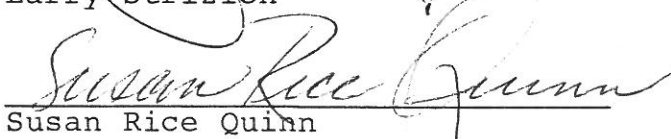
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The Cascade County Study Commission formally presents the following recommendations for study consideration and action by all appropriate governing bodies:

PURCHASING POLICY & SYSTEM / INVENTORY CONTROL. The Cascade County Study Commission recommends that the governing bodies of all affected governments study, consider and take appropriate action on the feasibility of cooperation in establishing a joint purchasing system for local governmental entities, divisions and agencies within Cascade County, the various school districts within the County, and the several incorporated cities in the County, (Belt, Cascade, Great Falls, and Neihart.

The Study Commission further recommends that the Board of County Commissioners of Cascade County study, consider and take appropriate action on the feasibility of establishing a purchasing policy for Cascade County accompanied by a system of implementation.

And, the Study Commission recommends that the Board of County Commissioners study, consider and take appropriate action on the feasibility of establishing an inventory control system for Cascade County in conjunction with a purchasing system.

Comments: The Study Commission recognizes that some joint purchasing is currently taking place between Cascade County, the City of Great Falls, and some other governmental entities. However, we feel the idea of joint purchasing can be expanded upon. Joint purchasing of quantity goods and materials may reduce costs. It could also eliminate the possibility of stockpiles in some governmental entities and shortages in others.

Purchasing Policy & System / Inventory Control
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Comments (cont.)

When touring offices and facilities of the City of Great Falls, the Study Commission was impressed by their purchase-requisition system. This system seemed to assure that purchases of more than a few hundred dollars were approved in advance of the actual transaction and greater control of purchases and inventory occurred. This also seemed to assure that payments to vendors were completed in a shorter period of time. A similar system in Cascade County should be considered.

Finally, an inventory control system should be a part of any overall purchasing system. This would prevent overstocking of goods and materials, as well as assuring that the necessary items are on hand when needed.

Implementation of any or all of these recommendations should contribute to greater efficiency and savings for the governmental entities involved.

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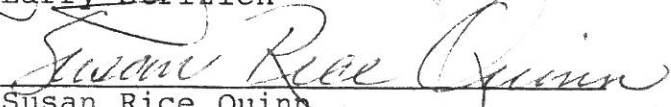
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The Cascade County Study Commission formally presents the following recommendations for study, consideration and action by the governing body of Cascade County:

CENTRAL FINANCE OFFICE. The Cascade County Study Commission recommends that the Board of County Commissioners of Cascade County study, consider and take appropriate action on the feasibility of establishing a central finance office for the government of Cascade County.

Specific areas for consideration include:

placement of all County bookkeeping and related record-keeping into one central office;

simplifying the handling and review process for claims against the County.

Comments: The Study Commission realizes that State Statutes assign certain tasks and functions to specific departments in county governments. The current system was apparently designed to assure adequate checks and balances with regard to county finances. However, the number of departments handling claims and doing bookkeeping seems too high.

The Study Commission believes that inter-departmental cooperation could serve to streamline this complicated financial process. Modern accounting techniques and equipment should be a adequate safeguard for county finances. Pre-approved purchase requisitions, as recommended in an attached supplementary report, would also serve to improve this system.

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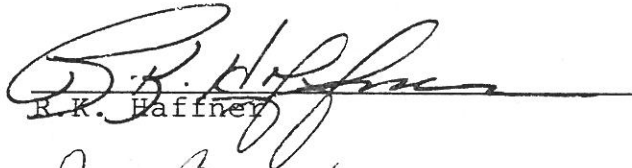
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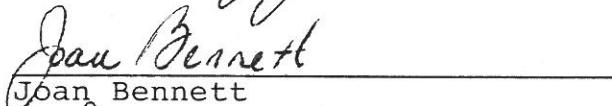
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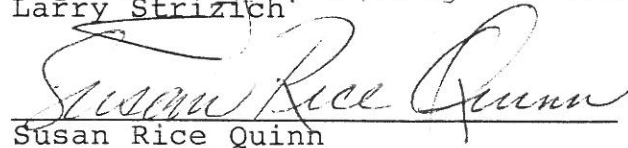
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The Cascade County Study Commission formally presents the following recommendations for study, consideration and action by all appropriate governing bodies:

PROPERTY APPRAISAL REFORM. The Cascade County Study Commission recommends that the governing bodies of all affected governments study, consider and take appropriate action on the feasibility of creating reforms in the system of reporting property to be appraised for tax purposes, and reforms in the administration of local Appraisal Offices.

Specific areas for consideration include:

a reporting form, to be completed by residential property owners, which would describe the essential aspects of their residential property. Property values could be assigned by the Appraisal Office based upon information supplied by property owners;

assignment of appraisal staff to appraise commercial and agricultural properties only, except in cases of questionable reporting by residential property owners;

rotation of Appraisal Office Supervisors to other State Appraisal Offices, at least every ten years.

Comments: The Study Commission makes the recommendation for property owner reporting based upon a suggestion by Cascade County Commissioner Pat Ryan.

Residential property appraisal reform could be beneficial to all involved. Self-reporting forms could be of a simple design. Yet, property owners could be held responsible for providing accurate descriptions of their property with the aid of multiple choices on the reporting form. Property owners would know what information was being used to value their property, and the Department of Revenue could make better use of their appraisal staff. Based upon more accurate descriptions and appraisals, property owners and government agencies alike could be assured of more equitable tax figures.

Property Appraisal Reform
Supplementary Report - page 2 -

The Study Commission also heard suggestions to rotate the heads of local Appraisal Offices on a regular basis and we agree with the reasoning we heard. Greater equity could be achieved through such a rotation. A new supervisor would probably uncover any pre-existing problems and bring fresh ideas and solutions into the office.

These suggested reforms could not assure absolute equity, but they could go a long way toward simplifying and explaining the property tax system.

The Study Commission realizes that the Board of County Commissioners of Cascade County has minimal power to implement such improvements, but they could lobby members of the State Legislature in an effort to establish such reforms.

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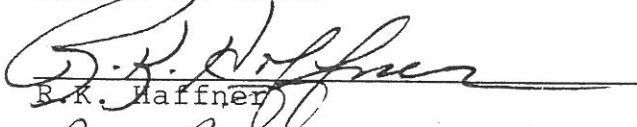
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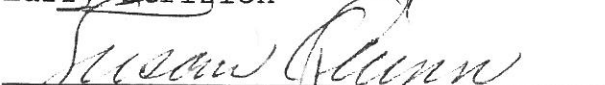
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