



Local Government Review Board 3-5-26  
Minutes  
March 05, 2026 at 5:30 PM

**1. Call to Order**

Chair Sergeant called the Local Government Review Board meeting to order at 5:30pm.

Board Present: Sergeant, Mayer, Whiteman

Others Present: Mayor Norby, Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin, Kali Buxbaum, Gary Schoepp, Karen Schoepp, Duane Mitchell, Jamie Larson, Madison Miller and Tess Hurley.

**2. New Business**

a. January 8th, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Motion was made to approve.

Motion made by Whiteman, Seconded by Mayer.

Voting Yea: Sergeant, Whiteman, Mayer

b. Public Hearing on the Change of Form of Government-Mayor/Council vs City Manager/Council

Mrs. Sergeant read the rules and procedures for the public hearing, stating the proponents for tonight's public hearing will be those in favor of changing the form of government and opponents will be those wishing to speak against changing the form of government, including those who wish to retain the current form but would like to speak for or against the City Administrator recommendation. Mrs. Sergeant opened the public hearing at 5:31pm and Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin gave her staff report on the forms of government and the option for the recommendation.

Mrs. Sergeant called for any proponents, three times, with none coming forward to testify.

Mrs. Sergeant called for any opponents, three times, with the following coming forward to testify.

The City of Sidney is an equal opportunity provider.

Kali Buxbaum stated she is opposed to the change of form of government but would like to see the city pursue the City Administrator under the Mayor. She stated she feels this will increase the city's capacity to meet concerns heard recently with currently especially with the Downtown Master Plan, Growth Policy and Local Government Review. She stated she feels we could build better programming to meet the public's needs, expand capacity with grant management and the structure within the city would be better suited with this change.

Duane Mitchell stated he is opposed to the change of form of government, he feels if it is not broke, you don't fix it. He stated we have had a Mayor for forever and we are not that big. He stated money is tight and everyone is upset about the taxes, how would you go about paying for an Administrator that would cost more than the Mayor position costs. He thanked the LGRB for sitting on the board and reiterated he feels it should be left alone.

Gary Schoepp stated he and his wife have been to all of the LGRB meetings and he agrees with Mr. Mitchell, it is not broke so don't fix it and leave it like it is.

With no further testimony Mrs. Sargent closed the public hearing at 5:38pm and the LGRB had no further questions at this time.

c. Survey #1 Results

Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin reviewed the survey results. Mr. Mayer asked for clarification on what the weighted scores of survey question on how the City is doing means and Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin stated the numbers for the weighted average fall between Slightly Effective and Moderately Effective on a scale of 1-Not Effective at all, 2-Slightly Effective, 3-Moderately Effective, 4-Very Effective and 5-Extremely Effective. Mr. Mayer also asked for Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin to clarify her thoughts on the survey results for question 8 on ranking what is more important and the results for the self-government powers. Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin stated the way it is ranked the highest for most important but because of the way it is worded it could have been deceptive. She stated posing the question in Richland County about giving more local control will always lean towards yes, but there is a lot more intricacies in becoming self-governing powers which is why she is hoping the training in April will be beneficial for the public and the board on this topic.

**3. Old Business**

a. Recommendation on Change of Form of Government

Motion was made to keep the Mayor-Council form of government.

Motion made by Mayer, Seconded by Whiteman.

In discussion Mr. Mayer stated he agrees and can understand the concept if its not broke, don't fix it, but he also feels we should always strive to get better and how, rather than just stay even keel like Mrs. Buxbaum stated about the Administrator and he feels that is certainly one way the Council could look into being better. He stated the survey results of less than moderate effective show the public that responded feel we could have a more effective government, but to switch to switch does not feel right. He further stated he did not have a lot of members of public reach out to him on this topic.

Mr. Whiteman stated he agrees with Mr. Mayer and that a lot of the comments and survey results show room for improvement and the administrator position should be explored.

Voting Yea: Sergent, Whiteman, Mayer

Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin asked for clarification on if a formal recommendation to the City Council for looking into the administrator position would be being made and Mr. Mayer asked if that should be at the end of the review in one or today and Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin stated it could be handled either way. Mr. Whiteman stated he feels leaving it open for more discussion might be best and Mr. Mayer stated considering it was not an option not everyone new of and the information getting into the public, he is of the opinion to wait until the end and do one final recommendation to the Council.

b. Discussion on Council Composition:

Council size / membership — how many council members there are (currently 6)

Representation structure — how those members are elected (by ward, at-large, or hybrid)

Ward apportionment — how many members represent each ward (currently 2 represent 3 wards)

Electoral system — e.g., ward-based, at-large, or mixed at-large/ward

Elected at Large — e.g., ward-based representation, at-large voting

Rotation of Election -- e.g., every 2 years 3 council members are elected, 1 from each ward (current)

Mrs. Sergent stated staff has provided a staff report with further information on the Council composition but there are some items we cannot change without changing to self-governing powers, such as changing from non-partisan, creating term limits or changing from the 4-year term lengths.

Mr. Mayer stated one area we can look into changing would be the representation structure and asked how that change would be and Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin stated via ballot change. Mr. Mayer asked if the 6 Council members, 3 wards, 2 representing each

ward is representative of other municipalities for our size and Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin stated yes and for populations up to 15,000. Mr. Whiteman asked how any changes would affect current council members and Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin stated any changes made in the review process cannot affect current terms, so if it was switched to all at large, for example, as their terms end they would have to run again as at large instead of by ward. She further stated that Ms. Cross provided a list of Montana municipalities that have at large representation and their population size and form of government. She stated generally when the Council is at large, it is a small community and Mr. Mayer stated White Fish is interesting being at large with only 3 Council members and Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin stated they are self-governing chartered so they are a unique situation.

Mr. Mayer stated another option would be to have the Council represent wards but be elected at large and Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin stated yes but this is mostly common in County Governments and not in municipalities but she has not found anything that prohibits posing the question to the constituents to change to that form. Mr. Mayer asked for the survey results again for going to at large and Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin stated 58% were in favor, 42% not. Mr. Mayer asked if they are looking for a formal recommendation tonight and Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin stated no, she is looking for more detail on what direction they would like to go to gather more information, such as another survey or call for a public hearing on one or more of the specific topics.

Mr. Mayer stated he feels the 3 wards feels right for Sidney and same for the 6 council members, but have kicked around the hybrid of having 1 council member represent each of the 3 wards and 3 at large, allowing for direct representation for each ward but allowing for more people to run, but in theory that could result in 4 council members being in one ward. Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin stated she has found no information that shows that a Montana municipality currently has this system and she feels getting more information on this at their training with the Local Government Services is a good idea, as she does not know the why no one is. Mr. Whiteman stated he does agree with there being benefits of having at large representation and Mr. Mayer stated also to have ward representative. Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin stated the only way she has seen the hybrid model in practice is to have 8 council members, 6 by ward and 2 at large, but that does not necessarily mean it is the only way it can be done, just is the only way currently she could find. Mr. Mayer stated when looking back most races are uncontested or from an appointment so adding 2 Council members might not be feasible.

Mr. Mitchell stated we have a representative form of government and although as an elected official in a small community you are pulled everywhere, you are still tasked with representing your ward and assisting them with issues. He stated he is not necessarily comfortable that 4 of the Council members, or a majority, could be from one area and have an agenda. Mr. Mayer stated that is a possibility but he was trying to find a hybrid model to service all needs without increasing the Council size, as more is not always better. Mr. Mitchell asked what happens when there is a tie with an even number and

Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin stated the Mayor is the tie breaker and Mayor Norby stated he has never had to break a tie.

Mr. Mayer stated he feels getting more information from the training is needed to continue the conversation and the LGRB agreed. Chair Sergeant stated the training will be April 9th at 5:30pm at City Hall and the public is welcome to attend and gain knowledge along with them.

**4. Questions/ Comments from Public**

None.

**5. Questions/ Comments from Board**

None.

**6. Adjournment**

Next meetings:

Training Meeting: April 9th, 2026 at 5:30pm

Regular Meeting: May 7th, 2026 at 5:30pm

Adjourned at 6:00pm.