



Local Government Review Board 10-9-25

Agenda

October 09, 2025 at 5:30 PM

1. Call to Order
2. New Business
 - [a.](#) July 10, 2025 Minutes
3. Old Business
 - [a.](#) Forms of Government Discussion: Mayor/Council versus City Manager/Council
 - [b.](#) Engaging the Public
4. Questions/ Comments from Public
5. Questions/ Comments from Board
6. Adjournment



Local Government Review Board 7-10-25

Minutes

July 10, 2025 at 5:30 PM

1. Call to Order

Board Present: Sergent and Mayer (via zoom)

Others Present: Mayor Norby, Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin, Dennis Moore, Jamie Larson, Lee Harris, Meagan Dotson, Harleigh Manley

2. New Business

a. April 10, 2025 Minutes

Motion was made to approve.

Motion made by Mayer, Seconded by Sergent.

Voting Yea: Sergent, Mayer

b. Public Hearing: Mayor vs Manager Format

Chair Sergent called on Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin to review the differences between the two positions and the pros and cons of the two and then called on any public input on the forms of government.

Key points discussed at the meeting included the City Manager format would be similar to that of the school districts with the superintendents, the manager's contract could address issues like where they live, mayors wages could offset the cost of the managers wages, the City is a \$15 million dollar business in need of a trained CEO to manage it, not just someone who chose to be elected because they were mad about something.

Also discussed at the meeting was how to get more people involved in the process such as the Chamber emails, around town/events for chamber and newspapers, and radio. Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin stated she would also like to pitch to the Sunrise Ambassadors teaming up for their December get together, like they did for the growth policy.

3. Old Business

a. Forms of Government Discussion

Discussed under public hearing.

4. Questions/ Comments from Public

Nothing.

5. Questions/ Comments from Board

Mr. Mayer asked Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin for a income vs expense breakdown by department for the last 5-10 years to give perspective to the committee on growth and Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin stated she would provide it.

6. Adjournment

Next meeting October 9th, 2025 at 5:30pm

Adjourned at 6:29pm.

Comparison of Forms of Government for Sidney, Montana

Background

Every ten years, Montana cities and towns must place a local government review question on the ballot, giving voters the opportunity to review and, if desired, change their form of government. Currently, Sidney uses a Council–Manager system. Another option often considered is the Mayor–Council system.

Council–Manager Form (Current System)

Pros:

- Professional management by trained administrator.
- Reduces day-to-day politics in operations.
- Clear division: council = policy, manager = administration.
- Typically more consistent budgeting and planning.

Cons:

- Manager is appointed, not directly elected by citizens.
- Can reduce visibility/accountability to the public.
- Council/Manager disagreements can create tension.
- May feel 'less democratic' to some residents.

Mayor–Council Form

Pros:

- Direct citizen accountability: mayor answers to voters.
- Strong political leadership and visibility.
- Better suited for cities that want a more 'hands-on' elected executive.
- Clearer line of responsibility to the public.

Cons:

- Risks of politicizing city operations and staffing.
- Leadership can change abruptly with elections.
- Can reduce professional/technical oversight if mayor lacks management experience.
- Potential for conflict between mayor and council.

Key Considerations for Sidney

Sidney's size and complexity may benefit from professional management, but residents may also value direct accountability. Council–Manager spreads power across the council and manager, while Mayor–Council concentrates executive power in one elected official.

Comparison Table

Feature	Council–Manager (Current)	Mayor–Council
Executive Leader	Appointed City Manager (professional)	Elected Mayor (political)
Accountability	To City Council	Directly to Voters
Professional Expertise	High (trained administrator)	Varies (depends on election)
Stability	High, less political turnover	Can change with elections
Citizen Input	Indirect (via council)	Direct (via mayor elections)
Risk of Politicization	Lower	Higher

City of Sidney – Local Government Review Board Survey

1. Awareness of the Review Process

Context: Every ten years, Montana cities may conduct a Local Government Review to decide if changes should be made to their form or powers of government.

Before this survey, were you aware that Sidney voters approved a Local Government Review to examine how our city government is structured?

Answer: Yes or no

2. Understanding of the Current Government Form

Context: Sidney currently operates under a Mayor–Council form of government. The Mayor is the chief executive, and the City Council serves as the legislative body.

How well do you understand the roles and powers of the Mayor and City Council under Sidney's current government structure?

Answer: Sliding Scale

3. Views on the Current Form of Government

Context: The Mayor–Council system is one of several options allowed under Montana law. Other cities use a Council–Manager form, where a professional city manager handles daily operations under Council oversight.

Do you believe Sidney's current Mayor–Council form of government best fits the city's size, needs, and future direction?

Answer: Yes or no

4. City Government Structure

Context: The Local Government Review may examine whether Sidney's current form (Mayor-Council system) best serves the community, or whether changes might be beneficial.

How familiar are you with Sidney's current form of government and how decisions are made?

Answer: Sliding Scale

City of Sidney – Local Government Review Board Survey

5. Balance of Power and Oversight

Context: In some city structures, power is more centralized in the mayor's office; in others, it's shared or delegated to an appointed manager.

How should the balance of power between elected officials (Mayor and Council) and appointed staff (City Administrator/Manager) be structured?

Answer: Comment Box

6. Representation and Decision-Making

Context: City Councils can be elected by wards (geographic areas) or at large (citywide). Representation methods affect accountability and diversity of viewpoints. Currently the City of Sidney has 3 wards, with two Councilmembers representing each ward.

How do you feel City Council members should be elected?

Answer: Ward or At Large

7. Local Powers and Autonomy

Context: Cities in Montana can adopt self-government powers under a charter, which allows more local control over policies, taxation, and regulations (within state limits).

Would you support Sidney adopting a self-government charter to give the community more local decision-making authority?

Answer: Yes or No

8. Checks and Balances

Context: The Review Board is examining whether the current structure provides appropriate checks and balances between branches of local government.

Do you think Sidney's current system provides adequate oversight between the Mayor, City Council, and administration?

Answer: Yes or No

City of Sidney – Local Government Review Board Survey

9. Citizen Participation in Government Structure

Context: Any future change in Sidney's form or powers of government would require voter approval. The Review Board wants to know how residents prefer to be involved in that process.

How would you prefer to receive information and provide input if changes to Sidney's form of government are proposed?

Answer: Newspaper, Social Media, City Website, Other:_____

10. Vision for Sidney's Governance

Context: This Review is about shaping how Sidney's government will operate for the next generation.

In one or two sentences, how would you describe your ideal vision for how Sidney's local government should be structured and operate in the future?

Answer: Comment Box