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County government changes on ballot

By JOE PAISLEY
of The Montana Standard

The county's residents will get a chance to change how some elected positions are filled, when they vote Tuesday on changes in government recommended by the Gallatin County Study Commission.

They will vote first on whether to adopt the commission form recommended by the study commission, then on these

three "sub-options":

■ Whether commission members will be elected by districts, or at large but nominated from districts in which the candidates live.

■ Whether the county surveyor will be appointed by the county commission or be elected.

■ Whether the county coroner will be appointed by the commission or be elected.

If the first question is rejected by a majority of voters, the sub-options also fail. The surveyor and coroner now are elected. Study commission Chairman Sam Hofman said that has proved a problem because

state law does not require them to be qualified for the posts.

"Sometimes we have people elected who have no idea what they are doing," Hofman said. "That has forced the county to hire out to handle duties and that makes no sense."

Commissioners now are elected by district. Even if voters decide they want all county residents voting on all three commissioners, it will have little effect, Hofman said. That is because each district already contains a part of Bozeman to make the population and size of the districts equal.