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Public hearings held in CB, Browning by Glacier County Study Commission

Jurisdiction problems and better satellite services needed on the west end of Glacier County seemed to be the main problems faced by Browning, East Glacier and Babb-St. Mary residents.

After public hearings in Cut Bank and Browning recently by the Glacier County Study Commission members, county residents on the west end of the county feel neglected and sometimes overlooked while Cut Bank seems to be doing well and receiving all the attention.

The public hearing in Cut Bank heard only one person give verbal testimony, Chris Mattocks, School District 15 superintendent. Included in Mattocks' testimony concerning county government, he mentioned the policy of county commissioners trying to be fair with Cut Bank and Browning requests. Mattocks testified when Cut Bank had requests the commissioners would not consider unless there was a fair choice for Browning as well. Mattocks also mentioned possible consolidation of county and Cut Bank city law enforcement. He also suggested a possible manager form of government for the study commission's consideration.

The hearing conducted in Browning saw a lot more testimony offered on

suggestions, comments and questions concerning the present form of government.

Myrna Galbreath and Carl Kipp, both Blackfeet Tribal Council members, offered suggestions of county commissioners visiting the Browning area and better communications between county and tribal officials.

The council members both were pleased by the study commission visiting Browning and suggested more county public meetings be held. Kipp testified on the east/west issue, stating he believed more economic relief was shown by county government to the Cut Bank area rather than equally toward the west.

Two East Glacier residents, Steve Sherburne and Bill Grant, testified concerning the jurisdictional issue for non-tribal members around the East Glacier area. There are some current problems with an established water and sewer district for East Glacier residents at this time and Sherburne and Grant admitted they do not understand why the taxing policy is costing so much to some, while others do not pay for the services. And now the district is involved in a suit filed by the Blackfeet Tribe concerning water rights.

Deviating from proper hearing procedures, commission members did

question the two who testified concerning the water and sewer district issue.

Carol Taylor from the Babb-St. Mary ambulance service testified concerning the ambulance vehicle. She told the study commission that county commissioners had approved the purchase of a new ambulance to replace the present one used previously by both Cut Bank and Browning. After some time, ambulance crews were instructed by the commissioners to take the ambulance for complete repairs. That would leave the Babb area with no ambulance for emergencies since they only have one vehicle. A third instruction from county commissioners approved only new wiring for the ambulance.

Taylor said she would like to know why Cut Bank had three ambulance vehicles and Babb had only one two-wheel drive to cover the entire Babb-St. Mary area even during tourist season. Taylor did report the Babb ambulance budget had been raised from \$5,000 to \$10,000 for this fiscal year.

Study commission members will now review all the testimony from both public hearings as well as interviews with county officials and prepare to write a tentative report.