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Reduce duplication City study group told

71 By Brian Rygg
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Eliminating the duplication of city and county services was the most frequent suggestion at last week's City Government Study Commission public hearing.

More than 15 people attended the meeting May 13, including several high school students fulfilling class requirements.

Commissioner Don Howard noted at the beginning of the session that the study commission does not have the power to fix holes in the streets or lower sewer rates — its purpose is to study forms of local government and possibly suggest an alternative form, which would be voted on by city residents in November 1986.

Although the first suggestion for eliminating duplication of government and services was to disincorporate Libby, later discussion turned more toward consolidation with Lincoln County.

Bob Holiday, the first member of the public to speak, said the current form of government is as good as any but said the commission should consider doing away with city government by disincorporating.

This would be in line with the movement toward less government, Holiday said.

Those living outside the city have almost all of the advantages of those inside the limits, he said, but don't pay as much in taxes for those services.

County taxpayers are levied about three-fourths of the taxes levied on city taxpayers on the average, Holiday said.

Now duplicated by city and county are such things as courts, with city police court and justice of the peace, and road crews.

Commissioner Frank Nelson said that in 1975, voters defeated a measure to disincorporate. They didn't want to lose their city identity, Nelson said.

Perhaps the tax burden could be leveled off through consolidation, incorporating the area surrounding Libby, Nelson

said.

Consolidation would be more practical than disincorporation, Earl Lovick said, suggesting that the boundaries of the consolidated district might be set to be the same as for the Libby High School District.

As long as the duplication is eliminated, Holiday said, he doesn't care whether disincorporation or consolidation is the means.

City residents are now paying for that duplication, said Libby City Council member George Bauer, who is the liaison between the council and the study commission.

Total consolidation, Bauer said, "is the only way to go."

A joint meeting of the City

Government Study Commission and the County Government Study Commission has been set for June 18, at 7 p.m. in City Hall.

Also at last week's public hearing, two city employees suggested that members of the City Council become more involved with the work force. Another suggested that crew members should have a say in who is hired, to reduce emotional conflicts among the workers.

Howard said that anyone with gripes should take them to the City Council. This is effective, he said, recalling that when Libby residents complained last year about a proposed large increase in sewer rates, the increase was made smaller.