

## **Government Study Review Commission Meeting**

**November 26, 2024 5:15 p.m.**

### **Meeting minutes summary**

IN attendance: Carolyn Dawes, Commission Member; Randy Mercer, Commission Member; Jason Stevenson, Commission Member; Jordan Knudson, Ex-Officio Member, Mayor Joe Purcell.

Meeting was called to order by Mayor Joe Purcell

First order of business established a temporary Presiding officer. The Commission appointed Carolyn Dawes as temporary Presiding Officer.

Next order of business was establishing by-laws to agree on at the next meeting. Suggestions made to find templates intended for by laws on the University website. Once examples are agreed upon in the next meeting. Electing more permanent officers for the commission will move forward.

Discussion on time for public comment on the meetings from the public. Allowing minutes of speaking time.

Review of the budget proposed and discussion of how money will be spent as the commission moves forward. Discussion on training needs, travel stipends for training, and supplies.

Discussion of adopting a timetable for the plan the study commission will follow that will need to be published to the public. The established time table is 90 days which is the end of February to publish the time table to the public.

Next meeting is scheduled for December 18th, 5:30 p.m at City Hall.

Meeting adjourned.

**Hardin Local Government Review Study Commission**

December 18, 2024 Meeting Minutes

At 5:30 p.m., Temporary Presiding Officer Carolyn Dawes called the meeting to order. Present were Commissioners Carolyn Dawes, Jason Stephenson and Randy Mercier. Also present was Jordan Knudsen, ex-officio member.

No members of the public were present for Public Comment.

A motion was made to approve the minutes from the previous meeting of November 26, 2024, and seconded. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

Dawes called up the first order of business, establishing bylaws. The commission discussed waiving formal parliamentary procedure to begin editing a basic template of proposed bylaws. A motion was made by Jason Stephenson to waive the procedure, which was seconded. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed. The commission then proceeded to edit the proposed bylaws, section by section, with 'friendly' amendments allowed. The proposed template being a set of bylaws from a water/sewer district, required numerous changes to titles and duties. The commission then discussed officer positions for the commission. The commission agreed that there should be four officers: Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. After numerous edits, the draft of the proposed bylaws was approved for the next meeting.

Dawes then called the second agenda item, the election of permanent officers. Dawes was nominated to be the Chair. There were no other nominations, nominations were closed, and Dawes was elected to be Chair upon a voice vote. Jason Stephenson was nominated to be Vice-Chair. There were no other nominations, nominations were closed, and Stephenson was elected to be Vice-Chair by voice vote. Jordan Knudsen was nominated to be Secretary. There were no other nominations, nominations were closed, and Knudsen was elected Secretary by voice vote. Randy Mercier was nominated to be Treasurer. There were no other nominations, nominations were closed, and Mercier was elected Treasurer by voice vote.

Chair Dawes then called the third agenda item, the time table for official dates and publication. Stephenson suggested that due to the time spent on the bylaws, the commissioners should each take the time table home, and bring back proposals at the next meeting. The commissioners discussed further. Stephenson moved that each commissioner take the time table home and fill out proposed dates and return with the table at the next meeting. Dawes seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

Commissioners then discussed the next meeting date. Knudsen reported that commissioners agreed at a previous meeting to have meetings on the third Wednesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. The commission agreed that January 15, 2025 would be the next meeting date.

Stevenson moved to table the remaining items on the agenda until the next meeting. Mercier seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

Stephenson moved to adjourn. Mercier seconded. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.

Approved this 15<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2025.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Carolyn Dawes, Chairperson

**Hardin Local Government Review Study Commission**

February 19, 2025 Meeting Minutes

At 5:35 p.m., Chairperson Carolyn Dawes called the meeting to order. Present were Commissioners Carolyn Dawes, Randy Mercier.

No members of the public were present for Public Comment.

Carolyn stated that because there are only two commissioners present, Carolyn stated that she would reschedule the meeting to February 26, 2025 at 5:30. Randy agreed.

The meeting adjourned at 5:37 p.m.

Approved this 19 day of March, 2025

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Carolyn Dawes, Chairperson

**Hardin Local Government Review Study Commission**

February 26, 2025 Meeting Minutes

At 5:47 p.m., Chairperson Carolyn Dawes called the meeting to order. Present were Commissioners Carolyn Dawes, Jason Stephenson and Randy Mercier. Also present was Jordan Knudsen, ex-officio member.

No members of the public were present for Public Comment.

Carolyn moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting of January 15, 2024, and Randy seconded. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

The Chair called up the first order of business, the timetable. Jason stated that he wanted Feb 19, 2025 changed to February 26, 2025 since the meeting was moved. Jason made a motion regarding that change, which was seconded by Randy. Voice vote called, passed unanimously. Publication will be done by Jason.

The discussion then turned to the meeting scheduled for March 19, 2025. Jason set he will get radio announcements done. Carolyn mentioned that people are reading posts, but there's not a lot of interest. Jason wants comments on what goals are so he has talking points for the radio. Carolyn asked how it would be best presented to the public at the public hearing. Randy suggested a printed handout. Carolyn wants to use one of the 15 minute phone calls to the MSU trainer. Randy and Jason agreed that Carolyn could do that. Carolyn stated that she will prepare for the presentation. Carolyn asked what should be put on the presentation. Randy suggested that the MSU trainer may already have something prepared that we could use. Jason stated that we need to show the public which direction committee is headed, and that may get more attention and participation. Carolyn suggested that commissioners get suggestions to Jason by March 7 so that Jason can use them on the radio.

Jason moved that the public hearing start at 6:30 p.m. March 19, following the 5:30 meeting. Randy seconded the motion, and a voice vote was called. The motion passed unanimously.

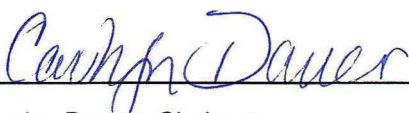
Jason suggested a special meeting before March 19 to prepare for public hearing. Much discussion was held on the idea. Randy suggested that we meet at 5:00 on March 19<sup>th</sup> to prepare. Carolyn agreed that everything could be done if we met starting at 5:00 p.m. on March 19. Jason moved to amend the start of the regular meeting to 5:00 on March 19, rather than 5:30 so that the commission could prepare for the public hearing at 6:30. Randy seconded. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

Carolyn stated that the hearing will be at city council chambers. Jason thanked everyone for moving the February 19 meeting to February 26.

Jason moved to adjourn the meeting. Randy seconded. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

Approved this 19 day of March, 2025

  
\_\_\_\_\_

Carolyn Dawes, Chairperson

**Hardin Local Government Review Study Commission**

March 19, 2025 Meeting Minutes

At 5:05 p.m., Chairperson Carolyn Dawes called the meeting to order. Present were Commissioners Carolyn Dawes and Randy Mercier. Also present was Jordan Knudsen, ex-officio member.

A member of the public was present, but no Public Comment was made.

Carolyn moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting of February 19, 2025, and Randy seconded. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

Carolyn moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting of February 26, 2025, and Randy seconded. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

Carolyn stated that the remaining time until the Public Hearing at 6:30 would be used to prepare for the hearing, and to work on her presentation.

No further business was conducted, and Randy moved to adjourn. Carolyn seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 5:09 p.m.

The commission members then worked on the presentation until the Public Hearing.

The Public Hearing was held at 6:30, and two members of the public attended. No additional business was conducted by the commission at the hearing.

Approved this 16<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2025

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Carolyn Dawes, Chairperson

**Hardin Local Government Review Study Commission**

April 16, 2025 Meeting Minutes

At 5:41 p.m., Chairperson Carolyn Dawes called the meeting to order. Present were Commissioners Carolyn Dawes and Jason Stephenson. Randy Mercier was absent. Also present was Jordan Knudsen, ex-officio member.

No members of the public were present, and no public comment was made

Jason moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting, March 19, 2025, and it was seconded by Carolyn. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 1, Discussion of Public Hearing, was called as the first order of business. Carolyn discussed possible future meetings with the Chief of Police, or other business owners to gather more input.

Jason reminded the commission that ordinances couldn't be changed.

Jason then discussed pending legislation in the Montana Legislature, and requested the changes to a self-governing form of government.

Carolyn and Jason discussed whether the commission should recommend a self-governing charges, or whether the recommendation should be to keep the same form as currently used.

Carolyn suggested inviting some city administrators to the next commission meeting.

Carolyn then suggested that the commission should recommend a self-governing charter government with the same mayor/council format.

Jordan and Jason and Jordan then discussed the differences and problems of self-governing versus general powers government.

Jason suggested that the chief of police position should be elected. After a brief review of the Montana Code, Jordan stated that he didn't think that position could be an elected position, but must be appointed.

Jason and Carolyn suggested that each meet with the Chief of Police, the Mayor, and other supervisors within the City to get additional input.

Jason stated that Randy should talk to the City Finance Officer, Carolyn should talk to the Chief of Police, and Jason volunteered to talk to the Mayor. Carolyn agreed.

Carolyn asked when the next meeting was scheduled, Jordan replied May 21, 2025.

No further business was conducted, and Jason moved to adjourn. Carolyn seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:34 p.m.

Approved this 21 day of May, 2025

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Carolyn Dawes, Chairperson

**Hardin Local Government Review Study Commission**

May 21, 2025 Meeting Minutes

At 6:33 p.m., Chairperson Carolyn Dawes called the meeting to order. Present were Commissioners Carolyn Dawes and Randy Mercier. Also present was Jordan Knudsen, ex-officio member.

Three members of the public were present: George Real Bird III, AJ Espinoza and Harry Kautzman.

Public Comment: AJ Espinoza asked how many meetings the commission has had, and Jordan reported that this was the fifth meeting so far.

Randy moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting of April 16, 2025, and Carolyn seconded. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

Reports of outreach activities: Carolyn then reported that she did not get a hold of the Chief of Police, but had met with the Sheriff of Big Horn County. Carolyn reported on the Sheriff's opinion on government authority. Jason Stephenson was not present to report on his meeting with the Mayor of the City of Hardin

Next outreach activities: Carolyn stated that she has had no other responses from the public. Randy suggested mailers, and Carolyn supplemented with perhaps doing postcards. Carolyn suggested she may get a list of addresses of electors from the Big Horn County Election Office. Carolyn stated that she will call the MSU Local Government office to see how other cities have done mailers and surveys. Further discussion about what should be on the mailers, such as a QR code that leads to a survey, a website, or meeting dates. AJ Espinoza commented that something in the Original Briefs may be helpful to notify the public. Carolyn then discussed talking at a meeting of city council or the county commissioners to help spread information about the meetings. Jordan agreed that the Briefs would be a good idea, and that maybe the Briefs would print a QR code to a survey, rather than postcards. A question was raised about the commission's budget. Jordan informed the commission members that they had about \$14,000 allocated this fiscal year, and there's another fiscal year coming and the city council will decide how much to allocate during the upcoming budget meetings.

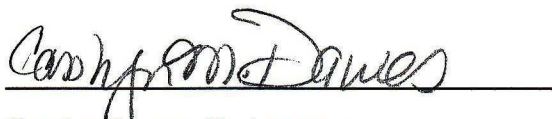
The commissioners then decided they needed a treasurers report to see how much money was left this year. Randy, the treasurer, will provide a treasurer's report at the next meeting.

The commissioners then suggested that they will report back at the next meeting on the costs of surveys, and who can develop them for the commission.

The next meeting is June 18, 2025 at 6:30 p.m.

No further business was conducted, and Randy moved to adjourn. Carolyn seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

Approved this 18 day of June, 2025



Carolyn Dawes, Chairperson

**Hardin Local Government Review Study Commission**

June 18, 2025 Meeting Minutes

At 6:30 p.m., Chairperson Carolyn Dawes called the meeting to order. Present were Commissioners Carolyn Dawes and Randy Mercier. Jason Stephenson was absent. Also present was Jordan Knudsen, ex-officio member.

No members of the public were present initially, but Andy Jacobs and Karleen Pitsch arrived after the meeting started.

Carolyn moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting, May 21, 2025, and it was seconded by Randy. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Randy stated that the initial budget was \$14,222.00, and that \$3,279.66 has been spent so far, leaving \$10,942.34. Jordan noted that the fiscal year ends June 30. Jordan asked Randy if he knew whether the balance would roll over to the next year, or if the balance would go back to the city and a new amount would be budgeted for the next fiscal year. Randy said he would check and report back at the next meeting.

Agenda Item – Outreach activities. Carolyn stated that she called the MSU Local Government Center office and they suggested that the commission provide free food at a local business to attract public participation. The Local Government Center suggested posters to advertise and that any such forum should be less than an hour. She also stated that the Local Government Center suggested that the commission not do mailers.

Carolyn stated that she had met with the Chief of Police, and he suggested that the commission attend a neighborhood watch meeting. Carolyn then suggested a booth at the Little Big Horn Days, June 26-28. Discussion was had that it may be too late to organize that. Randy suggested that instead of Little Big Horn Days, that a booth be done during the 4<sup>th</sup> of July events on Center Avenue.

Carolyn stated that she will coordinate with the Chief of Police about attending a neighborhood watch meeting. Carolyn asked what the commission must do to have a meeting prior to the next regular meeting. Jordan stated that notice of the meeting needed to be posted. Carolyn suggested a special meeting on July 2 at 5:30 to plan for a July 4 outreach event. Randy agreed. The meeting would be held July 2, 2025 at the City Council chambers at 5:30.

Andy Jacobs asked about the purpose of the commission. Jordan explained that it was to review the overall structure of Hardin's government, and to collect public comment to see if a change in the form was needed. Andy suggested that the commission attend some local men's group meetings. Andy also suggested that the commission get a website, and offered to build for cost, about \$200. The commission agreed to place Andy's offer on the next agenda. Karleen Pitsch also offered for the commission to attend a women's group. Additional discussion was held about the website building process, and that it would be a short-term website.

The next regular meeting is July 16, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.

Carolyn moved to adjourn. Randy seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

Approved this 2 day of July, 2025

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Carolyn Dawes, Chairperson

**Hardin Local Government Review Study Commission**

July 2, 2025 Meeting Minutes

At 5:32 p.m., Chairperson Carolyn Dawes called the meeting to order. Present were Commissioners Carolyn Dawes, Jason Stephenson, and Randy Mercier. Also present was Jordan Knudsen, ex-officio member.

No members of the public were present:

Public Comment: None

Carolyn moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting of June 18, 2025, and Randy seconded. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Randy reported that the nearly \$10,000 from the 2024/2025 fiscal year will roll over, and that the same amount may be funded in 2025/2026, but it's unclear how much the City Council will actually provide for the 2025/2026 fiscal year.

Discussion of July 4<sup>th</sup> event. Carolyn discussed posters. Randy stated that it may be too late to get something going for July 4<sup>th</sup>. Carolyn suggested a food event with pizza in the alternative on July 15. Jordan stated that July 15 is a regularly scheduled Hardin City Council meeting. Carolyn offered to be in charge of getting posters and handouts made for the next event. Jordan suggested that a date for a food event be finalized on the next commission meeting on July 16.

Carolyn then called the next item on the agenda, a website. Discussion was had that Andy Jacobs offered to build a site for \$200. Jason moved to approve the proposal, and Randy 2<sup>nd</sup>. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously. Jason asked if the \$200 included the cost of the domain, and Carolyn answered in the affirmative.

Randy suggested that the food event needs to be advertised in the paper. Jason moved to approve an add in local newspaper, Randy 2<sup>nd</sup>. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

Jason discussed the differences in general powers versus self-governing, and expressed concern over self-governing powers.

Jason also asked if handouts were ever made. Carolyn said handouts were made early on the process, and were passed out to interested persons.

The next agenda item was called – presentations at church groups. Carolyn volunteered to go to a women's group to present what the commission's duties and responsibilities are, and how the process works.

The next meeting is July 16, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.

No further business was conducted, and Jason moved to adjourn. Carolyn seconded the motion. Carolyn stated that she may be absent from the next meeting for the birth of her first grandchild. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 5:57 p.m.

Approved this 16 day of July, 2025

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Carolyn Dawes, Chairperson

## Hardin Local Government Review Study Commission

July 16, 2025 Meeting Minutes

At 5:30 p.m., Chairperson Carolyn Dawes called the meeting to order. Present were Commissioners Carolyn Dawes, Jason Stephenson, and Randy Mercier. Also present was Jordan Knudsen, ex-officio member.

Members of the public present: Riley Ramsey, Andy Jacobs and Carleen Pitsch

Public Comment: Mr. Ramsey asked about the goals of the commission. Carolyn provided an explanation of the study commission's duties. Mr. Jacobs asked if the website proposal was approved, and Jordan indicated that it was approved at the previous meeting.

Jason moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting of July 2, 2025, and Randy seconded. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

Outreach events: Locations of a potential outreach event was discussed. Randy reported that the high school commons area would probably not work for maintenance work being done. Jason suggested using Al Sargent's place on Center Avenue. Mr. Jacobs suggested the Alliance Church.

Jason moved to use the Alliance Church as a location for the event. Randy seconded. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

The date and time of the event was discussed. The commission members discussed August 27, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. Jason moved to accept the date and time of August 27, 2025 at 6:00 p.m., and Randy seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

The commission then considered posters for the outreach event. Carolyn presented a proposed draft of the poster. Jordan made suggested changes to the poster. Jason then moved to approve the poster, with the suggested changes. Randy seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

The commission then considered brochures to present during the outreach event. Carolyn suggested that she could just reprint the brochures that the commission had previously used.

The commission then considered advertisement for the event. Mr. Jacobs said that he would have the advertisement put on the website. The commission then discussed taking out an ad in the Briefs newsletter. The commission then discussed the costs of the ads. Informally, the commission thought that \$400 would be sufficient to cover the cost of advertising. Jason made a formal motion to approve ads in the Briefs, not exceeding \$400, to advertise the outreach event. Randy seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously. Jason then volunteered to be responsible for getting the ads put together and submitted to the Briefs.

The commission then considered food for the outreach event. Carolyn suggested Subway sandwiches. It was unclear how much spend on food. Jason moved to approve Subway, but that details and cost should be presented at the next meeting for final approval.

Jason then presented some of the feedback that he has been receiving from members of the public:

1. Desire that ordinances passed by City Council also be approved by the voters.
2. That City Council votes be recorded how each Council member votes, not just voice votes.
3. Formal paths of grievances with the City.
4. Citizens Bill of Rights

Jason then moved to adjourn the meeting. Randy seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:12p.m.

The next meeting is set for August 20, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.

Approved this 20 day of August, 2025

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Carolyn Dawes, Chairperson

**Hardin Local Government Review Study Commission**

August 20, 2025 Meeting Minutes

At 5:34 p.m., Chairperson Carolyn Dawes called the meeting to order. Present were Commissioners Carolyn Dawes and Randy Mercier. Commissioner Jason Stephenson was absent. Also present was Jordan Knudsen, ex-officio member.

Members of the public present: none

Public Comment: none.

Carolyn moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting of July 16, 2025, and Randy seconded. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

Outreach events:

Carolyn reported that she was unable to get much done between meetings. Jordan reported that it did not appear that the outreach event had been advertised in the Briefs yet. Carolyn suggested moving the event date. Carolyn then moved to set the outreach event to September 3, 2025 at 6 p.m. at Alliance Church, in Hardin. Randy seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

Carolyn volunteered to look into food from Subway, as well as poster, brochures and a website.

Randy agreed that he would do the advertisement in the Briefs.

The Commissioners discussed that the next regular meeting would be September 17, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.

Carolyn then moved to adjourn, and Randy seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 5:47 p.m.

Approved this 22 day of October, 2025

  
Carolyn Dawes, Chairperson

**Hardin Local Government Review Study Commission**

October 22, 2025 Meeting Minutes

At 5:33 p.m., Chairperson Carolyn Dawes called the meeting to order. Present were Commissioners Carolyn Dawes and Randy Mercier. Commissioner Jason Stephenson was absent. Also present was Jordan Knudsen, ex-officio member.

Members of the public present: none

Public Comment: none.

Randy moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting of August 20, 2025, and Carolyn seconded. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

Outreach events:

Discussion on the outreach event of September 3, 2025. Carolyn was happy about the event, but expressed that many of the comments were outside the scope of the commission. Carolyn noted that one person did raise concern on going to self-governing from the general powers. Carolyn and Randy both agreed that even though one person raised concerns, the self-governing still appears a good fit for Hardin.

Carolyn and Randy then discuss whether November 2026 should still be the date that the commission puts the matter on the ballot. Jordan said that the timeline could be amended, and that the topic should be placed on the agenda. Carolyn asked Jordan to put it on the agenda for the next meeting.

Discussion on website. Randy and Carolyn discussed the website. Carolyn asked if the commission should move forward on the website. After additional discussion, Randy and Carolyn agreed to proceed with the website.

Carolyn asked Jordan if the upcoming City Council elections would have any impact on the Commission. Jordan answered that they would not.

Randy asked if se should do any more outreach events. Discussion, and Randy and Carolyn agreed that if another outreach event, it should be limited to self-governing verses general powers. Jordan agreed this was a good idea.

Due to multiple absences, Jordan stated that he would try to reach out to Jason Stephenson to find out if he wanted to keep his position on the Commission, or if he had other thoughts about continuing.

The next meeting is scheduled for November 19, at 5:30 pm, according to Jordan.

Carolyn then moved to adjourn, and Randy seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 5:58 p.m.

Approved this 19 day of November, 2025

  
Carolyn Dawes, Chairperson

**Hardin Local Government Review Study Commission**

November 19, 2025 Meeting Minutes

At 5:31 p.m., Chairperson Carolyn Dawes called the meeting to order. Present were Commissioners Carolyn Dawes and Randy Mercier. Commissioner Jason Stephenson was absent. Also present was Jordan Knudsen, ex-officio member.

Members of the public present: none

Public Comment: none.

Carolyn moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting of October 22, 2025, and Randy seconded. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

Website Update:

Carolyn stated that she emailed the website builder, but did not get a respond by the time of the meeting. Carolyn wondered if having a website was still a good idea. Carolyn asked Jordan if the City had resources to build a website, and Jordan answered no. Carolyn suggested a prize or gift card to those that respond to a survey. Carolyn suggested a postcard mailed to voters with a survey link.

Carolyn asked permission of the commission to use another 15 minute phone call to the MSU Local Government center. Randy and Carolyn consented to the request.

Randy suggested that the commission follow up with the website builder again.

Randy suggested submission of a QR link in the Briefs to do a survey

Randy asked if the City website can have a link to a website or QR survey code. Jordan answered yes.

Carolyn agreed that a QR code in the Briefs was a good idea.

Amendments to Time Table:

Discussion on whether the December 18 deadline for the tentative report is achievable. Carolyn moves to amend the timetable so that the Tentative report is due February 18, 2026, and that the hearing on the Tentative Report should be held on February 18, 2026. Randy seconds. A voice vote is called, and the motion passes unanimously.


Vacancy of Jason Stephenson:

Jordan reports that Jason has not attended a meeting of the study commission since July, which is four months. Jordan reports that pursuant to Montana Code § 7-4-411(8) (2025), the office is considered vacant if an elected official does not discharge their official duties for three consecutive months. Jordan suggested that at the next meeting, the commission pass a resolution of vacancy of the position, and that Jordan prepare it for the next meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for December 16, at 5:30 pm, according to Jordan.

Randy then moved to adjourn, and Carolyn seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 6:06 p.m.

Approved this 21 day of January, 2026.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Carolyn Dawes, Chairperson

**Hardin Local Government Review Study Commission**

January 21, 2026 Meeting Minutes

At 5:30 p.m., Chairperson Carolyn Dawes called the meeting to order. Present were Commissioners Carolyn Dawes and Randy Mercier. Commissioner Jason Stephenson was absent. Also present was Jordan Knudsen, ex-officio member.

Members of the public present: none

Public Comment: none.

Carolyn moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting of November 19, 2025, and Randy seconded. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

Randy provided a financial report, that there was \$26,515.53 in the Study Commission account.

The next item discussed was the Tentative Report, which is set to be due February 18, 2026. Carolyn reported that she talked to the Local Government center at MSU to get a presenter, but they were not available February 18. Carolyn reported that February 20 was available for the presenter, but that it would cost money. Jordan suggested that the commission still have the Tentative Report done by February 18, and then have the hearing as scheduled. There was some discussion on how to complete the tentative report, and then provide it to Jordan for the February 18 meeting. Carolyn suggested that there should be refreshments for the hearing, and Jordan volunteered to be responsible for them. Carolyn said that a box of Subway sandwiches would be a good choice. There was discussion on whether February 18 should still be the date of the Tentative Report, and the hearing.

Carolyn moved that the commission pay for the travel of the MSU presentation, which would include the fee, travel mileage, per diem, and hotel, if needed. Randy seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously. Jordan informed the commission that the costs could be submitted to the City via a claim form.

Randy moved to give Carolyn authority to re-set the date of the Tentative Report and hearing for a date in future at which the MSU presenter could attend, since no date had been finalized for the presentation. Carolyn seconded. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

The next item discussed was the vacancy of the position held by Jason Stephenson. Jordan informed the parties that Jason had not attended a meeting since July 16, 2025. The commission then reviewed Resolution No. 2026-01, drafted by Jordan, which upon approval would declare Jason's position vacant. Carolyn moved to approve Resolution No. 2026-01, and Randy seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously. Resolution No. 2026-01 was adopted, and Jason's position on the commission was now vacant.

The February 18, 2026 meeting was cancelled, and the next meeting date would be set by Carolyn.

Carolyn then moved to adjourn, and Randy seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:52 p.m.

Approved this 11 day of March, 2026.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Carolyn Dawes, Chairperson

**Hardin Local Government Review Study Commission**

March 11, 2026 Meeting Minutes

At 5:38 p.m., Chairperson Carolyn Dawes called the meeting to order. Present were Commissioners Carolyn Dawes and Randy Mercier. Also present was Jordan Knudsen, ex-officio member.

Members of the public present: none

Public Comment: none.

Carolyn moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting of January 21, 2026, and Randy seconded. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

Carolyn presented the Tentative Report. After review, it was decided that Appendix C to the report needed a correction to the date from November 4, 2025 to November 3 2026 to coincide with the general election date of 2026. Carolyn discussed each index. Carolyn discussed the provisions of a self-governing local government.

Jordan mentioned that the language in Appendix D should be amended so that the options on the ballot should both include commission/executive form of government, but the distinction being self-governing powers or general powers. Randy and Carolyn agreed, and Jordan will make the changes to Appendix D for the next meeting.

Carolyn then brought up the topic of another public presentation and whether or not there would be any attendance at the presentation. Jordan stated that this meeting, being the March 11 meeting, was advertised as the final public presentation on the tentative report, and that no additional public presentations were needed. Jordan and Carolyn discussed the benefit of having a presentation by a member of the MSU local government center if no public attends the meetings.

Carolyn then asked if the commission could update the language in the final report earlier than scheduled, and if the final report could be turned into the election office early. Jordan answered that the final report could be done early, and that the report is due to the election office by July 15. Jordan stated that if the final report is approved early and turned into the election office, there would likely be no need for additional meetings of the commission until after election.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 15, 2026 at 5:30. Randy asked if the adopted final report would be available at city hall. Jordan replied that it would be, and that it would likely be posted on the city's website, too.

Carolyn then moved to adjourn, and Randy seconded the motion. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:02 p.m.

Approved this 15 day of April, 2026.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Carolyn Dawes, Chairperson