



Local Government Review Board Meeting
July 27, 2026 5:30 PM
115 2nd Street SE | Sidney, MT 59270

Committee meetings are held in a hybrid format, allowing both in-person and Zoom participation. Councilmembers will attend in person unless remote attendance is necessary. Consistent with the Montana Constitution's Right of Participation and Right to Know, the City is committed to open and accessible meetings. Public participation via Zoom or phone is available using the information below:

Zoom Link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/7130805898?pwd=tJpmtgBdGbsjBXS0EAU50ANb4u7h3l.1&omn=86859485864>

Call: 1-346-248-7799 **Meeting ID:** 713 080 5898 **Passcode:** 4332809

1. Call to Order

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Roll Call

Committee Members Present:

City Officials/ Staff Present:

4. Correction or Approval of Minutes

a. July 2nd, 2026 Meeting Minutes

5. Public Comment/ Visitors

Your opportunity for the public to address the Council on items not included on the agenda, no action will be taken during this time.

6. New Business

a. Education/Public Outreach: Report and Ballot Item

7. Unfinished Business

a. Adoption of Final Report

8. Comments and Questions from the Committee

9. Adjournment

Meeting Guidelines

- We ask that all participants be respectful and courteous.
- Please direct comments to the Council as a whole.
- When speaking, please state your name for the record.
- Be mindful of others by keeping comments concise and avoiding repetition.
- The presiding officer may guide speaking time to help the meeting run smoothly.
- Disruptive behavior may result in removal from the meeting.



Local Government Review Board
Minutes
July 02, 2026 at 5:30 PM

1. Call to Order

Chair Sergeant called the Local Government Review Board meeting to order at 5:30pm.

Committee Present: Sergeant, Whiteman, Mayer

Other's Present: Mayor Norby, Interim CAO Chamberlin, Jody Wells (Roundup) and Jamie Larson (via Zoom)

2. New Business

a. June 18th, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Motion made by Mayer, Seconded by Whiteman.

Voting Yea: Sergeant, Whiteman, Mayer

b. Adopt and Approve Final Report

Mr. Whiteman stated he feels, given the testimony from the public hearing and what he has heard from the public since, that removing the ballot item to change the representation and wards is the best course. Mr. Mayer agreed, stating it was important to have it in the tentative report to gauge the public feelings though.

Motion was made to amend the Tentative Report to recommend that the only question submitted to the voters at the November 2026 election be whether the City of Sidney should adopt self-governing powers and to remove any recommendations for changes to the city's form of government or method of election of the City Council members, but to include its deliberation process.

Motion made by Whiteman, Seconded by Mayer.

Voting Yea: Sergeant, Whiteman, Mayer

Mr. Whiteman further stated that with the given testimony and information provided he feels adding the recommendation to the City Council the report that should the self-

The City of Sidney is an equal opportunity provider.

governing powers pass, they should pursue investigating the election at large process that would allow all voters to vote for all ward positions.

Motion was made to add this recommendation to the report.

Motion made by Whiteman, Seconded by Mayer.

Voting Yea: Sergeant, Whiteman, Mayer

Interim CAO Chamberlin stated she will amend the report as directed, but the LGRB will have to meet one final time to adopt the changes in the report. The LGRB agreed to meet on July 27th, 2026 at 5:30pm.

3. Old Business
4. Questions/ Comments from Public
5. Questions/ Comments from Board
6. Adjournment

Information will be shared through newspaper/newsletter articles, social media, the City website, and public meetings. Posts are educational and do not advocate for either option.

NEWSPAPER / NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

AUGUST 2026

Article 1: Understanding the Ballot Question

Overview of Local Government Review and the two forms of government.

OCTOBER 2026

Article 2: Frequently Asked Questions

Answers to common questions and voting information.

SOCIAL MEDIA EDUCATION PLAN

1	Aug 3	Voter Information Guide #1
2	Aug 10	Why Does Local Government Review Happen?
3	Aug 17	General Government vs. Self-Governing: An Overview
4	Aug 24	Characteristics of General Government Powers
5	Aug 31	Characteristics of Self-Governing Powers
6	Sept 7	Considerations of General Government Powers
7	Sept 14	Considerations of Self-Governing Powers
8	Sept 21	Considerations for both
9	Sept 28	Myth vs. Fact General Powers
10	Oct 5	Myth vs. Fact Self-Governing Powers
11	Oct 12	What Happens After Election Day?
12	Oct 19	Voter Information Guide #2

Suggested use: schedule one educational post per week, publish two neutral articles, and direct all questions to the City webpage for consistent information.

Learn more: <https://cityofsidneymt.com/bc-localgovrev>

This guide is provided for educational purposes only. The Local Government Review Board is providing factual information and is not advocating for either ballot option.

City of Sidney Local Government Review Board

Understanding the Ballot Question

Every ten years, communities across Montana participate in a process that many residents may never realize is happening until it appears on the ballot. This year is Sidney's turn.

As required by Article XI of the Montana Constitution, every city and county in Montana conducts a Local Government Review every ten years. The purpose of the review is to evaluate whether a community's current form and powers of government continue to meet its needs and to give local citizens an opportunity to consider whether any changes should be recommended to the voters.

The Local Government Review Board is made up of Sidney residents appointed specifically for this constitutional responsibility. Over the past year, the Board has met regularly, reviewed Montana law, studied how local governments operate, gathered public input, and discussed whether any recommendations should be presented to the voters.

Following that process, the Board is recommending one ballot question for the November 2026 General Election.

What will voters decide?

The ballot question asks whether the City of Sidney should continue operating under General Government Powers or adopt Self-Governing Powers.

This question is not asking residents to change Sidney's form of government.

Regardless of the election outcome:

- Sidney will continue to operate under a Mayor-Council form of government.
- Residents will continue to elect the Mayor and City Council.
- City departments and services will continue to operate.
- Existing ordinances remain in effect unless changed through the normal public process.
- The City's day-to-day operations continue uninterrupted.

Instead, the ballot question focuses on how the City receives its legal authority to act on local matters.

What is the difference?

Under General Government Powers, municipalities may exercise only those powers that are granted by the Montana Constitution or by the Montana Legislature.

Under Self-Governing Powers, municipalities receive broader authority directly from the Montana Constitution unless that authority is specifically prohibited by state law or the Constitution.

Both forms of government remain subject to the Montana Constitution, federal law, and state laws that apply statewide or preempt local authority.

Why is the Local Government Review important?

Local Government Review gives each community the opportunity to periodically evaluate whether its governmental structure and legal authority continue to meet local needs.

The process encourages public participation, community discussion, and informed decision-making. Whether voters ultimately choose to retain the current system or adopt a different set of governing powers, the decision belongs entirely to the residents of Sidney.

Learn More

Over the coming weeks, the Local Government Review Board will publish a series of social media posts explaining the ballot question, outlining the characteristics of each option, addressing common misconceptions, and providing examples of how each form of government operates.

Residents are encouraged to review these educational materials, attend public meetings, and ask questions before casting their vote.

Additional information is available on the City of Sidney website at:

<https://cityofsidneymt.com/bc-localgovrev>

About the Local Government Review Board

The City of Sidney Local Government Review Board is responsible for conducting the Local Government Review process required by the Montana Constitution. The Board's role is to study Sidney's local government, gather public input, make recommendations when appropriate, and provide neutral educational information to assist voters. The Board does not advocate for or against either ballot option.

City of Sidney Local Government Review Board

Frequently Asked Questions About the Local Government Review Ballot Question

As the November election approaches, the Local Government Review Board has received several questions from residents about the upcoming ballot question. The following answers are intended to provide factual, nonpartisan information to help voters better understand what they will be asked to decide.

What will I be voting on?

Voters will decide whether the City of Sidney should continue operating under General Government Powers or adopt Self-Governing Powers.

The ballot question concerns how the City receives its legal authority to govern local matters.

Does this change Sidney's form of government?

No.

Regardless of the election outcome, Sidney will continue to operate under its current Mayor-Council form of government unless changed through an entirely separate legal process.

The Mayor, City Council, elections, and City departments will all remain the same.

Will my taxes automatically increase if Self-Governing Powers are adopted?

No.

Neither General Government Powers nor Self-Governing Powers automatically change taxes.

Any taxes, fees, or assessments must still comply with applicable constitutional and statutory requirements, and in many cases voter approval is still required.

Will City ordinances automatically change?

No.

Existing ordinances remain in effect regardless of the election outcome.

Any future ordinance changes would continue to require the normal public process, including City Council consideration and opportunities for public participation.

Does Self-Governing mean the City can do anything it wants?

No.

Self-Governing municipalities remain subject to:

- The United States Constitution
- The Montana Constitution

- Federal law
- State laws that apply statewide or preempt local authority

Self-Governing Powers provide broader local authority, but they are not unlimited authority.

Does General Government mean the City has no local authority?

No.

General Government municipalities have significant authority to provide public services, adopt ordinances, maintain infrastructure, enforce local regulations, and manage municipal operations.

The primary difference is that their authority comes from powers granted by state law.

Will City services change?

No.

Residents will continue to receive the same essential municipal services, including:

- Police protection
- Fire protection
- Water
- Sewer
- Streets
- Parks
- Solid Waste
- Code Enforcement

The ballot question does not change the City's responsibility to provide these services.

Who decides which option is best?

You do.

The Local Government Review Board's role is to study the issue, provide educational information, and place the question before the voters.

The final decision belongs entirely to the registered voters of Sidney.

Why does Montana require this review?

Article XI of the Montana Constitution requires every city and county to complete a Local Government Review every ten years, if the voters request it through the election.

This ensures communities periodically evaluate whether their governmental structure and governing powers continue to meet local needs.

Where can I learn more?

Residents are encouraged to review the educational materials published by the Local Government Review Board, attend public meetings, and ask questions before Election Day.

Additional information can be found at:

<https://cityofsidneymt.com/bc-localgovrev>

CITY OF SIDNEY

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW BOARD



OUR COMMUNITY. OUR DECISION.

Every ten years, the Montana Constitution requires every city to review its form and powers of local government. The Local Government Review Board has completed its study and is providing this information to help you understand the ballot question you will see in November 2026.



WHAT IS ON THE BALLOT?

Sidney voters will decide whether the City should continue operating under General Government Powers or adopt Self-Governing Powers.

THIS VOTE DOES NOT CHANGE:

 Mayor-Council form of government	 Number of elected officials	 Election procedures
 City departments and services	 Current City employees	 Existing ordinances

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

GENERAL GOVERNMENT POWERS

Authority is limited to powers specifically granted by the Montana Legislature.

SELF-GOVERNING POWERS

Authority comes directly from the Montana Constitution unless specifically prohibited by law.



Both forms of government must follow the Montana Constitution, federal law, and all state laws that apply or preempt local authority.

LEARN MORE

Visit the City of Sidney Website: <https://cityofsidney.mt.com/be-localgovrev> for additional information and resources.

REFERENCES

- Montana Constitution, Article XI
- Montana Code Annotated, Title 7, Chapter 1
- Montana State University Local Government Center

This guide is provided for educational purposes only. The Local Government Review Board is providing factual information and is not advocating for either ballot option.

2026 BALLOT INFORMATION GUIDE

*Understanding the Local Government
Review Ballot Question*



THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW BOARD

The Local Government Review Board does not govern the City. Its responsibility is to:

- ✓ Review Sidney's current local government.
- ✓ Gather community input.
- ✓ Study available options under Montana law.
- ✓ Make recommendations to the voters.
- ✓ Provide factual, nonpartisan educational information.

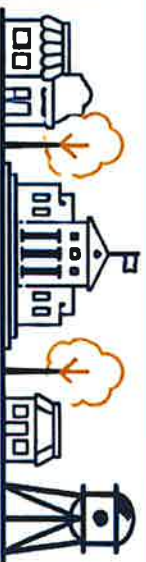


The Board does not advocate for how residents should vote. Ultimately, the decision belongs entirely to the voters of Sidney.



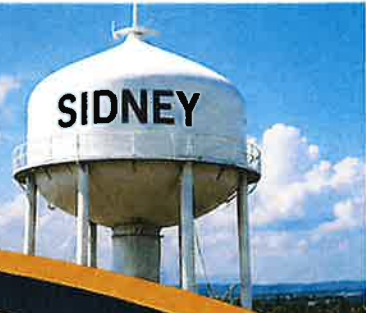
IMPORTANT DATES

Absentee Voting Begins September 19, 2026
 Voter Registration Deadline October 26, 2026
 Election Day November 3, 2026





**CITY OF
SIDNEY**
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
REVIEW BOARD



WHY DOES THE REVIEW *Happen?*



REQUIRED BY THE MONTANA CONSTITUTION

Article XI of the Montana Constitution requires every city and county to conduct a Local Government Review every 10 years.



ENSURES LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKS FOR YOU

The review allows the community to evaluate how local government is working and whether any changes could better serve residents.



BUILT ON COMMUNITY INPUT

The Local Government Review Board gathers input through meetings, surveys, and outreach to make recommendations based on what matters most to our community.



PUTS THE DECISION IN YOUR HANDS

If the Board recommends a question for the ballot, the final decision belongs to the voters of Sidney.

“

The purpose of Local Government Review is to help ensure that our local government remains effective, responsive, and accountable to the people.



THE NEXT REVIEW HAPPENS IN

2026

*Your Community. Your Voice.
Your Decision.*



LEARN MORE

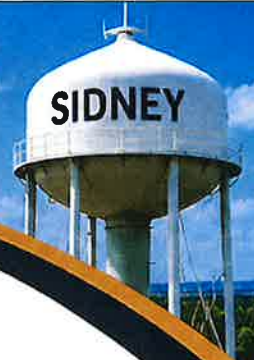
Visit the City of Sidney Website:
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for more information, meeting updates,
and educational resources.



**STAY INFORMED.
ASK QUESTIONS.
BE PART OF THE FUTURE.**



**CITY OF
SIDNEY**
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
REVIEW BOARD



GENERAL *vs.* SELF-GOVERNING

A Quick Overview

The 2026 ballot question asks whether Sidney should adopt Self-Governing Powers instead of continuing under General Government Powers.



GENERAL GOVERNMENT POWERS

Authority is limited to powers specifically granted by the Montana Legislature.



LIMITED AUTHORITY

The City may act only when state law specifically allows it.



STATE LAW CONTROLS

State law and regulations set the boundaries for City actions.



LESS LOCAL FLEXIBILITY

Fewer options to address unique local needs without state approval.



TAXING AUTHORITY

Limited to what state law specifically grants and allows.



SELF-GOVERNING POWERS

Authority comes directly from the Montana Constitution unless prohibited by law.



BROADER AUTHORITY

The City can act on local matters unless the Constitution or state law prohibits it.



LOCAL CONTROL

More flexibility to create solutions tailored to Sidney's unique needs.



RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENT

Easier to adapt to changing community needs without waiting for state action.



TAXING AUTHORITY

May be broader, but still subject to state law and voter approval requirements.



BOTH FORMS OF GOVERNMENT MUST FOLLOW:

The Montana Constitution, all federal law, and all state laws that apply or preempt local authority.



YOUR VOICE MATTERS.

The decision belongs to the voters of Sidney.
Be informed. Ask questions. Vote.



ELECTION DAY:

NOVEMBER 3, 2026



LEARN MORE

Visit the City of Sidney Website:
<https://cityofsidneymt.com/bc-localgovrev>
for more information, meeting updates,
and educational resources.

Your Community. | Your Voice. | Your Decision.



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LOCAL GOVERNMENT
REVIEW BOARD

CHARACTERISTICS OF GENERAL GOVERNMENT POWERS

Under General Government Powers, the City's authority is limited to powers specifically granted by the Montana Legislature.

These key characteristics define how Sidney operates under General Government Powers:



LIMITED AUTHORITY

The City may only exercise the powers specifically granted to it by the Montana Legislature. Any power not granted is outside the City's authority.



STATE LAW CONTROLS

State statutes set the boundaries for City actions, including how decisions are made, how matters are handled, and what processes must be followed.



LESS LOCAL FLEXIBILITY

The City has fewer options to address unique local needs or to respond quickly to changing community conditions without first seeking state authority.



DEPENDENCE ON STATE ACTION

To take new actions or address emerging issues, the City may need to request the Legislature to grant new authority through a bill, which can be time-consuming and uncertain.



TAXING AUTHORITY IS LIMITED

The City's ability to levy taxes, fees, or charges is restricted to what state law specifically allows.



FOCUS ON COMPLIANCE

Operating under General Government Powers requires a strong focus on compliance with state laws and regulations.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR SIDNEY:

General Government Powers provide a clear structure and consistency, but they can limit the City's ability to address local issues in the most efficient or innovative ways.



*Your Community.
Your Decision.*



LEARN MORE

Visit the City of Sidney Website:
<https://cityofsidneymt.com/lsg-localgovrev>
for more information, meeting updates,
and educational resources



STAY INFORMED. ASK QUESTIONS.

Be informed. Be involved.



ELECTION DAY

NOVEMBER 3, 2026

The decision belongs to
the voters of Sidney



Both forms of government must follow the Montana Constitution, all federal law,
and all state laws that apply or preempt local authority.

Your Community. Your Voice. Your Decision.



CITY OF
SIDNEY
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
REVIEW BOARD



CONSIDERATIONS OF GENERAL GOVERNMENT POWERS



Benefits and things to keep in mind as we evaluate this option.



PROVEN AND STABLE STRUCTURE

General Government is the traditional form of city government in Montana and provides a familiar structure with defined roles and procedures.



CLEAR LEGAL BOUNDARIES

Authority is specifically granted by the Legislature, providing clarity on what the City can and cannot do. This limits legal risk.



PROTECTS AGAINST OVERREACH

Limits on authority can help prevent government from expanding beyond essential services and spending.



STATE SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

State laws and programs often come with guidance, training, and support for cities operating under General Government Powers.



CONSISTENCY ACROSS MONTANA

Many Montana cities operate under General Government Powers, allowing for shared best practices and collaboration.



CHANGE CAN BE SLOWER

Addressing new challenges or opportunities may require legislative action, which can be time-consuming and uncertain.



THERE IS NO PERFECT OPTION.

The best choice is
the one that best fits
Sidney's values,
priorities, and future.



LEARN MORE

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STAY INFORMED. ASK QUESTIONS.

Be informed.
Be involved.



ELECTION DAY

NOVEMBER 3, 2026

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Your Community. Your Voice. Your Decision.





CITY OF
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LOCAL GOVERNMENT
REVIEW BOARD



CONSIDERATIONS OF **SELF-GOVERNING POWERS**

Benefits and things to keep in mind as we evaluate this option.



GREATER LOCAL CONTROL

The City can address local issues and opportunities without needing state approval.



FLEXIBILITY TO MEET LOCAL NEEDS

Allows Sidney to create solutions tailored to our unique community, priorities, and future goals.



RESPONSIVE AND ADAPTABLE

The City can act quickly to respond to changing circumstances, emerging challenges, and new opportunities.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND INNOVATION

Broader authority can open the door to new partnerships, economic development tools, and creative initiatives.



STRONGER COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Self-Governing Powers may help Sidney compete for grants, funding, and development opportunities.



GREATER RESPONSIBILITY

More authority comes with greater responsibility to manage resources wisely, stay informed, and remain accountable.



MORE AUTHORITY. MORE RESPONSIBILITY.

Self-Governing Powers give us the tools to shape our future—but success depends on how we use them.



LEARN MORE

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— *Your Community. Your Voice. Your Decision.* —



**CITY OF
SIDNEY**
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
REVIEW BOARD

CONSIDERATIONS OF GENERAL GOVERNMENT POWERS

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WHAT IT MEANS:

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State laws and programs often come with guidance, training, and support for cities operating under General Government Powers.



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CHANGE CAN BE SLOWER

Addressing new challenges or opportunities may require legislative action, which can be time-consuming and uncertain.



THERE IS NO PERFECT OPTION.

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LEARN MORE

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STAY INFORMED. ASK QUESTIONS.

Be informed. Be involved.



ELECTION DAY

NOVEMBER 3, 2026

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*Your Community.
Your Voice.
Your Decision.*



**CITY OF
SIDNEY**
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
REVIEW BOARD

CONSIDERATIONS OF SELF-GOVERNING POWERS

Benefits and things to keep in mind as we evaluate this option.



WHAT IT MEANS:

Under Self-Governing Powers, the City's authority comes directly from the Montana Constitution unless prohibited by the Constitution or by state law.



GREATER LOCAL CONTROL

The City can address local issues and opportunities without needing state approval.



FLEXIBILITY TO MEET LOCAL NEEDS

Allows Sidney to create solutions tailored to our unique community, priorities, and future goals.



RESPONSIVE AND ADAPTABLE

The City can act quickly to respond to changing circumstances, emerging challenges, and new opportunities.



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More authority comes with greater responsibility to manage resources wisely, stay informed, and remain accountable to our community.



MORE AUTHORITY. MORE RESPONSIBILITY.

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LEARN MORE

Visit the City of Sidney Website: <https://cityofsidneymt.com/bc-localgovrev> for more information, meeting updates, and educational resources.



STAY INFORMED. ASK QUESTIONS.

Be informed. Be involved.



ELECTION DAY

NOVEMBER 3, 2026

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*Your Community.
Your Voice.
Your Decision.*



CITY OF
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LOCAL GOVERNMENT
REVIEW BOARD



MYTH **vs.** FACT

GENERAL GOVERNMENT POWERS

★ *Let's set the record straight.* ★



MYTH

The City has no control under General Government Powers.



FACT

The City still makes decisions about services, budgets, projects, and local priorities within the authority granted by the State.



MYTH

General Government Powers limit our ability to grow.



FACT

Many Montana communities thrive under General Government Powers by planning strategically and using resources wisely.



MYTH

The State controls everything.



FACT

The City Council remains elected locally and makes decisions for Sidney residents—just within the legal authority provided by the State.



MYTH

We can't address local needs quickly.



FACT

The City can act quickly on many issues without waiting for State approval.



MYTH

Switching to Self-Governing is the only way to be flexible.



FACT

General Government Powers provide the tools needed to address most local issues effectively.



Different doesn't mean better.

The best choice is the one that best fits Sidney's values, priorities, and future.

LEARN MORE

Visit the City of Sidney Website:
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for meeting updates and educational resources.

★ *Your Community. Your Voice. Your Decision.* ★



CITY OF
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LOCAL GOVERNMENT
REVIEW BOARD



MYTH **VS.** FACT

SELF-GOVERNING POWERS



Let's set the record straight.



MYTH

Self-Governing Powers mean the City can do whatever it wants.



FACT

Self-Governing Powers come with greater responsibility. The City must follow the Montana Constitution and all applicable laws.



MYTH

Self-Governing Powers will cost taxpayers more.



FACT

It does not automatically increase taxes or costs. The City still decides how to use resources and set priorities.



MYTH

The City will have to recreate every policy and rule.



FACT

Existing ordinances and policies can remain in place or be updated. There is no need to start from scratch.



MYTH

It's a complicated change that will take years.



FACT

The process is straightforward and guided by State law. Many Montana cities have made the transition successfully.



MYTH

Self-Governing Powers remove oversight and accountability.



FACT

Self-Governing does not mean less accountability. Voters, laws, and transparency requirements still apply.



**More authority.
More responsibility.**

The goal is to empower Sidney to meet today's needs and prepare for tomorrow.



**ELECTION DAY
NOVEMBER 3, 2026**

The decision belongs to the voters of Sidney.



Your Community. Your Voice. Your Decision.





CITY OF
SIDNEY
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
REVIEW BOARD

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER ELECTION DAY?

Here's how the process works after you vote.



Your vote
helps shape
Sidney's future!

1



VOTES ARE COUNTED

Election officials count the ballots and certify the official results.



Results are typically certified within a few days after the election.

2



RESULTS ARE CERTIFIED

The County Election Administrator officially certifies the election results.



Once certified, the results are shared with the City.

3



CITY COUNCIL TAKES ACTION

The City Council reviews the results and prepares for the next steps.



If approved by voters, the City will begin the process to implement the new powers.

4



IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING

Staff and Council develop a plan to update policies, ordinances, and procedures.



This ensures a smooth transition and compliance with State law.

5



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CONTINUES

Opportunities for public input and feedback will continue as changes are made.



Your voice remains important as we move forward together.

6



NEW POWERS GO INTO EFFECT

Once the process is complete, the City can officially use its new self-governing powers.



Sidney can better meet local needs and make decisions that work best for our community.

7



BUILDING A STRONGER SIDNEY

Together, we'll continue building a vibrant, safe, and thriving community.



Thank you for being part of Sidney's future!



TIMELINE REMINDER

The timeline may vary, but our goal is transparency, communication, and a smooth process every step of the way.



STAY INFORMED. GET INVOLVED.

Visit the City of Sidney website for updates and meeting information.



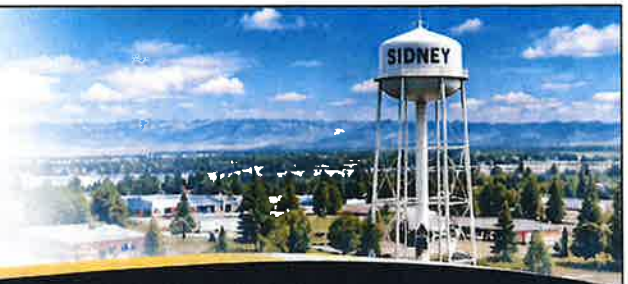
LEARN MORE

cityofsidneymt.com/bc-localgovrev
for resources, meeting schedules, and updates.

★ *Your Community. Your Voice. Your Decision.* ★



**CITY OF
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2026 BALLOT INFORMATION GUIDE

Understanding the Local Government Review Ballot Question



OUR COMMUNITY. OUR DECISION.

Every ten years, the Montana Constitution requires every city to review its form and powers of local government. The Local Government Review Board has completed its study and is providing this information to help you understand the ballot question you will see in November 2026.



WHAT IS ON THE BALLOT?

Sidney voters will decide whether the City should continue operating under **General Government Powers** or adopt **Self-Governing Powers**.

THIS VOTE DOES **NOT** CHANGE:



Mayor-Council
form of government



Number of
elected officials



Election
procedures



City departments
and services



Current City
employees



Existing
ordinances



WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

GENERAL GOVERNMENT POWERS

Authority is limited to powers specifically granted by the Montana Legislature.

SELF-GOVERNING POWERS

Authority comes directly from the Montana Constitution unless specifically prohibited by law.



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REFERENCES

- Montana Constitution, Article XI
- Montana Code Annotated, Title 7, Chapter 1
- Montana State University Local Government Center

This guide is provided for educational purposes only. The Local Government Review Board is providing factual information and is not advocating for either ballot option.

Final Report

2024-2026

City of Sidney Local Government Review Board

Study Commissioners

Janet Sergent, Chair

Wade Whiteman

Jordan Mayer



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1. Introduction

The City of Sidney Local Government Review Board was established pursuant to Article XI, Section 9 of the Montana Constitution and Title 7, Chapter 3 of the Montana Code Annotated, which requires periodic voter review of local government. This review process provides the community with an opportunity to evaluate the City's current form, structure, powers, and service responsibilities and to consider alternative forms or powers of government authorized under Montana law.

Throughout the review process, the Board held public meetings, analyzed Montana statutes and constitutional provisions, examined governance structures used in other comparable Montana municipalities, and gathered feedback from residents, elected officials, staff, and community stakeholders.

Following publication of the Tentative Final Report and the public hearing held on June 18, 2026, the Board reviewed testimony and comments received from the public. At its July 2, 2026 meeting, the Board amended its Tentative Final Report to reflect the public input received and adopted its recommendation that only the question of self-governing powers be submitted to the voters at the November 2026 General Election. This Final Report reflects the Board's final recommendations and serves as the official record of the Local Government Review process.

This Final Report summarizes the Board's review, the public participation process, the findings reached during its deliberations, and the recommendations adopted following completion of the Local Government Review

2. Letter to the Citizens of Sidney

To the Citizens of Sidney:

The City of Sidney Local Government Review Board respectfully submits this Final Report to the residents of the City of Sidney.

The purpose of the Local Government Review process is to periodically examine the form, structure, and powers of local government and determine whether changes should be considered by the voters. Over the course of this review, the Board examined Sidney's current Mayor-Council form of government, representation structure, and governing powers; reviewed self-governing powers authorized under Montana law; evaluated practices used by other Montana municipalities; and gathered feedback through public outreach and discussion. Following its review, the Board voted to recommend retaining Sidney's current Mayor-Council form of government without change.

During its deliberations, the Board also evaluated potential changes to Sidney's council representation structure. Those concepts were included in the Tentative Final Report to encourage public discussion and gather community input. Following the public hearing on June 18, 2026, and after considering the testimony received from residents, elected officials, and community members, the Board determined there was not sufficient public support to recommend changing the City's existing ward representation structure.

Accordingly, the Board voted to place one question before the voters:

- Whether the City of Sidney should adopt self-governing powers.

This report provides background information, analysis, and explanation regarding that proposal so voters may make an informed decision.

The Board thanks the residents of Sidney for their participation, feedback, and engagement throughout this process. The comments received during the review were instrumental in shaping the Board's final recommendation and demonstrate the value of public participation in local government.

Respectfully submitted,

City of Sidney Local Government Review Board

Janet Sergent, Chair

Wade Whiteman

Jordan Mayer

3. Summary of Local Government Review Board Activities

The City of Sidney Local Government Review Board conducted its review over approximately eighteen months. During that time, the Board held public meetings, conducted community outreach, reviewed Montana constitutional and statutory provisions relating to local government, examined governance structures utilized by other Montana municipalities, and discussed community concerns regarding representation, governance, and local authority.

Public participation and transparency were central components of the review process. All meetings were open to the public, public comment was accepted throughout the process, and meeting materials were made available in accordance with Montana's open meeting laws. Throughout the review, the Board:

- Conducted regular public meetings and work sessions;
- Reviewed Montana constitutional and statutory provisions relating to local government review;
- Reviewed the forms and powers of government authorized under Montana law;
- Examined examples from other Montana municipalities regarding ward representation, at-large representation, hybrid representation, and self-governing powers;
- Conducted public outreach through community presentations, surveys, and educational materials;
- Reviewed public comments and survey feedback; and
- Discussed representation, governance, administrative flexibility, and local authority.

Prior to the commencement of the formal review process, members of the Local Government Review Board attended Study Commissioner training provided by the Montana State University Local Government Center. During this training, Board members received an overview of the purpose and responsibilities of the Local Government Review process, the current powers, form, and structure of the City of Sidney, and the alternative forms of government and powers authorized under Montana law.

In April 2026, members of the Board also participated in additional Local Government Review and governance-related training sessions focusing on:

- General governing powers versus self-governing powers;
- Charter governments;
- Ward, at-large, and hybrid representation structures;
- Statutory and constitutional limitations on local governments;
- Ballot requirements and voter education responsibilities; and
- Examples of governance structures utilized by other Montana municipalities.

Following completion of its research and public outreach efforts, the Board published its Tentative Final Report and conducted the public hearing required by Montana law.

Public Hearing

On June 18, 2026, the Board conducted the required public hearing on its Tentative Final Report. Prior to the hearing, the Board hosted an informal open house to provide residents an opportunity to ask questions and review the proposed recommendations.

During the public hearing, residents, elected officials, and community members provided testimony regarding both recommendations contained in the Tentative Final Report. While several speakers expressed support for allowing Sidney voters to decide whether the City should adopt self-governing powers, the majority of testimony regarding the proposed representation change favored retaining Sidney's existing ward representation structure.

Several speakers expressed concern that converting three council positions to at-large seats could gradually reduce equal geographic representation throughout the community. Others suggested that, should the voters approve self-governing powers, the City Council may wish to study an alternative election method that would allow all qualified electors to vote for every council position while continuing to require council members to reside within and represent their respective wards. The Board carefully considered all testimony received during the hearing, as well as written comments submitted during the review process.

Final Deliberations

Following the public hearing, the Board met on July 2, 2026, to review the testimony received and determine whether any changes should be made to the Tentative Final Report.

After discussion, the Board unanimously concluded that the testimony demonstrated insufficient public support for recommending changes to Sidney's existing ward representation structure. The Board therefore voted to amend its Tentative Final Report by removing the proposed representation ballot question while retaining its recommendation that the voters consider adopting self-governing powers.

The Board further voted to include a recommendation that, should the voters approve self-governing powers, the Sidney City Council consider studying an election method that would permit all qualified electors of the City to vote for all City Council positions while continuing to require council members to reside within and represent their respective wards.

The Final Report reflects these amendments and represents the Board's final recommendations following completion of the Local Government Review process.

4. Findings of the Local Government Review Board

Scope of Review

As required by Montana law, the Local Government Review Board examined the City of Sidney's current form of government, representation structure, and governing powers. The Board reviewed the City's existing Mayor-Council form of government, its method of electing City Council members, and the authority provided under General Governing Powers. The Board also evaluated alternative forms of representation and the potential adoption of Self-Governing Powers as authorized by the Montana Constitution and Montana Code Annotated.

The Board's review included statutory research, educational training, public outreach, comparisons with other Montana municipalities, and consideration of public comments received throughout the review process.

Form of Government Findings

The Local Government Review Board conducted a comprehensive review of the City of Sidney's existing Mayor-Council Form of Government, as well as the alternative forms of municipal government authorized under Montana law. This review included examination of the statutory responsibilities, organizational structures, advantages, and limitations associated with the Commission, Commission-Executive, Mayor-Council, and City Manager forms of government.

Throughout its review, the Board discussed how each form of government distributes legislative, executive, and administrative authority, as well as the degree of professional administration associated with each model. The Board also considered how these forms of government have been implemented in other Montana municipalities and whether any would better meet Sidney's current or future needs.

The Board found that Sidney's existing Mayor-Council Form of Government continues to provide clear accountability through the direct election of both the Mayor and City Council while preserving local representation and legislative oversight. Board members concluded that the City's current governmental structure has served the community well and continues to provide an effective framework for municipal governance.

During its deliberations, however, the Board devoted considerable discussion to the distinction between a municipality's form of government and its administrative organization. Members recognized that many Montana municipalities operating under a Mayor-Council Form of Government employ professional administrators, such as City Administrators or Chief Administrative Officers, to oversee the day-to-day administration of municipal operations while leaving policy decisions and legislative authority with the elected governing body.

The Board discussed these administrative models as a means of improving organizational efficiency, strategic planning, coordination among City departments, continuity of operations, and implementation of policy established by the Mayor and City Council. Members generally agreed that professional

administration can strengthen municipal operations without requiring a change to the City's statutory form of government.

The Board further observed that municipalities may improve administrative efficiency through organizational changes adopted by ordinance or policy without altering their form of government. This distinction became an important consideration during the review and reinforced the Board's conclusion that improvements in administration do not necessarily require changes to the City's governmental structure.

Because the creation or modification of administrative positions is a policy decision that may be accomplished under Sidney's existing Mayor-Council Form of Government, the Board concluded that this issue falls within the authority of the City Council rather than the Local Government Review Board.

After considering the alternatives authorized under Montana law, reviewing examples from other Montana communities, and discussing the relationship between governmental form and administrative organization, the Board unanimously concluded that there is no compelling reason to recommend changing Sidney's existing Mayor-Council Form of Government.

Representation Findings

The Board conducted an extensive review of Sidney's current council representation structure, including ward-based, at-large, and hybrid representation systems utilized by municipalities throughout Montana.

Sidney currently consists of:

- Three wards;
- Six City Council members;
- Two council members elected from each ward; and
- Four-year staggered terms, with one council member from each ward elected every two years.

Throughout the review process, Board members discussed the strengths and limitations of the existing representation system.

Supporters of the current ward-based structure noted:

- Strong neighborhood representation;
- Direct accountability between council members and the residents they represent;
- Balanced geographic representation throughout the City; and
- A representation system that has served Sidney well for many years.

The Board also reviewed representation systems utilized by other Montana municipalities, including at-large and hybrid election methods. During those discussions, Board members considered whether modifications to Sidney's representation structure could increase citywide accountability while

maintaining local representation. As a result of those discussions, the Board included a proposed hybrid representation model in its Tentative Final Report for the purpose of encouraging public discussion and obtaining community feedback. The proposed hybrid representation model included 3 wards, 6 Council members, with 3 representing the wards and 3 running at large.

Following publication of the Tentative Final Report, the Board conducted a public hearing on June 18, 2026.

During the hearing, the Board received testimony from residents, elected officials, and community members. While opinions varied regarding Self-Governing Powers, the overwhelming majority of testimony concerning representation favored retaining Sidney's existing ward system. Speakers consistently expressed concern that converting some council positions to at-large seats could diminish equal geographic representation throughout the community.

After reviewing the testimony and additional comments received following the public hearing, the Board concluded there was not sufficient public support to recommend changing Sidney's existing representation structure. Accordingly, the Board voted to remove the proposed representation ballot question from the Final Report and recommends retaining the City's current ward representation system.

The Board recognizes that discussions regarding representation may continue in the future as the needs of the community evolve. However, based upon the information available during this review, the Board concluded that no change should be recommended at this time.

Self-Governing Powers Findings

The Board also conducted an extensive review of the differences between General Governing Powers and Self-Governing Powers under Montana law.

Under General Governing Powers, municipalities may exercise only those powers specifically granted by the Montana Constitution or the Montana Legislature.

Under Self-Governing Powers, municipalities may exercise any power not prohibited by the Montana Constitution, state law, or applicable federal law. Self-Governing Powers provide greater local flexibility while remaining subject to constitutional protections and legislative limitations.

Throughout its review, the Board examined educational materials, statutory language, examples from Montana municipalities, public comments, and information presented during Local Government Review training sessions.

Considerations Discussed in Support of Self-Governing Powers

During its review, the Board identified several reasons communities choose to adopt Self-Governing Powers, including:

- Increased flexibility in addressing local issues;

- Greater local control over administrative and operational decisions;
- The ability to adopt ordinances addressing local concerns where not prohibited by state law;
- Greater flexibility in organizing municipal government; and
- The ability to tailor local regulations and programs to meet community needs.

Supporters of Self-Governing Powers frequently described them as providing local governments with a broader set of tools to solve local problems while remaining subject to constitutional and statutory limitations.

The Board also discussed examples of local authority that may be affected by Self-Governing Powers, including:

- Local nuisance regulations;
- Noise ordinances;
- Administrative organization and procedures;
- Ethics and disclosure policies;
- Recreation and community programs; and
- Local licensing or operational regulations where not preempted by state law.

Considerations Discussed Regarding Self-Governing Powers

The Board also discussed considerations frequently raised regarding adoption of Self-Governing Powers, including:

- The importance of maintaining public understanding of local governmental authority;
- Questions regarding the long-term implications of adopting a self-governing charter;
- The possibility that future elected officials may exercise broader authority than currently available under General Governing Powers; and
- The importance of continued public participation in future decisions should Self-Governing Powers be adopted.

Board members also emphasized that Self-Governing Powers **do not**:

- Permit the City to violate or override state or federal law;
- Override constitutional rights or protections;
- Provide unlimited governmental authority; or
- Prevent future voters from revisiting the City's governing powers during subsequent Local Government Review cycles.

After considering the information presented throughout the review process, the Board concluded that the question of whether Sidney should adopt Self-Governing Powers involves significant questions regarding the City's future authority and flexibility and is therefore appropriate for direct consideration by the voters.

Recommendation and Reasons

The Local Government Review Board's recommendations are based on the findings presented in the preceding section, including its review of Montana law, comparison of alternative governmental structures, public outreach efforts, and testimony received throughout the Local Government Review process. Collectively, these findings led the Board to adopt the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1:

Recommendation

Retain the City of Sidney's existing Mayor-Council form of government.

Reason:

Following its review of the City's current governmental structure and alternative forms of government authorized under Montana law, the Board concluded that Sidney's existing Mayor-Council Form of Government continues to effectively serve the community.

The Board therefore recommends no change to the City's existing form of government.

Recommendation 2:

Recommendation:

Retain the City's existing ward representation structure.

Reason:

The Board thoroughly evaluated Sidney's existing ward-based representation system together with alternative representation models authorized under Montana law. Although the Board initially included a proposed hybrid representation model within its Tentative Final Report for public consideration, testimony received during the public hearing demonstrated strong community support for preserving Sidney's existing ward structure.

Following review of that testimony and subsequent deliberations, the Board determined there was not sufficient public support to recommend changing the City's current method of electing City Council members.

Recommendation 3:

Recommendation:

Submit one ballot question asking whether the City of Sidney should adopt Self-Governing Powers pursuant to Article XI, Section 6 of the Montana Constitution.

Reason:

The Board concluded that Self-Governing Powers present an important policy question regarding the City's future authority and flexibility. Because adoption of Self-Governing Powers affects the scope of municipal authority while leaving the City's existing Mayor-Council form of government unchanged, the Board believes the issue is appropriate for direct voter consideration.

Recommendation 4:

Recommendation:

Recommendation to the Sidney City Council

Reason:

Although the Board no longer recommends changing Sidney's current representation structure, the testimony received during the public hearing identified interest in an alternative election method that would preserve equal ward representation while allowing all qualified city electors to vote for every City Council position.

Accordingly, should the voters approve Self-Governing Powers, the Board recommends that the Sidney City Council evaluate the feasibility and legal implications of an election system that would:

- Continue utilizing three wards;
- Continue requiring all council members to reside within the ward they represent;
- Continue maintaining two council members from each ward; and
- Permit all qualified electors of the City to vote for every City Council position.

The Board makes this recommendation solely for future consideration by the City Council. It is not part of the proposed ballot question and would require additional public discussion and legal review before any future implementation.

5. Comparison of Existing and Proposed Plans of Government

a. Comparison of Specific Characteristics

Characteristic	Existing Structure	Proposed Structure
Form of Government	Mayor-Council	No Change
Government Powers	General Governing Powers	Self-Governing Powers (If approved by voters)
Number of Wards	Three	No Change
Number of Council Members	Six	No Change
Ward Representation	Two Council Members elected from each Ward	No Change
Terms of Office	Four-year staggered terms	No Change
Election Cycle	One Council Member elected from each ward every two years	No Change

6. Minority Report

Pursuant to Montana law, Jordan Mayer submits the following Minority Report.

While I respect the work completed by the Board and support providing voters with the opportunity to decide important questions regarding their local government, I believe additional caution should be exercised regarding the adoption of Self-Governing Powers.

Self-Governing Powers provide broader local authority and flexibility; however, they may also create uncertainty regarding the extent of local governmental authority and increase the potential for inconsistent regulation or legal disputes. Additionally, Self-Governing Powers may lead to increased regulation or governmental expansion, reduced consistency between local governments across the state, and broader authority being exercised by future elected officials than currently exists under General Governing Powers.

Although the Board ultimately chose not to recommend changes to Sidney's current ward representation structure, I believe that decision appropriately reflects the testimony received from the public during the review process. The Board's willingness to modify its recommendations demonstrates the value of public participation in Local Government Review.

I also believe voters should consider the relatively limited level of public participation throughout the review process when evaluating whether to adopt Self-Governing Powers. Public attendance at Local Government Review Board meetings totaled approximately twenty-five (25) individuals across five meetings, excluding Board members and City staff, and the public survey received approximately eighty-one (81) responses. While those who participated provided valuable input, these participation levels represent only a small portion of the City's population. Given the long-term implications of adopting Self-Governing Powers, broader public engagement would provide greater confidence that such a change reflects the informed preferences of the community as a whole.

For these reasons, I encourage voters to carefully consider both the potential benefits and the potential drawbacks associated with adopting Self-Governing Powers before casting their vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Jordan Mayer

7. Supplementary Report

The Local Government Review Board considered whether additional supplemental information should be included within this Final Report. Throughout the review process, educational materials, survey results, meeting minutes, public comments, and presentations were made available to the public and considered by the Board during its deliberations.

The Board determined that this Final Report, together with the public record created throughout the Local Government Review process, adequately documents the information considered and the basis for the Board's recommendations. Supporting materials remain available through the City of Sidney in accordance with applicable public records laws.

8. Certificate A - Existing Plan of Government

The City of Sidney currently operates under a Mayor-Council form of government with general governing powers as authorized under Montana law.

The current representation structure consists of:

- Three wards
- Six council members
- Two council members elected from each ward
- Four-year staggered terms

9. Certificate B – Proposed Plan of Government - Self-Governing Powers

If approved by the voters, the City of Sidney shall adopt Self-Governing Powers pursuant to Article XI, Section 6 of the Montana Constitution.

Adoption of Self-Governing Powers does not change the City's existing Mayor-Council form of government or its ward representation structure.

The City shall continue operating under its existing organizational structure unless modified through future lawful action.

10. Certificate C – Proposed Plan of Government - Self-Governing Powers

The Local Government Review Board recommends that the following question be submitted to the qualified electors of the City of Sidney at the November 2026 General Election:

Whether the City of Sidney should adopt Self-Governing Powers pursuant to Article XI, Section 6 of the Montana Constitution.

11. Certificate D – Official Ballot Language

Explanatory Statement

The City of Sidney currently operates under a Mayor-Council Form of Government with General Governing Powers. Under General Governing Powers, the City may exercise only those powers specifically granted by the Montana Constitution or the Montana Legislature.

If approved by the voters, the City would retain its existing Mayor-Council Form of Government, but would adopt Self-Governing Powers pursuant to Article XI, Section 6 of the Montana Constitution. Self-Governing Powers provide municipalities with broader local authority by allowing the City to exercise any power not prohibited by the Montana Constitution, federal law, or state law. Adoption of Self-Governing Powers does not change the City's elected officials, ward boundaries, council representation, or the Mayor-Council form of government.

The following question shall be submitted to the qualified electors of the City of Sidney:

Official Ballot Question

Shall the City of Sidney adopt Self-Governing Powers pursuant to Article XI, Section 6 of the Montana Constitution?

____ FOR adopting Self-Governing Powers

____ FOR keeping current General Powers

12. Certificate E – Effective Date if Approved

If approved by the voters, the City of Sidney shall adopt Self-Governing Powers effective January 1, 2027, unless otherwise provided by law.

The City shall continue operating under its existing Mayor-Council form of government and existing ward representation structure unless modified through subsequent lawful action.

13. Appendix

a. City of Sidney Local Government Review Survey

The following materials were utilized or developed during the Local Government Review process and are available as part of the public record maintained by the City of Sidney and/or on the City of Sidney website www.cityofsidneymt.com :

- City of Sidney Local Government Review Survey
- Public outreach materials
- Educational handouts

- Meeting agendas and approved minutes
- Public hearing materials
- Written public comments received during the review process
- Presentations and informational materials reviewed by the Board

Conclusion

The Local Government Review Board was established to examine the City of Sidney's local government, engage the public in meaningful discussion, and provide recommendations to the voters as required by Montana law.

Throughout this review, the Board examined Sidney's form of government, representation structure, and governing powers; participated in educational training; reviewed examples from other Montana communities; conducted public outreach; and carefully considered the comments and testimony received from residents, elected officials, and community stakeholders.

The Board's final recommendations reflect both its independent review and the valuable input received during the public participation process. While the Board determined that Sidney's existing Mayor-Council form of government and ward representation structure should remain unchanged, it concluded that the question of adopting Self-Governing Powers is appropriate for direct voter consideration.

The Local Government Review Board appreciates the participation of everyone who contributed to this process and encourages all qualified electors to become informed about the proposed ballot question and to exercise their right to vote.