

FINAL REPORT

Town of Sheridan Local Government Review Study Commission

Fiscal Years 2024-2026

Dear Citizens of the Town of Sheridan,

We have been honored to serve on the Sheridan Study Commission (SC), created in accordance with Montana state law. Since December 2024, we have carried out our statutory duty “to study the existing form and powers of a local government and procedures for delivery of local government services and compare them with other forms available under the laws of the state (7-3-172, MCA).” Specifically, we have (1) conducted a review of the existing Town of Sheridan government structure and (2) explored whether or not the community wishes to make any structural changes allowed by state law.

Our process has included the following activities:

- Study Commissioner training by the MSU Local Government Center;
- An informational letter introducing the project to all Town property owners and inviting their participation;
- SC member vacancy advertisements to solicit a new member to replace an original SC member who had to resign early for personal reasons;
- Nine monthly SC meetings;
- An educational forum offering community members a chance to learn more about the local government review process and provide some early input on Town needs and potential structural changes;
- Interviews with Town officials and department heads to listen to collect their thoughts about Town needs and Town government structure options;
- A public hearing to listen to citizen suggestions for making any structural changes;
- Preparation and distribution of a Tentative Report;
- A second public hearing to receive public input on the Tentative Report;
- Near-monthly updates at Sheridan Town Council meetings to describe the status of our local government review process and invite meeting attendees to participate.
- Publication of meeting notices, calendar of events listings in local publications, and newspaper articles and legal notices to report our project status and invite the public to give us feedback.

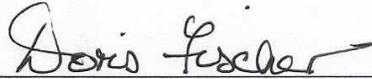
The SC has taken seriously its statutory responsibility to comply with the Montana Open Meeting Law (Title 2-Chapter 3-Part 2, MCA). All of our deliberations took place in duly noticed public meetings where citizens were given a chance to ask questions, share knowledge and observations, make suggestions, and express opinions.

We offer the following findings:

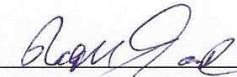
- In May 2024, when 53% of Town voters said Yes to the opportunity to establish a Study Commission and launch this local government review process, the Sheridan community was experiencing significant turmoil associated with Town Hall decision-making. Hot issues included a controversial subdivision proposal, budgetary issues, and turnover among several elected officials and staff. It is likely that many voters felt that changes in Town governance were needed, but they did not fully understand the limited scope of the Study Commission process.
- Since May 2024, a sense of order has been restored at Town Hall. Over the past year Town officials, staff, and citizens have redirected their attention to other issues, such as the drafting of a Zoning Ordinance, contract negotiations between the rural and Town fire departments, audit completions and new budget management, and a proposed increase in sewer and water rates to support the Town's infrastructure. Amid this high level of Town busyness, the work of the Study Commission has drawn little citizen interest or public comment. Despite outreach efforts, attendance at our public meetings has been minimal, and very few people seem inclined to learn more about or formulate an opinion on the structural options that exist. Individual SC members have engaged several community members in informal discussion about the local government review process; the most common response reported back at SC meetings is that people have asked, "Why are we doing this?" and then advised, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

Given the above findings, the Town of Sheridan Study Commission concludes there is general consensus that the existing Commission-Executive Form of government has served the Town of Sheridan well and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. Our concern has been to provide a form of government that will be responsive to local citizens and provide the opportunity for devising solutions to local problems. We feel the Sheridan community can best achieve these goals by retaining the current form. We therefore recommend no change to this form of government.

Respectfully submitted by the Town of Sheridan Local Government Study Commissioners
this 6th day of November, 2025.



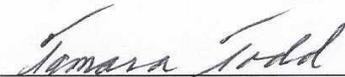
Doris Fischer, Chair



Ralph Sand, Vice-Chair

N/A

Third Voting Member (Seat is presently vacant)



Tamara Todd, Ex-Officio Member (Non-voting)