

# **RESOURCE TEAM ASSESSMENT REPORT**

**for**

## **LIBERTY COUNTY**

**March 25 – 27, 2003**

**In partnership with Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA),  
Bear Paw Development Corporation, USDA/Rural Development, MT  
Department of Agriculture, Double K Outfit, Montana Jobs Network,  
Ft. Peck Dam Interpretive Center, and the people of Liberty County**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

I am sure I speak for the entire team when I write that we were impressed with the people of your county and the passion that was displayed to preserve your communities and unique rural lifestyle. We were impressed with your community leaders, students, volunteers, schools, business owners, entrepreneurs, senior citizens and all the people in between. It is obvious that in working together, there is nothing to stop Chester, Joplin and the rest of Liberty County from being all that you envision it to be.

Before digging in to the report itself, I would like to give recognition to MEDA – Montana Economic Developers Association. MEDA provides the contracted services that make each and every resource team possible. Special thanks are due Craig Erickson of Bear Paw Development who was the spark plug behind this entire project. In addition, I applaud each and every team member that dedicated hours of work and travel in order to participate on the team: Larry Mires (Ft. Peck Interpretive Center), Julie Foster (Montana Jobs Network), Kristine Komar (Double K Outfit), Bill Barr (USDA/RD) and Brent Poppe (MT Department of Agriculture). Each team member's contact information is provided in the following report. Please feel free to call on any of us for additional information or support. It would be our pleasure!

The Liberty County Resource Team Assessment was truly a team effort on the local level. The support of your County Commissioners, Town Council, Mayor, and Chamber of Commerce was incredible. Thanks to our tour guides, those that provided lodging and to those that fed us wonderful meals!

The elements are all in place for Liberty County to have a successful future. There are a number of short term and long term accomplishable recommendations that the resource team has provided in this report. Each of you individually must decide what it is that you want to do— what kind of project you want to tackle. It is also important for the entire community and/or county to be involved in finding ways to accomplish its goals. A few celebrations at the successful conclusion of an activity that has involved a large number of citizens will lead to a feeling of accomplishment that will carry over into other activities. Look through the suggestions, pick out one, and get started. It can be done. It is your choice, your decision; you can do it!

Gloria O'Rourke  
MEDA

## **PROCESS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THIS REPORT**

Montana Economic Developers Association (MEDA) provided staff support for the coordination of a resource team to assist Liberty County in evaluating the county's assets and liabilities and in developing suggestions for improving the environment, social and economic future of the area.

Craig Erickson of Bear Paw Development served as the community contact and local team leader for the project. Craig took the lead in agenda development, logistics, budgeting and publicity for the assessment. Resource team members were selected to visit, interview citizens, business and community leaders; and develop a plan of recommended action for the city. The team members were carefully selected based on their fields of expertise that Liberty County officials indicated would be needed to respond to the problem areas identified.

The Resource Team toured the county and interviewed approximately 150 people over a three-day period from March 25 – 27<sup>th</sup>. The team interviewed representatives from the following segments of Liberty County: Local Government, Agriculture, Youth (Chester High School), Joplin Commercial Club, Foundations, Educators, Finance/Banks/Insurance, Retail/Chamber/Rotary, Health Care/Social Services, Churches, Civic Groups, Senior Citizens and the Chester and Joplin School Boards.

Each participant was asked to respond to three questions designed to begin communications and discussion and to serve as a basis for developing the action plan. The three questions were:

- What do you think are the major problems and challenges in Liberty County (or in your community?)
- What do you think are the major strengths and assets in Liberty County (or in your community?)
- What projects would you like to see completed in two, five, ten and twenty years in Liberty County (or your community?)

Upon completion of the interviews, the team met to compare notes and share comments following the three days of intense study. The team then agreed that each team member would carefully analyze the things said, synthesize what they heard with their knowledge of programs and resources, prepare their notes and suggestions, and forward these items to be combined into a final report to Liberty County.

A preliminary oral report and a summary of group recommendations was presented to the people of Liberty County on March 27<sup>th</sup> and many of the county's citizens who participated in the interviews were in attendance.

Following the oral report, this formal written report was prepared and is presented to Liberty County. Copies will be made available in print and electronically. The report is available on the MEDA website at <http://www.medamembers.org>. A meeting is planned for June 3, 2003, to review the report with the people of Liberty County and to set priorities and initiate action plans.

**CHESTER  
RESOURCE TEAM ASSESSMENT**

**TEAM MEMBERS**

**MARCH 25 – 27, 2003**

**Chester Team Member: Bill Barr  
Title: Cooperative Specialist  
Agency: USDA/RD  
Address: P.O. Box 850  
City/State/Zip: Bozeman, MT 59771  
Phone: 406.585.2545 Fax: 406.585.2565  
Email: [Bill.Barr@mt.usda.gov](mailto:Bill.Barr@mt.usda.gov)  
Web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt>**

**Chester Team Member: Julie Foster  
Title: Executive Director  
Agency: Montana Jobs Network  
Address: 4655 Watt Lane  
City/State/Zip: Stevensville, MT 59870  
Phone: 406.777.7185 Fax: 406.777.0564  
Email: [jmfoster@montana-jobs.net](mailto:jmfoster@montana-jobs.net)  
Web: <http://www.montana-jobs.net>**

**Chester Team Member: Kristine Komar  
Title: Principal  
Agency: Double K Outfit  
Address: P.O. Box 2185  
City/State/Zip: Hamilton, MT 59840  
Phone: 406.375.9953 Fax: 360.7019cell  
Email: [kristine.komar@att.net](mailto:kristine.komar@att.net)  
Web: [www.naturalborders.com](http://www.naturalborders.com)**

**Chester Team Member: Larry Mires  
Agency: Ft. Peck Dam Interpretive Cr.  
Address: 17 Robertson Ct.  
City/State/Zip: Glasgow, MT 59230  
Phone: 406.228.8033 Fax: 406.228.9033  
Email: [2lmires@nemontel.net](mailto:2lmires@nemontel.net)  
Web: <http://www.fortpeck.com>**

**Chester Team Member: Gloria O'Rourke  
Agency: MEDA  
Address: 118 E. Seventh St.; Suite 2A  
City/State/Zip: Anaconda, MT 59711  
Phone: 406.563.5259 Fax: 406.563.5476  
Email: [gloria@medamembers.org](mailto:gloria@medamembers.org)  
Web: <http://www.medamembers.org>**

**Chester Team Member: Brent Poppe  
Title: Bureau Chief  
Agency: MT Dept. of Agriculture  
Address: P.O. Box 200201  
City/State/Zip: Helena, MT 59620-0501  
Phone: 406.444.2402 Fax: 406.444.9442  
Email: [bpoppe@state.mt.us](mailto:bpoppe@state.mt.us)  
Web: <http://www.agr.state.mt.us>**

**Town of Chester  
Resource Team Agenda  
March 25, 26, and 27**

<b>Tuesday</b>	<b><i>Time</i></b>	<b><i>Activity</i></b>	<b><i>Location</i></b>
	11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.	<b>Lunch</b> with Community Resource Team Planners	Wired Inn
	1:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.	Area Tour	Various Locations in Liberty County
	6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.	<b>Dinner</b>	River View Colony or Alternate
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b><i>Time</i></b>	<b><i>Activity</i></b>	<b><i>Location</i></b>
	6:30 a.m. to 7:30 a.m.	<b>Breakfast</b>	Spud's Café
	7:45 a.m. to 8:45 a.m.	Local Government	Spud's Café
	8:45 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.	Ag	Spud's Café
	10:00 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.	Youth	Chester High School`
	11:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.	Joplin Commercial Club	Joplin Community Center
	12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.	<b>Lunch</b>	Joplin Bar & Restaurant
	2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.	Foundations	Spud's Café
	3:15 p.m. to 4:15 p.m.	Educators	Chester High School
	4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.	Finance, Bank, Insurance	Spud's Café
	5:45 p.m. to 6:45 p.m.	<b>Supper</b>	Spud's Café
	6:45 p.m. to 7:45 p.m.	Retail/Chamber/Rotary	Spud's Café
<b>Thursday</b>	<b><i>Time</i></b>	<b><i>Activity</i></b>	<b><i>Location</i></b>
	6:30 a.m. to 7:45 a.m.	<b>Breakfast</b>	Spud's Café
	8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.	Health Care/Social Services	Liberty County Hospital
	9:15 a.m. to 10:15 a.m.	Churches	Spud's Café
	10:15 a.m. to 11:15 a.m.	Civic Groups	Spud's Café
	11:30 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.	Seniors/ <b>Lunch</b>	Senior Center
	1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.	School Boards	Spud's Café
	2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.	Break	Motel
	3:10 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.	Prepare for Town Meeting	Spud's Café
	5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.	Working <b>Supper</b>	Grand Bar & Eatery
	7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.	Town Meeting - Team presents oral reports	Chester High School Auditorium

Thank you to our local sponsors for helping us bring the resource team to our communities:

- Wired Inn – Lunch for Resource Team
- Riverview Colony – Supper for Resource Team\*
- Spud's Café – Meeting Room & Supper for Resource Team
- Ken and Kay's Kafe – Lunch for Resource Team\*
- Grand Bar & Chic'n Coop – Supper for Resource Team
- \*Not Yet Confirmed

A special thank you to the very generous donation of rooms for the resource team during their stay:

- Vet's Club & Wheat Sheaf Motel
- MX Motel

After hours and hours of listening to the people of Liberty County (see attached Listening Notes for recorded comments) the following Main Issues were identified by the team. The following report addresses these issues.

## **MAIN THEMES OF THE LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSIONS**

### **Natural Resource**

- **Under used and Lake Elwell**
- **Sweet Grass Hills**
- **Alternative Energy**
  - **Wind**
  - **Hydro**
  - **Bio fuel**
- **Water**

### **Agriculture**

- **BNSF Freight Rates**
- **Transportation**
- **Value Added**
- **Ag-Tourism – Heritage Trail**

### **Workforce**

- **Jobs available/Not available**
- **Spouse Recruitment**
- **Workforce Education/job training**

### **Community**

- **Beautification**
- **Volunteers**
- **High quality of life**
- **Faith-based Opportunities**
- **Zoning, land use planning**
- **Intelligent people**
- **Clothing store**
- **Cultural resource**

### **Health Care**

- **“U” Store**
- **Hospital foundation**
- **Technology**
- **Mental Health/emotional services**
- **Psychologist**
- **Inter-Community Coop: mental health and testing**
- **Partnership with Benefis**

## **Recreation**

- **9 hole golf course; Tiber/Town**
- **Chambers Contract Coordinator**
- **Marketing and Signage**
- **Heritage Trail**
- **Visitor/Info Center**
- **Bed and Breakfast**

## **Youth**

- **School to Work**
- **What can kids offer**
- **Retaining our youth**
- **Rec-center – things to do**
- **Leadership training**

## **Education**

- **Concern for the future**
- **Organizational structure**
- **Create a model – consensus**
- **Consensus Council**

## **Transportation**

- **Roads**
- **Highway 2 – slow down traffic**
- **Pave Whitlash**
- **Public Transportation – lack of**

## **Business**

- **Support local business**
- **Business development**
  - **Develop local ideas**
  - **Nurture entrepreneurs**
- **Business recruitment**
- **Local investment**

## **Regulatory Agencies**

- **BLM**
- **BOR**
- **US Fish and Wildlife**
- **Corps of Engineers**
- **Homeland Security**
- **MDT**

**Report by:**  
**Kristine Komar**  
**Double K Outfit**  
**PO Box 2185, Hamilton, MT 59840**  
**406/ 360-7019 (cell)**  
**406/ 375-9953 (office)**  
**kristine.komar@att.net**

**Main Topic: COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING**

**Issue or Project: Community Capacity Building.**

Recommendations & Objectives:

*Human geography encompasses common beliefs, locally based skills and livelihoods, local culture, a sense of place, and shared history. It is not just the lay of the land, but how the land shapes culture and in turn is shaped by culture.*

**Gain an understanding of the human geography of the area and the informal networks within the community.** Members of the community operate within networks that caretake and resolve issues for the community; ensure its survival and success by adapting to change; and carry its shared history and cultural values forward.

**Contact / Recommended Resource(s):**

[www.NaturalBorders.com](http://www.NaturalBorders.com)

Kevin Preister, Social Ecology Associates, 541/ 488-6978, [kevpreis@jeffnet.org](mailto:kevpreis@jeffnet.org)

Kristine Komar, Double K Outfit, 406/ 375-9952, [kristine.komar@att.net](mailto:kristine.komar@att.net)

**Recommendations & Objectives:**

Non-profit Board Capacity Building . There is ample evidence that Liberty County has a vital and active non-profit community. The non-profit sector can be developed just as the for-profit—same idea, different strategies and techniques. **The Combined Fund Drive, an existing collaboration, might be a group that could spearhead some development activity.**

**Contact / Recommended Resource(s):**

- Short enough to read over a cup of very strong coffee, the Board Café offers a menu of ideas opinion, news, and resources to help board members give and get the most out of board service. CompassPoint Nonprofit Services, [www.boardcafe.org](http://www.boardcafe.org). *Commit to learning new stuff... subscribe everyone who's involved with a non-profit.*
- Explored the notion of Asset Based Community Development. Find information, including an inventory, workbooks, and list.serve at [www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/abcd.html)

**Recommendations & Objectives:**

Liberty County is proud of its dedicated volunteers. Much community work would go undone without them! Don't take volunteers for granted... continue to consciously develop the organizations and projects that support them.

**Contact / Recommended Resource(s):**



INDEPENDENT SECTOR's Giving and Volunteering in the United States Signature Series provides a comprehensive picture of the giving and volunteering habits of Americans. Based on a national survey of more than 4,000 adults, this series of reports explores the why, how, and who behind the extraordinary everyday generosity—both in time and money—of American households. [www.independentsector.org/programs/research/gv01main.html](http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/gv01main.html)

## **Main Topic: BUSINESS**

### **Issue or Project:**

**Create a stronger local economy by developing opportunities for local artists and craft people. Explore opportunities to attract more artists to the area.**

### **Recommendations & Objectives:**

- Recent studies indicate that local arts and crafts and culture and heritage travel mean big money.
- The Arts Center is really neat, but the store features more out of the area work than local. Is local not available? **If so, recruit local material.** Spread the financial risk by consigning rather than buying outright. Help ensure that the building is repaired to look as attractive on the outside as on the inside. Erect appropriate signage.
- Artist in Residence Programs are a fantastic way to provide opportunities for artists, enhance school curriculum, and create a vital community connection. Both Artist in Schools and Artists in Communities grants are available from the Montana Arts Council.
- Cluster Development: There seem to be quite a few artists in the very local area, with more in the region. Artists and the art they produce seems to be a business “cluster” and could be developed with “forward linkages” or “ways to improve the process by which something progresses along in having value-added to it.”<sup>1</sup>
- Workshops. Create a series of craft and art workshops that attract regional rubber time market visits. Work together and bundle meals, accommodations, and workshop fees into one price. (Be creative—what about home stays or the new B&B? What about home cooked meals rather than restaurant?) And it’s not just a workshop, it’s an experience! Focus on service and creating a relaxing, special environment. Integrate little trips to local galleries, the mill, an interesting local barn or elevator. In the late-summer or fall (whenever it’s gleaning time), let participants glean a shock of wheat (yes, right from the field) for their fall centerpiece—hardly costs you anything but it would be an experience to remember and a prized possession. Workshop topics could include: Wheat Weaving, Stained Glass, Working with Fur & Hides (how many women who sew have husbands who hunt), Basketweaving, etc. Do market research with craft groups (knitting, weaving, quilting, etc.) and guilds so you can build them into the marketing program.
  - Involve the high schoolers interested in computers and skilled in the ways of the internet to help build a web site for the workshops.
  - Create a simple, effective brochure.
- Workshop Venue. Perhaps there is a market beyond what local expertise can provide. Consider long-term growth to include bringing in outside instructors according to the interests of your workshop attendees. (You’ll know what they’re interested in because you’ll survey them.)

---

<sup>1</sup> From the “Cluster Development Opinions” of Al Jones, Regional Development Officer, South Central Montana, Business Resources Division, Montana Department of commerce, [aljonersdo@attbi.com](mailto:aljonersdo@attbi.com)

- Art & Craft Supplies. It is often very difficult to find appropriate suppliers for some types of crafts. Perhaps some of the workshops could support small but viable web-based/mail order supply stores. Wheat weaving comes to mind—if you want to learn to do it (You can tell it has intrigued me for a long time...)—Where do you go? Are instruction books available? Where do you buy the right kind of wheat?
- Co-location. Ensure the success of other artistic enterprises. For example, the Waldron Glass Art Gallery is considering closing due to 1) problems with their building and 2) their inability to be visible enough to attract customers through the use of simple, effective signage due to MDOT restrictions. Help them with the sign issues and or help them relocate, perhaps expanding the space so that other artists can share common infrastructure. Downtown would be a great place to locate artists. Art—especially studio space with artists at work—draws travelers and the community wants to draw travelers downtown.
- There is evidence here and there around town (usually a decorative application) of artistic endeavor, but it is difficult to find where more of the same might be for sale. We saw works of an artist who draws in pencil, a straw weaver, a stained glass artisan, and a furrier. (Later found by asking that the furrier’s studio is co-located with stained glass artisan at the Waldron Glass Art Gallery and that the wheat straw weaver has a national reputation! Although we asked several times, the pencil drawing artist was not discovered, although folks knew who he was, they couldn’t easily guide me to his work.) Ensure that there is a simple, effective brochure listing local artists and providing contact and other relevant information readily available. The artists and craftspeople will be able to help create and design a brochure, partner with them for printing and distribution. Begin modestly, improve and expand with experience.

#### **Issue or Project:**

**Encourage the involvement of artists and craftspeople—they can help make anybody’s good business idea better.**

#### **Recommendations & Objectives:**

- Identity and welcome signage is a practical need and artists can help make it very special and unique. An outstanding sign will authentically (as opposed to cutesy or artificially) draw interest from passers by. And artists can help integrate local culture and tradition into the signs.
- There were lots of comments in the listening sessions that called for “main street improvements.” And remember, authenticity is a key issue, rather than cute. (For example, this visitor found town streets rather charming as they are.) Engage local artists and craftspeople to help you add scenic value to the downtown area. They can help ensure that your enhancements are authentic rather than cute.
- Involve artists and craftspeople in any project to improve visual quality.
- Downtown walking / local area driving tour. As the assessment team was driven to and fro in town over the course of our project, folks were constantly pointing out the sights to see. Whether it was a house built over a house, a backyard play castle, the Arts Center, or another special place it was interesting to a visitor. Codify this as a walking tour. Create a brochure and make them available at the visitor center and at restaurants. Most people feel like a little stretch of the leg after a meal. For things outside the downtown area, consider a companion brochure outlining local sites of interest to drive to.
- Consider creating obvious paths through blocks. It makes it fun to get somewhere. For example, the shortcut between Wired (where you get morning coffee) and Spuds (where you have breakfast.) It could be as simple as pavers, or a rock lined path, or something specially

created to fit into the spaces. Ask an artist to be involved. Perhaps school children could work with a clay or pottery artist-in-residence to

**Contact / Recommended Resource(s):**

- Montana Arts Council [www.art.state.mt.us](http://www.art.state.mt.us) 406/ 444-6430; Fax 406/ 444-6548, PO Box 202201, Helena, MT 59620-2201
- Economic Impact of the Arts in Montana: [www.art.state.mt.us/resources/resources\\_ecoimpact.htm](http://www.art.state.mt.us/resources/resources_ecoimpact.htm)
- Arts Driven Economic Impact in Montana: [www.art.state.mt.us/resources/resources\\_ecoimpact.htm](http://www.art.state.mt.us/resources/resources_ecoimpact.htm)
- Artists in Communities & Schools Grants: [www.art.state.mt.us/orgs/orgs\\_aisc.htm](http://www.art.state.mt.us/orgs/orgs_aisc.htm)
- Grants for Organizations: [www.art.state.mt.us/orgs/orgs.htm](http://www.art.state.mt.us/orgs/orgs.htm)
- Grants for Individuals & Cultural and Aesthetic Grants: [www.art.state.mt.us/individ/individ\\_c&a.htm](http://www.art.state.mt.us/individ/individ_c&a.htm)
- Folkart Apprenticeships: [www.art.state.mt.us/folklife/folklife.htm](http://www.art.state.mt.us/folklife/folklife.htm)
- Beck McLaughlin [bemclaughlin@state.mt.us](mailto:bemclaughlin@state.mt.us) sends out regular information on grants and other relevant art-related “stuff”... He maintains three lists; one for Organizations, one for Educators, and one for Artists. I get all three. There’s some overlap, but all are interesting.
- Arts 4 All People is a resource for anyone or any group dedicated to the arts and culture, who wish to share or gain better insight into successful ways to build and enhance audience participation. The site was designed to facilitate the exchange of new research, concrete ideas and "best practices" to promote service to people as integral to the health of arts institutions and to the life of their communities. [www.arts4allpeople.org](http://www.arts4allpeople.org)
- National Endowment for the Arts, [www.nea.gov](http://www.nea.gov)
- National Endowment for the Humanities, [www.neh.gov](http://www.neh.gov)
- Al Jones, Regional Development Officer & Cluster Development Specialist, South Central Montana, Business Resources Division, Montana Department of commerce, [aljonesrdo@attbi.com](mailto:aljonesrdo@attbi.com)

**Issue or Project:**

**Barns, Mills, Elevators, and other Historic Rural Structures are COOL and people love to go see them! You see them every day and they’re just boring to you, but to many others who haven’t grown up with them—they’re fascinating!**

**Recommendations & Objectives:**

- Create a driving tour and brochure of local rural buildings. Where possible add value by being able to arrange a personal tour, hear a story, or enjoy a traditional picnic lunch in an historic setting.
- Establish a month long celebration, with special events throughout designed to attract visitors. Many communities have accomplished this, you can, too!
- Create a “heritage tour.” Such a tour can include static sights as well as experiences, artist studios as well as a working farm or ranch.

**Contact / Recommended Resource(s):**

National Trust for Historic Preservation, [www.nthp.org](http://www.nthp.org)

Barn Again! [www.agriculture.com/barnagain](http://www.agriculture.com/barnagain)

Montana Tourism and Recreation Strategic Plan 2003-07, [www.travelmontana.state.mt.us](http://www.travelmontana.state.mt.us)

- Share Your Heritage, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, 1029 Vermont Avenue, NW, 2nd Floor, Washington, DC , 20005, 202/ 347-6352; FAX 202/ 737-0526, [www.nasaa-arts.org](http://www.nasaa-arts.org); Montana contacts: Vicky Munson, 406/ 887-2126; [vmunson@cyberport.net](mailto:vmunson@cyberport.net); [www.travelmontana.state.mt.us](http://www.travelmontana.state.mt.us) Travel Montana,
- National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, 1029 Vermont Avenue, NW, 2nd Floor, Washington, DC , 20005, 202/ 347-6352; FAX 202/ 737-0526, [www.nasaa-arts.org](http://www.nasaa-arts.org)
- Utah Heritage Tourism Toolkit, <http://history.utah.gov/httoolkit>

**Issue or Project:**

**Tourism development.**

**Recommendations & Objectives:**

Liberty County is remote and quiet. Just the place for a segment of travelers looking for the right place to rest and be away from it all. The goal is not necessarily to develop Liberty County as a destination for tourists (water park, golf course, etc.) but rather to market what it has to offer to those who are looking for exactly those things.

**Ensure that everyone in Liberty County understands the basics of welcoming visitors.** In the long term, success will be judged not only by the number of guests who visit the area but also by the quality of their stay and the number of times they return. Montana has an outstanding reputation for friendly people and is fortunate to have a comprehensive customer service training/visitor information program in place. The SUPERHOST! program is designed to create an awareness and understanding of Montana's travel industry and to enhance the level of customer service provided by the industry. Ultimately, the program strives to encourage the state's visitors to stay longer, to tell their friends about the positive experiences they found here and the great people they met, and to make plans to return to the state year after year. The SUPERHOST! program stands ready to lead the way in educating Montana communities and businesses about the importance and economic impact of Montana's tourism industry. Consider creating a Heritage Trail. Very fashionable just now.

**Contact / Recommended Resource(s):**

Montana Tourism and Recreation Strategic Plan 2003-07, [www.travelmontana.state.mt.us](http://www.travelmontana.state.mt.us)

Travel Montana SuperHost Program,

<http://www.travelmontana.state.mt.us/OURPROGRAMS/Superhost.htm>

Travel Montana Grants, [www.travelmontana.state.mt.us/OURPROGRAMS/tourismDevEd.htm](http://www.travelmontana.state.mt.us/OURPROGRAMS/tourismDevEd.htm)

Regarding Heritage Trails

Vicky Munson, 406/ 887-2126, [vmunson@cyberport.net](mailto:vmunson@cyberport.net)

Mark Martin, Missoula Cultural Council, [mcc@missoulacultural.org](mailto:mcc@missoulacultural.org), 406/ 721-9620

Travel Montana

**Issue or Project:**

**Attract the film industry to Liberty County. (Just a wild idea—but Liberty county is so beautiful!) Not a great deal of time need be spent on this subject to ensure a productive relationship.**

**Recommendations & Objectives:**

- There are beautiful locations in and around Liberty and this work brings dollars to the local economy. Ensure that you have created and are maintaining a strong working relationship with appropriate film commissions.

**Contact / Recommended Resource(s):**

- Montana Film Office, 301 South Park Avenue, Helena, MT 59620, 406/ 841-2876, FAX 406/ 841-2877, [montanafilm@visitmt.com](mailto:montanafilm@visitmt.com)
- Northern Montana Film Commission, Great Falls, MT, 800/ 735-8535, FAX 406/ 761-2029
- Travel Montana, [www.travelmontana.state.mt.us/OURPROGRAMS/FilmIndustry.htm](http://www.travelmontana.state.mt.us/OURPROGRAMS/FilmIndustry.htm)

**Main Topic: PUBLIC LAND STEWARDSHIP & AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS**

Community members in Chester told us of poor relationships with local federal land managers while at the same time expressing extremely high interest in opportunities for citizen-based stewardship of federally managed lands and facilities.

While folks in Liberty County are passionate about Tiber Dam / Lake Elwell (Bureau of Reclamation / Corps of Engineers ) and the Sweetgrass Hills (Bureau of Land Management), *most* folks we talked with didn't seem to understand or were critical of the way the Bureau of Land Management (Sweetgrass Hills) and the Bureau of Reclamation (Tiber Dam / Lake Elwell) manage these public lands. On the other hand, there were many visions expressed for how they would like to see these areas managed. And they understood how important the public lands are in term of local and culturally aligned recreation (hunting, fishing, hiking, etc.)

**Overall there seems little general citizen knowledge of either agency's mission and charge, culture, or management structure. Differences and problems seem more severe when only part of the situation is understood and the issues become polarized.**

On the other hand, the five local issues of the *Liberty County Times* the team was given (February 16 & 26, March 5 & 12) had fairly in-depth coverage of BLM and BOR projects and programs as well as in-depth coverage of a recent Liberty County Commissioners inquiry into access and management of the Sweetgrass Hills. The March 19 edition ran a story seeking nominations for the BLM's Central Montana Resource Advisory Council and an announcement seeking vendors to provide campground maintenance at recreation areas around Tiber Reservoir.

Given the comments made by citizens and the rather thorough coverage, there seems to be a "disconnect" here somewhere. (And, again, it is awkward making recommendations with just the little knowledge I have...)

**Issue or Project:**

There seems to be a low level of knowledge within the community about either agency's mission and charge, culture, or management structure. Federal employees living within or nearby are not well known.

Differences and problems seem more severe when only part of the equation is understood or there are "sides taken" on issues. If the citizens and communities of Liberty County wish to co-

steward public lands, they must reach out to the agencies and learn of management concerns while they share community interests.

When opinions and attitudes are strong and well-established it is often difficult to approach resolution without impartial facilitation or a process where all parties can come together as equals and learn, work, and grow together.

**Citizens can INITIATE ACTION.** Indeed, there are those who believe that only citizen interests *can* be the catalyst for co-stewardship. Decide to be the catalysts in developing strong agency-citizen/community relationships... many other communities throughout the Inter-mountain West are doing so.

### **Recommendations & Objectives:**

Find the will to decide to collaborate. Begin by creating a facilitated shared experience designed to help with this. Consider the BLM's Partnership Series, a group of courses for agency staff and community members to attend designed for just this purpose. Take a look at *Community-Based Partnerships and Ecosystems: Ensuring a Healthy Environment at* [www.ntc.blm.gov/partner/community.html](http://www.ntc.blm.gov/partner/community.html)

The Sonoran Institute also provides tools for creating community capacity for conservation. They have an office in Bozeman, a focus on the Northern Rocky's and many resources and tools available (publications, grants, advisors, etc.) [www.rccproject.org](http://www.rccproject.org), [www.sonoran.org/resources/si\\_tools.html](http://www.sonoran.org/resources/si_tools.html). Their *Desktop Reference Guide to Collaborative, Community-Based Planning* is a good basic publication on the subject and the BLM is a regular partner on project with The Sonoran Institute.

Investigate the Federal Lakes Recreation Demonstration Program. Of 30 demonstration lakes nationally (find press release is at [www.usbr.gov/main/nws/newsreleases/2001-06-11.html](http://www.usbr.gov/main/nws/newsreleases/2001-06-11.html)), one is Clark Canyon, a BOR lake. Clark Canyon is close enough to establish and develop a relationship to learn from Clark Canyon's Federal Lake Recreation Demonstration project. [www.doi.gov/flr/pld.html](http://www.doi.gov/flr/pld.html)

Bureau of Land Management (BLM),  
Lewistown Field Office (Airport Road), Dave Mari, Field Manager  
Havre Field Station (Sweetgrass Hills: Black Jack Butte [intensive use area], Devil's Chimney [cave](Wow!), Dispersed Use)

Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)  
Great Plains Region [How fortunate you are! The Region is 10 states big and you have the office in yours!], 316 North 26<sup>th</sup>, PO Box 36900, Billings, MT 59107-6900, Maryanne C. Bach, Regional Director, 406/ 247-7600 (Bio at [www.usbr.gov/gp/mgrbio1.htm](http://www.usbr.gov/gp/mgrbio1.htm).) Jerry Kelso, Assistant Regional Director, (Bio as above.)

Montana Area Office, 2900 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, Billings, MT, Area Manager, 406/ 247-7347

Lake Elwell/Tiber Reservoir, PO Box 220, Chester, MT 63006, 406/ 456-3226

### **Contact / Recommended Resource(s):**

Charles Pregler, The Partnership Series, 602/ 906-5504, [charles\\_pregler@blm.gov](mailto:charles_pregler@blm.gov)

Bruce Brown, Federal Lakes Recreation, 202/ 513-0599, [bbrown@usbr.gov](mailto:bbrown@usbr.gov)  
Kristine Komar, Agency/Community Partnership Specialist, 406/ 375-9953,  
[kristine.komar@att.net](mailto:kristine.komar@att.net)  
Federal Lakes Recreation Demonstration Program, [www.doi.gov/flr/pld.html](http://www.doi.gov/flr/pld.html)

## **Main Topic: AGRICULTURE => COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY, SLOWFOOD**

### **Issue or Project:**

Liberty County has experienced a decline in the market value of the superior quality wheat it produces, so much so that it almost costs more to raise it than can be realized from sending it to market. Adding value to the wheat is one way to re-capture and/or increase the value.

As I spent time in your community, I kept hearing that often what saddened farmers most was not the low price of wheat but the disappointment that they could no longer do their job which they perceive to be growing food.

Another way to return value to the wheat may be to *think differently about food*. Two important grass roots concepts are gaining advocates world wide—*food security* and *slowfood*.

### **Recommendations & Objectives:**

Understand the concepts embodied by the Slowfood movement, in short:

1. enjoying the sensual pleasure (taste) of sharing good food among friends; and
2. knowing where your food comes from--that the grower/producer receives a fair living from providing it and that s/he takes good care of the land and other natural resources involved in farming/ranching.

Other aspects include the amount of transportation on food—i.e. does it come from a great distance or within the region?

Food security is the concept of all people having access to adequate types and amounts of food that is affordable and nutritious.

### **Contact / Recommended Resource(s):**

- <http://www.slowfood.com/>
- <http://www.foodsecurity.org/index.html>

The Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) is a non-profit 501(c)(3), North American organization dedicated to building strong, sustainable, local and regional food systems that ensure access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food for all people at all times. We seek to develop self-reliance among all communities in obtaining their food and to create a system of growing, manufacturing, processing, making available, and selling food that is regionally based and grounded in the principles of justice, democracy, and sustainability. They have a great list-serv!

**Report by:**  
**Lawrence E. Mires**  
**17 Robertson Court**  
**Glasgow, Montana 59230**  
**Phone 406-228-8033**  
**Fax 406-228-9033**  
**Email: [2LMIRES@NEMONTEL.NET](mailto:2LMIRES@NEMONTEL.NET)**

**Resource/Background of Larry:**  
**Consultant**  
**MEDA member**  
**Two Rivers Growth, Inc. Board of Directors member**  
**Fort Peck Dam Interpretive Center & Museum, Inc.**  
**Coordinated Resource Management Council – Lower Missouri River**  
**Vocational Career Guidance Counselor**  
**Vocational/Industrial/Technology Instructor – Glasgow School District**

I would first like to say Thank You to the communities of Liberty County for your gracious hospitality and your candidness during the listening sessions. I know that I learned far more and gained a deeper appreciation of Liberty County than I am able to reciprocate to your cause. The recurring comment from every group on the quality of the “good and caring people” is truly an understatement.

## **MAIN THEMES OF THE LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSIONS**

### **Natural Resource**

There are Natural Resources and then there are “Renewable Natural Resources”. Keep in mind that Natural resources once abused or used are gone forever with a short-term efficiency – i.e. mining and oil/gas. Also note that only a small minority ever really prosper from these resources.

**Recommendation:** – combine Natural Resources with Renewable Natural Resources – they can be extended for the long term and hence a more stable economy. In two words – Diversify - Partnerships. The more diversification of your resources the greater the chances for longevity and hence a more stable economy. Likewise, the more partnerships involved – the greater the chances for securing funding and thus fruition of the enterprises.

- Under used and Lake Elwell
- Sweet Grass Hills

Both Lake Elwell and the Sweet Grass Hills beckon the yearnings of not only the Liberty County residence – but also the urban neighborhoods of the region. You have the beauty of both the wide-open prairies and the majesty and splendor of Montana’s mountains. Very few communities have such a rich natural resource to capitalize on. These two natural resources make for their own destination areas.



**Recommendation: First and foremost – a clear and concise plan for each must be developed.** This must include a county wide planning Board to deal with zoning and infrastructure issues, i.e. sewage, water, access, etc. The visions expressed by many during the listening sessions to have cabins, a full service marina, golf course and a large lodge at lake Elwell is a beginning for that area. The visions of the Sweet Grass Hills need to be further fleshed out. Some suggestions to consider would be Ag-related Bed and Breakfast - week retreats and/or day hikes, old time gold panning, wild game viewing adventures and in the fall the elusive Montana prairies to mountains big game hunting. Don't forget the fabulous upland game bird hunting that is available only here. The opportunity for entrepreneurship is virtually endless. Secondly and most overlooked – we need to let people know point blank where we are – tell the world how great we are and where to find us. The third part of the formula is to **THINK BIGGER** and bolder. There are many issues to be dealt with in these ventures and none-are impossible to achieve. Tourism is the second largest industry in Montana and Liberty County needs to capitalize on it.

**Recommended Resources:**

Montana Tourism & Recreation Strategic Plan 2003-2007

Victor Bjornberg

Tourism Development Coordinator

Travel Montana

Montana Department of Commerce

P.O. Box 200533

Helena, MT 59620-0533

Phone: 444-2654

E-mail: [victor@visitmt.com](mailto:victor@visitmt.com)

Website: <http://www.travelmontana.state.mt.us>

- **Alternative Energy**
  - **Wind**
  - **Hydro**
  - **Bio fuel**
  - **Hydrogen fuel cell production**
- **Water**

The location of Liberty County makes it a natural to take advantage of Alternative Energy production and I feel it is an area that should be considered with the highest of priority. It appears that it may be ideal to take advantage of Hydrogen Energy in addition to the other areas of renewable energy.

**Recommended Resources:**

**Dr R. Paul Williamson, (Dean)**

University of Montana College of Technology

909 South Avenue West

Missoula, MT 59801

Email - [WilliamsonRP@mso.umt.edu](mailto:WilliamsonRP@mso.umt.edu)

[www.cte.umt.edu](http://www.cte.umt.edu)

## **Community**

- **Beautification**
- **Volunteers**
- **High quality of life**
- **Faith-based Opportunities**
- **Zoning, land use planning**
- **Intelligent people**
- **Clothing store**
- **Cultural resource**

The general appearance of a community is without a doubt one of the most important factors to welcoming a newcomer. There were many suggestions as to what to do with empty houses as well as other aspects of the community. One in particular develop housing for retired people in the south to spend their springs, summers and falls up here in Liberty County. There-by creating a reversal of the “snowbirds” migration from the north. Funding is always the main issue to developing and completing of any project. In rural areas this is even a greater challenge. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has a variety of programs under the Super Nofa for 2003 that may be applicable to the community in the form of grants or lower interest loans for a variety of rural development and improvements.

## **Recommended Resources:**

Lawrence Gallagher, CRE  
Operations Specialist  
Office of Field Policy and Management  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Helena Field Office  
7 West 6th Avenue, Power Block  
Helena, MT 59601  
Telephone – direct line: 406.447.1480  
Fax: 406.449.5052  
Email: [lawrence\\_gallagher@hud.gov](mailto:lawrence_gallagher@hud.gov)

## **Health Care**

- **“U” Store**
- **Hospital foundation**
- **Technology**
- **Mental Health/emotional services**
- **Psychologist**
- **Inter-Community Coop: mental health and testing**
- **Partnership with Benefis**

The medical communities recent expanded partnering with Benefis Hospital in Great Falls is a perfect example of how you can go forward when partnering with other entities. The medical facilities available in Liberty County are a major asset to leverage in recruiting other business

ventures to the area. This same concept should be used to create an Inter-Community Mental Health/emotional services program.

**Recommended Resources:**

Fannie Mae Foundation  
C/o Harriet M. Ivey, Executive Director  
4000 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20016-2800  
Phone: (202) 274-8000  
Fax: (202) 274-8100  
Internet: <http://www.fanniemaefoundation.org>

**Recreation**

- **9 hole golf course; Tiber/Town**
- **Chambers Contract Coordinator**
- **Marketing and Signage**
- **Heritage Trail**
- **Visitor/Info Center**
- **Bed and Breakfast**

If there is one thing along the Hi-line of Central and Eastern Montana that we have excelled in it is – failure to tell the world where we are, why they should come and see us and what will they do and see when they are here.

**Recommendation:** On **all** home page websites related to Liberty County there should be a map showing where you are located and how to get there. Keep the home page simple but appealing. If it takes too long to load they will skip you and go someplace else. Use links to take the visitor to the areas they are looking for and the information they need. Signage along the highway needs to be located 75 to 100 miles before you get there. When approaching Shelby from the west the general public has no idea Super Stop is just 45 more miles down the road. The same goes true when approaching Havre from the east. In some cases you may want to locate signage in other states or in Canada if possible. It would be well worth the time and effort to contact a professional marketing firm to assist in developing a community-marketing plan.

**Recommended Resources:**

Victor Bjornberg  
Tourism Development Coordinator  
Travel Montana  
Montana Department of Commerce  
P.O. Box 200533  
Helena, MT 59620-0533  
Phone: 444-2654  
E-mail: [victor@visitmt.com](mailto:victor@visitmt.com)  
Website: <http://www.travelmontana.state.mt.us>

Ripple Marketing  
Kitch Walker, President

P.O.Box 10221  
Bozeman, MT 59719  
Phone 406-585-9168  
Fax 406-585-0047  
Email [kitch@ripplemarketing.com](mailto:kitch@ripplemarketing.com)

## **Youth**

- **School to Work**
- **What can kids offer**
- **Retaining our youth**
- **Rec.-Center – things to do**
- **Leadership training**

Two comments made during the listening sessions that are of particular concern came from the students that claimed they didn't know who was the mayor or if they had student council in the school. I realize there are those that have been exposed but just do not care to get involved with the community regardless of what you do to encourage them. In 1997 the Montana 4H council piloted the "Teens in Tourism" TNT program in Valley County. It was taught once a week for five weeks in 1-½ hour class periods in conjunction with the Health Enhancement classes. The goals were 1. Improve youths' understanding of the importance of the tourism industry in the community. 2. Provide an avenue of training in the tourism industry that may promote job opportunities and also create awareness of the community, importance of hospitality, and the impact tourism has in our local area for our youth. For those completing the program there was a notable positive difference in attitude and an increase in student participation in community activities. Students participating showed a greater sense of pride and community knowledge. I would highly recommend implementing this or a similar program into the schools curriculum.

### **Recommended Resources:**

For the 4H – Teen In Tourism – TNT contact the local County Extension agent or contact:

Debbie Donovan  
HC 67 Box 126  
Larshan, MT 59244  
406-228-6241  
Fax 406-228-9027

Jeri Mae Rowley  
Statewide Coordinator – MT SUPERHOST Program  
777 Grandview Drive  
Kalispell, MT 59901  
406-756-3674 – SUPERHOST  
406-756-3862 - office

### **Education**

- **Concern for the future**
- **Organizational structure**
- **Create a model – consensus**
- **Consensus Council**

As shown by the action of the recent legislative assembly – there is no clear-cut answer for small rural communities when it comes to saving our smaller schools. Some feel and promote consolidation as the only answer. However, during the listening session there were several ideas thrown around as possible alternative solutions and there was a very keen interest shown by both communities of Joplin and Chester to explore all possible avenues in trying preserve each communities strong educational systems. It is rewarding to notice the desire of each community to work together in finding an answer for this huge dilemma that faces virtually every school district on the Hi-line.

### **Transportation**

- **Roads**
- **Highway 2 – slow down traffic**
- **Pave Whitlash**
- **Public Transportation – lack of**

On Phillip Aaberg’s “Live From Montana” CD he comments “One of the good things about being from Chester – It’s 100 miles between traffic lights”. That’s not all that bad - really – most travelers hate traffic lights and bumps in the road – unless, they are designed to be the travelers own light or speed bump! Clarification: If you stop as a result of your own choice – you’ll usually stay longer and spend more. If forced to stop – you can’t wait to get out of there and spend little if anything. Montana is noted for its many paleontological (dinosaur) finds. Dinosaurs are the second largest draw in the museum world. They are an automatic and natural traffic light or speed bump for the traveling public. Find a Montana dinosaur (preferably unique to the area) and promote it as the Libertysaurus (just an idea). It has to be something of quality that the traveler won’t feel cheated when they stop. You want them to come back again or at the least send their friends.

As with all counties – roads will always be an issue – paving the Whitlash highway is a crucial element in further development of the Sweet Grass Hills and an alternate route to and from Canada. The paving of 366 from 223 to Tiber Dam and Lake Elwell is also crucial for development and better access to the area.

### **Recommended Resources:**

Work closely with the local Montana Department of Transportation District Administrator and your local state representatives and Montana’s congressional delegations. Have your projects work out and ready to go in the event funds become available. Sell the project on its merits to Liberty County and what it will mean to Montana.

Local DOT contact:

Michael “Mick” Johnson  
Great Falls District Administrator  
Montana Dept. of Transportation  
P.O. Box 1359  
Great Falls, MT 59403  
Phone: 454-5887  
Fax: 453-1359  
E-mail: [mijohnson@state.mt.us](mailto:mijohnson@state.mt.us)

The Honorable Max Baucus  
United States Senate  
511 Hart Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
Phone: (202) 224-2651

The Honorable Conrad Burns  
United States Senate  
187 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510  
Phone: (202) 224-2644

The Honorable Dennis Rehberg  
US House of Representatives  
516 Cannon House Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
Phone: (202) 225-3211

#### **Regulatory Agencies**

- **BLM**
- **BOR**
- **US Fish and Wildlife**
- **Corps of Engineers**
- **Homeland Security**
- **MDT**

**Each regulatory agency has its own prescribed “mission statement” by which it is to operate under as directed by congress. They do a very good job of staying within those confines. The agencies were established to work for the citizens, even though sometimes we may feel that is not what is actually happening. If you examine each carefully, you will find that they are all going in the same direction, just some are taking different roads to get there. The solution is to get everyone on the same road or track. It is also important to get a consensus on issues and a solution to those issues.**

The newly created Department of Homeland Security brings to light a whole new series of questions and possible solutions for Liberty County. It may be the answer for getting the Whitlash road paved and the creation of a security office in Whitlash or Chester. With the funding being directed its way and the grants they are putting out – it is definitely one agency to keep a good eye on for funding in the near future.

**Recommendation:** A solution to concerns expressed may be easier to achieve than first thought. There currently exists an organization known as the Marias River Watershed Group. This organization, a multi county group, is currently working on issues dealing with the Marias River and the various government agencies that have jurisdiction within the watershed. It is my understanding that it is more than capable of addressing concerns expressed for the region. It is already in place and would be the best place to start in dealing with government agencies and their different missions. The alternative is to establish a Coordinated Resource Management Council for the region. However, this is time consuming and would be somewhat redundant

considering what is already available. It is important to keep in mind that in dealing with any agency/organization – negative comments receive negative responses! Keep a positive attitude and outlook and work within the various agencies mission statements so that a win-win solution can be achieved. Build a positive working relationship with all the agencies.

**Recommended Resources:**

For additional information on the Marias River Watershed or to establish a CRM contact:

Mr. Warren Kellogg  
c/o Department of Natural Resources and Conservation  
1625 11<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
P.O. Box 201601  
Helena, MT 59620  
Phone 406-444-4490

Additional support for establishing a CRM Council:  
Boone Whiter  
872 Nickwall Road  
Wolf Point, MT  
Email – [Boonewhitmer@yahoo.com](mailto:Boonewhitmer@yahoo.com)  
Phone 406-525-3289

Richard (Dick) Iverson  
Department of Natural Resources and Conservation  
508 6 St. East  
Culbertson, MT 59218

Larry Mires  
Email - [2LMIRES@NEMONTEL.NET](mailto:2LMIRES@NEMONTEL.NET)  
17 Robertson Court  
Glasgow, MT 59230  
Phone 406-263-8403 (cell)

**Report by:**  
**Brent Poppe, Bureau Chief**  
**Montana Department of Agriculture**  
**PO Box 200201**  
**Helena, MT 59620-0201**  
**(406) 444-2402 ph**  
**(406) 444-9442 fax**  
[agr@state.mt.us](mailto:agr@state.mt.us)  
[www.agr.state.mt.us](http://www.agr.state.mt.us)

**Main Topic:**                      **Community**

**Issue:**                              **Community Development and Land Use Planning**

Community members lack a common vision of how they would like to approach development in Liberty County and appear to struggle with finding the best mechanisms for making positive changes in the community. **Often, community members focus on problems that are beyond their control.** For instance, drought, mergers and consolidations within multiple industries, and CRP have had very significant negative impacts upon Chester and Liberty County. These are issues not likely to be changed by community members, and will continue to monopolize the community's energy and focus if they let it.

A portion of the community is hopeful that businesses and resource providers from outside of their community will invest time and energy to lead an effort in making significant changes to the community and its business climate. Unfortunately, Liberty County has not been able to draw the widespread attention of outside business and resource providers. This may be due to the lack of a local driving force behind the community's wish for growth and development.

**Recommendation:**

Liberty County may wish to consider the development of either a formal or informal community and economic development team that will assume the role of a "white knight" and become the primary leader needed to drive projects towards completion. Much of this work is reported to be underway or approaching completion. Liberty County will have a difficult time changing and improving its community if they do not implement a local level approach. Activities like the MEDA Resource Team Assessment are excellent starting points and should be continued.

The local development team may utilize "business plans" or "development plans" that contemplate all aspects of the community's development projects, including those aspects which support and leverage additional or future projects. The development and use of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is a touted method of accomplishing the development planning process. Liberty County may elect not to use that formal an approach, given the limited financial, human and technical resources that appear to be currently available at a local level.

With a common community vision for the future in place, and a team of motivated community members tasked with bringing projects to fruition, Liberty County will be prepared to build and enhance its community. Residents have some very attainable development projects in mind, as well as some unrealistic projects. The key lies in tackling the attainable projects and building upon multiple small successes.



**Recommended Resource:**

**The primary resource available to Liberty County are community members with the intelligence, ability, and motivation to drive community and economic development projects within the county.**

Secondary resources available to Liberty County include BearPaw Development, and other regional development organizations. Efforts made by secondary resource providers, like BearPaw Development, are only as effective as the local drive behind it.

Bear Paw Development Corporation  
Craig Erickson  
P.O. Box 170  
Havre, MT 59501  
Ph: 406.265.9226 Fx: 406.265.5602  
Email: [cerickson@bearpaw.org](mailto:cerickson@bearpaw.org)  
Web: <http://www.bearpaw.org>

Finally, state and federal economic development agencies may provide additional technical and financial resources needed to accomplish projects within Liberty County, but much like organizations like BearPaw Development, they will only be as effective as the local drive behind the project.

Montana Department of Commerce  
Randy Hanson – Regional Development Officer  
48 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave.; Box 311  
Havre, MT 59501  
Ph: 406.262.9579 Fx: 406.262.9581  
Email: [hanson@ibic4.ibic.org](mailto:hanson@ibic4.ibic.org)  
Web: <http://www.commerce.state.mt.us>

**Main Topic:** Natural Resources

**Issue:** Lake Elwell & Tiber Dam - Irrigation

Lake Elwell and Tiber Dam are tremendous resources available for use as an enhancement to the community. Projects revolving around the lake include irrigation development, hydroelectric development, and recreation development.

Liberty County residents would like to develop and enhance irrigation in Liberty County. The most obvious source of water comes from Lake Elwell and Tiber Dam. Reports from the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) suggest that adequate water may be available for a large irrigation project, but that a significant study of the area is required to determine if a project is technically and financially feasible. When a person considers the community's desire to develop the lake as a recreation area, further evaluation and prioritization is needed before decisions can be made on size, scope and location of an irrigation project.

**Recommendation:**

**Residents are encouraged to develop a consensus position on what they would like around Lake Elwell and Tiber Dam.** Community members are also encouraged to work closely with DNRC as they work on irrigation development projects that propose to utilize water from the lake. Private consulting firms are available, at a price, to assist in the process of developing an irrigation district and/or new irrigation project.

One of the first steps in exploring the development of an irrigation project is to investigate both the technical and financial feasibility of irrigating with Tiber water. A significant amount of information is available through DNRC and may be condensed into a usable form by an individual specializing in irrigation development and Montana water law. Armed with the proper information, residents and potential district users may decide to move towards the formation of an incorporated irrigation district. Additional steps occurring after this point become more complex and are better described by technical experts.

**Recommended Resource:**

Local Development Team & Potential Users

BearPaw Development (see address above)

DNRC – John Tubbs, Resource Development Bureau - provides technical assistance and the potential for financial assistance for irrigation development in addition to a wealth of personal knowledge and experience with irrigation development projects.

John Tubbs, Resource Development Bureau; Bureau Chief

1625 11thAve.; P.O. Box 201601

Helena, MT 59620-1601

Ph: 406.444.6687

Email: [jtubbs@state.mt.us](mailto:jtubbs@state.mt.us)

Web: <http://www.dnrc.state.mt.us>

Montana Dept of Agriculture – Matt McKamey and Mike Sullivan, Agriculture Development Division – provide development assistance and act as a liaison for the Department’s Agriculture Development Council and Growth Through Agriculture Program.

Contact Matt and Mike at:

MT Dept. of Agriculture

P.O. Box 200201

Helena, MT 59620-0201

Phone: 406.444.2402

Web: <http://www.agr.state.mt.us>

Email Mike Sullivan: [misullivan@state.mt.us](mailto:misullivan@state.mt.us)

USDA – Rural Business Cooperative Service – Bill Barr, Cooperative Development Specialist – as a resource team member and a person familiar with USDA-RD funding program, Bill Barr may act a liaison and primary point of contact for technical and financial assistance.

Bill Barr

USDA/RD

P.O. Box 850

Bozeman, MT 59771

Ph.: 406.585.2545 Fx: 406.585.2565

Email: [Bill.Barr@mt.usda.gov](mailto:Bill.Barr@mt.usda.gov)

Web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt/>

The Bureau of Land Management and the Bureau of Reclamation should be involved with this project as early as possible, to promote a cooperative working relationship and to prevent derailments.

**Main Topic:    Natural Resources**

**Issue:    Lake Elwell & Tiber Dam - Recreation**

Liberty County residents have stated repeatedly that they would like Lake Elwell and Tiber Dam developed so that it enhances recreational opportunities in the area. Interestingly, youth in Liberty County stated they did not want to see Lake Elwell and Tiber Dam developed, as it is an area where they may escape from adult supervision and engage in youthful activities. This issue should be considered as Liberty County residents evaluate development options for Lake Elwell and Tiber Dam. Another consideration in developing the lake are impacts to future hydroelectric generation and irrigation development projects. Liberty County residents feel that they have not had a good working relationship with the Bureau of Land Management or the Bureau of Reclamation, which may impede any development effort around the lake.

**Recommendation:**

Referring to comments made in the previous section of this report, **Liberty County must develop a consensus position on development around Lake Elwell and Tiber Dam.** In looking at the community members' stated desire to develop more recreational opportunities in the area, attract additional tourists and develop tourism related businesses, as well as supporting businesses, there appears to be a significant opportunity to develop Lake Elwell and Tiber Dam as a multiple use area that accomplishes a number of the community's objectives.

For example, adjacent landowners may partner with a professional real estate developer(s) to build an 18-hole golf course/X-Country skiing park, and surrounded by rental homes and vacation homes. As relationships with BLM & Bureau of Reclamation improve, development may expand to include more of a lake front focus and marina/recreation improvements. This effort needs to be carefully planned so as not to negatively impact the attractive qualities that the lake has currently. For vacationers not wanting to spend the money needed to secure lake accommodations, there appears to be a number of "bed & breakfast" business opportunities, considering the number of vacant or semi-vacant farm houses in the area. These bed & breakfast opportunities may lead to farm/ranch recreation and outdoor sports opportunities that will have a minimal impact on the area but will serve to capture tourist dollars. Bird hunting, big game hunting, mountain biking, hiking, fishing, X-country skiing, and working ranch vacations are a few possible options.

**Recommended Resource:**

**Again, the primary resource needed to drive this project are community members willing to invest themselves in seeing the project to fruition.** A local or private investment will be needed to leverage state and federal assistance funds, as well as any long term financing.

BearPaw Development may assist in areas including technical assistance, planning and securing development funds.

The Montana Department of Commerce, through its Community Development Block Grant program, and its regional development program, may also provide technical and financial assistance.

Karyl Tobel  
MT DOC/CDBG  
P.O. Box 200505  
Helena, MT 59620-0505  
Ph: 406.841.2733 Fx: 406.841.2731  
Email: [karylt@state.mt.us](mailto:karylt@state.mt.us)  
Web: [http://commerce.state.mt.us/brd/BRD\\_CDBG.html](http://commerce.state.mt.us/brd/BRD_CDBG.html)

The Economic Development Administration and USDA-Rural Development may provide funds for planning and development as well.

John Rogers, Economic Development Officer  
US DOC/EDA  
P.O. Box 578  
Helena, MT 59601  
Ph: 406.449.5380 Fx: 406.449.5381  
Email: [edrmteda@aol.com](mailto:edrmteda@aol.com)

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality will both need to be involved in an project to insure that adverse impacts to the environment and other water users are avoided. The Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks may also have concerns over potential impacts to fisheries and wildlife habitat. The Bureau of Land Management and the Bureau of Reclamation should also be involved as early as possible, to promote a cooperative working relationship and to prevent derailments.

**Main Topic:                      Agriculture**

**Issue:                              Value-Added Agriculture Development**

Liberty County residents have stated that they would like value-added agricultural development in the county. A number of comments were made about the potential for livestock feeding. Other community members commented about the potential for grain processing and milling. Some of the comments tend to indicate that a portion of the residents in Liberty County are unable or unwilling to invest in a new value-added agricultural venture.

**Recommendation:**

Liberty County has a tremendous asset in its production agriculture base. It is suggested that Liberty County **residents consider value-added agricultural ventures that will compliment other business, recreation and tourism activities being considered.** Liberty County residents must look carefully at the nature of new value-added agricultural businesses and the costs that will be incurred in starting such a business.

The development of cattle feeding infrastructure serves to take advantage of existing grain and livestock production within the county and elsewhere in the region, and provides easy access to finishing yards in Canada or the Plains states. As cattle feeding experience and expertise

develops within the county, a transition to fat cattle may also be implemented; extending the time on feed within the county, and the dollars captured during that time. Investment required for backgrounding yards in Liberty County is relatively small, and an extensive amount of research and knowledge on how to successfully operate a backgrounding yard is readily available through the university system, and other technical assistance providers.

The concept of starting a large-scale flour mill was mentioned in numerous meetings. Early analysis of this type of venture would suggest that there is extensive milling capacity in existence and that start-up costs of new milling operations are high. It should also be noted that the milled/processed grains business is a highly competitive, price driven commodity industry. The concept is good, but brings a certain level of risk with it. Liberty County residents may wish to further explore this option or related options further before initiating any development effort. Perhaps a better option is an integrated milling, baking and restaurant business.

Liberty County residents also mentioned ethanol and bio-fuel production as a value-added opportunity for the area. The performance history of ethanol businesses in Montana suggest that this opportunity should be carefully investigated, as a facility's financial performance may be less than desirable when a person considers all of the development and operating costs. There is an extensive amount of research that intends to develop grain varieties and enzyme additives that will improve efficiency levels of wheat and barley used for ethanol distillation. There is also a new systems based approach being implemented jointly between ethanol distillers and livestock feeders that shows promise. Operations are able to improve production efficiencies and reduce operating costs by operating together rather than as a stand-alone facility.

**Recommended Resource:**

Liberty County's local development team is again a primary resource provider and must be prepared to position the community and its members to recruit outside value-added agricultural businesses if members of the community are not willing or able to develop the types of enterprises that the community would like to target.

BearPaw Development is able to assist the local development team and local entrepreneurs in helping developing value-added agricultural businesses in the county.

The Montana Dept of Agriculture – Growth Through Agriculture Program, has been formed specifically with value-added agricultural development in mind. The Department has both financial and technical assistance available for value-added business development projects.

USDA-Rural Business Cooperative Service has a significant amount of financial and technical assistance available and compliments the local and state resource programs and providers nicely. Phone: 406.585.2580 and ask for John Guthmiller.

The Montana Department of Commerce – Business Resources Division has numerous programs also designed to assist communities and entrepreneurs in developing and recruiting new enterprises to the county.

**Main Topic:** Business

**Issue:** Local Investment

Based on comments made during the Resource Team Assessment sessions, a portion of Liberty County residents express a fairly low tolerance level towards risk and exhibit an unwillingness to lead community and business/industry enhancement projects. A number of individuals commented that they would only be willing to invest in a project if somebody else would invest in the project first, provide an incentive to participate in the project, and provide an assurance that the project will succeed.

**Recommendation:**

**Liberty County must accept that development projects are less likely to occur unless they “drive” projects through their own efforts and investment.** Given the current economic health of Liberty County and much of rural America, local investment in projects is apt to be limited, but it remains as the trigger and the leverage point in attracting outside investment. Community members who may not be willing or able to invest in projects are encouraged to develop their own “business friendly” attitudes and welcome outside investment and development partners’ participation in community and business development projects. This may require that community members forgo “project ownership”. Ultimately, outside investment and ownership within the County will result in an enhanced tax base, secondary/supporting businesses opportunities, all of which leads towards the development of “community infrastructure” that will support new primary business.

**Recommended Resource:**

The local development team and community members are the primary resource provider needed to implement change in this area.

**Main Topic:** Business

**Issue:** Business Development

Liberty County residents have stated that they would like to see additional business locate within the county. Many would like to see diversification away from agriculture related businesses. Others would like to see a large-scale “community cornerstone” business locate in Chester. There is wide spread skepticism that new businesses will succeed in Liberty County because people feel there is a real lack of local support for local businesses.

**Recommendation:**

**Liberty County are encouraged to overcome their tendency towards “Great Falls envy” and work to structure business development efforts in a manner that utilizes Great Falls’ asset base and proximity as a tool, rather than a competitive force.**

Some of the strengths and assets that Liberty County possesses are its rural community attributes. Working to develop businesses that will compete directly with the Great Falls business community may be counterproductive because Great Falls has reached a level of critical mass. **Residents in Liberty County may be better served if they develop a business community that provides a category of products and services that fulfills some of the community members immediate wants and needs, but that also serve as an attraction to tourists and visitors from Great Falls, Havre, and other areas along the Hi-line.**

Liberty County’s business community must also pay attention to sizing issues. The infrastructure improvement needs for a large manufacturing business may run into the multi-

million dollar range. This may be a financial burden too great for a small community. Given that local economic development tools are somewhat limited in Liberty County, community members may wish to spread their resources over a number of smaller projects. As the smaller projects begin to experience real success and growth, local revenues that may be allocated towards additional community development projects will increase.

Several small business opportunities are ready made in Chester and Liberty County. Community members stated that they would like to see a clothing store, a golf course, a bowling alley, a movie theater, a recreation center, a nice restaurant, an R.V. park/KOA campground, a guiding/outfitting business, and a nice motel. These are all viable small business opportunities for local entrepreneurs. Additionally, these are all small businesses that may serve to make Chester and Liberty County a more attractive location for tourists and travelers to visit.

**Recommended Resource:**

Local entrepreneurs and local development team members are the primary resource available for making significant improvements to Liberty County's business community.

BearPaw Development and state and federal agencies, including the Montana Department of Commerce, USDA-Rural Business Cooperative Service and the Small Business Administration all have an extensive set of tools and programs that may assist new businesses in getting off the ground.

**Report by:**  
**Julie Foster, Executive Director**  
**Montana Jobs Network**  
**4655 Watt Lane**  
**Stevensville, MT 59870**  
**Ph: 406.777.7185 Fx: 406.777.0564**  
**Email: [jmfoster@montana-jobs.net](mailto:jmfoster@montana-jobs.net)**  
**Web: <http://www.montana-jobs.net>**

## **Main Topic: Workforce**

### **Issue: Jobs available / Not available**

[ Employers ] Employers in the community said they had trouble filling open positions and there were plenty of jobs available.

Employers cited burnout of employees due to operating at less than full staff because open positions go unfilled as a problem.

Child care not being as readily available as it could be was identified by the community as an issue that prevents some spouses from becoming part of the workforce.

Open positions consisted of entry level positions and skilled positions many of which were in the healthcare profession. Professionals from the healthcare industry mentioned that many did not want to do that type of work.

High turnover is a problem for some area employers (also noted under Workforce Training).

[ Community ] In general, the word was, there were no jobs, no opportunities for young people, and very difficult for family bread winners to make a living.

Many of the jobs available for young (16-22 years of age) are entry level positions. They are not seen as the beginning of ones career. The young people are aware of the positions available locally and do not see them as opportunities.

Low wages. Members of the more mature workforce cannot make a livable wage working at a single position. Most have a least two jobs, while some had three to four jobs. 1 : 5 people in Liberty County live in poverty.

### **Recommendations:**

The hospital is the areas largest employer with about 150 employees. **A Human Resource Manager should be hired.** Currently 4 other members of the hospital staff share this responsibility. A few of the problems and financial loss that occur from not having some sort of personnel manager in an establishment of this size are:

- No internal customer service. Employees are the Employers customers.
- Inconsistent policies and procedures.
- Bad publicity (i.e. this is not a good place to work)
- No one to build employee incentive programs, employee recognition programs, etc.



- No impartial mediator for work-related problems or a disputes with a co-workers.
- \*Loss of dollars.

\*According to the U.S. Department of Labor the base cost of replacing a worker is 30% of the person's annual earnings. In Montana that is usually between \$4,000 and \$8,000 per worker lost. These dollar losses do not include revenue lost from not providing good customer service and lost sales. Many place this metric at 1.5 times an employee's salary.

Montana businesses must be winners everyday in a global and highly competitive marketplace. Training and having good management staff is required. A good HR Manager will save the establishment much more than the cost of their salary.

**Make the available jobs more desirable.** Your employees are your customers. How are you treating them? Do you have good communication? Do you show your employees that their contributions are valued? Do you give employees feedback and coaching on performance? Do you create opportunities for employees to be challenged and use creativity on the job? Do you involve employees in day-to-day business decisions; ask their input for improvement and possible areas of growth? Could you list three of your employee's favorite things about working for you? Could you list three things individual employees like least about their job? Do you know what your employee's strengths are?

As a Manager / employer if you answered no to any of the above your employees are falling through the cracks, going on to their next job where they are likely to spread unfavorable information to friends and acquaintances about your establishment.

**Improve by setting a goal to be able to answer yes to all the above questions in the coming months. Begin today.**

**Don't under estimate the value communicating with your employees will have.** Do make sure you have an open door policy and make sure your employees know that you want to hear from them. Set aside time each week or bi-weekly to meet and talk with employees. This could be a group session where you give them information on how things are going in general, or a brain storming session on how to attract more customers this summer.

Some jobs are boring. Let your employees know that if they are coming to you to complain because the grass is green they need to help you by providing some suggested solutions.

**Make a boring jobs less tedious by getting creative.** If an employee has 5 essential tasks that are repetitive try to break up the monotony by assigning at least one task that challenges the person. They can be thinking about this challenge during the tedious time. Communicate, ask the employees and co-works for suggestions. Great ideas can be rewarded with recognition.

**Rewards and recognition that don't cost a lot and fit the person they are being given to.**

- Employee gets to go home an hour early with pay.
- A CD of their favorite artist (the fact that you took the trouble to find out what they like is a powerful statement).
- Re-assign the task you know they don't like doing for a week.
- Let peers, other employees in town, and friends know about the employee's contribution.

- Restaurant owners. Does the employee like to cook? Name the soup of the week after the employee and let them come up with the recipe.
- Is the employee interested in art? Let them select and decorate the next window theme.
- Special food - homemade chocolate chip cookies with a nice note and in pretty container they can keep.

**You can't change the nature of the work but you can change the way workers feel about doing it and the pride they take in their contribution to the business.**

Low wages is a problem of every community in the United States and the world. Unskilled workers bear most of this burden. Training your workforce is the best way to overcome low wages.

Specialty retailing, call centers, and the fast food industry are among Montana's top employers. Three of these typically pay low wages. Many workers that make low wages do not have the skills to climb the ladder to better paying positions.

Workers making low wages may need assistance with are transportation, child care, medical access, education (GED), and career path guidance. **Provide employees with opportunities for training which will lead to advancement (higher wage positions). Provide incentives for employees when reaching their goals.**

**Liberty County Hospital is a respected community icon. Consider a collaborative effort among the town's employers, led by the hospital, to provide those items above that will help increase a low wage workers out of pocket responsibilities.**

**Career path guidance and opportunities for advancement could begin with a list of positions that are not being filled.** What skills are not currently available in the local workforce? Employers, work with the community, your employees, educators, high school students, colleges of technology, and universities to develop curriculums that local residents can attend to gain skills and fill these positions.

**Recommended Resources:**

[Note: Employers are aware of State provided resources such as their local Job Service therefore that information is not listed here.]

Hawkpoint Consulting Inc.  
 Mary Larson (Butte, MT native)  
 7234 NE 147th PL  
 Kenmore, WA 98028-4936  
 Telephone (206)854-1429  
<http://www.hawkpointinc.com>

Coleen Callahan, President  
 Workforce Solutions of Montana, LLP  
 (406) 439-4369  
[wfsolutions@msn.com](mailto:wfsolutions@msn.com)

**Havre SCORE**

**[I spoke with Barry Remus - they are eager to assist businesses - there is no charge - highly recommend taking advantage of their service and expertise.]**

Barry Remus, Co-Chair [406.265.5847 - rings at Havre Job Service]

Gus Korb, Co-Chair

518 1st Street, Box 308

Havre MT 59501

Phone: (406) 265-4383

Fax: (406) 265-7548

E-mail: remo55@mtintouch.net or [korbg@msun.edu](mailto:korbg@msun.edu)

Peer Resources

<http://www.peer.ca/peer.html>

Miscellaneous:

Tax Credit for Child Care Information

<http://www.childcarenet.org/Tax%20credit%20for%20employer.htm>

Montana Child Care Resource and Referral Network

<http://www.montanachildcare.com>

Child Care Co-Ops

<http://www.ncba.coop/children.cfm>

Digital Divide Network - covers a variety of topics on succeeding in the digital world.

<http://www.digitaldividenetwork.org>

## **Main Topic: Workforce**

### **Issue: Workforce Education / Job Training**

High turnover is a problem for some area employers. Workers with skills to match local employment opportunities are difficult to find. Basic customer service is sometimes lacking. Young people do not return to the community. No diversity in the population. Many workers are underpaid and hold multiple jobs creating a jack-of-all-trades talent pool.

Assets of Liberty County are a well-educated population. Educators that care about the community and the student's welfare. Excellent high speed Internet access is available and affordable to almost everyone. The library currently offers many Adult Education programs. The community is made up of a tenacious, quality people, both young and mature that are "doers".

### **Recommendations:**

**Businesses must invest in training their workforce.** Small employers with little budget for training have a difficult time overcoming the lack of a trained workforce. Employee turnover has a significant impact on revenue because they find it hard to keep current customers, attract new customers, increase productivity or pursue growth opportunities. This creates a downward spiral effect on the workforce.

Montana Job Training Partnership, Inc. administers grant funds from the Workforce Investment Act. **Your business may qualify to receive these funds to assist with workforce training and development.**

**Train your managers.** Good management is key to implementing necessary improvements. A low cost solution would be a monthly "Managers Roundtable" where local employers meet to share challenges and create solutions. If the hospital did hire an HR Manager that leadership would be very beneficial for the roundtable. A well done roundtable will catalyze the acceptance and ability to be exposed to and adapt new concepts, which will be applied to day-to-day business for great benefit.

A **reading club** on business issues would tie in nicely with a Management Roundtable. Conversation with peers on these topics will naturally spur ideas that you will enjoy trying.

Management requires advanced communication, negotiation, leadership, coaching and mentoring skills. **If you are the owner / manager get an impartial party to evaluate your management skills.** Collaborate with others in town to hire a professional to do the evaluation.

All people are not good at all things. Evaluate your strengths and stick to those. If you are not cut out to be a manager hand that responsibility off to someone in your business that is.

**75% of employees leave their jobs because of the manager.** Managing a diverse group of employees is challenging. Only a small percentage of managers in Montana's small businesses receive training in "management skills". One reason for management without proper training is that promotion is used as a reward for doing a good job. Often those promoted to management have no particular skills or training for the job they are asked to do.

Don't use promotion as a reward. Do make sure managers and anyone in a supervisory role has the proper training.

Assist in integrating education, training, workforce development and career path development more fully into your business and community planning.

When employees come onboard provide them with information on moving up the job ladder. What will the employee need to accomplish to be given greater responsibility? This is a very challenging endeavor. Liberty County has a strong community that wants to succeed.

**Collaborate with the area businesses to provide ladder jobs within the community.** The employee may begin their career and training at one business and continue it at another.

**Be prepared to send employees that can not contribute to your team packing.** Have a set probationary period. When you do your part and the employee cannot fit in don't drag it out. That costs you money and is unfair to those that do make up your good team players.

**The climb up the job ladder for low wage earners will not happen without training and significant effort. See Project Quest.** There are many links to online materials. Don't hesitate to contact the individuals associated with them. Most will readily discuss projects that were close to their hearts and be happy to lend a hand.

There are funds available for improvement in these areas. Annie E. Case Foundation is an excellent resource as well as possible grant source. Bear Paw Development can help the community apply once specific needs and potential solutions are documented.

**Provide the environment for employers, managers, employees, community leaders, and educators to collaborate and brainstorm with one another on training, curriculum and workforce development.** Get together regularly at a set time and place to discuss these projects. Encourage those with ideas that seem a little bit edgy. End each meeting with action items that are assigned to those that will accept the responsibility. Generally those that will be most engaged in getting things done will have something at stake. Set some fairly easy short term goals so you will be bolstered by the successes and will be able to share them with others.

**Prior to contacting or hiring a professional make training part of your existing business plan.** Many business plans are very elaborate and require months of effort to create. If you have one, great. If you do not, create a business plan and timeline that works for you. It may be only a page or two. Create a document you can manage, it may look like a "to do" list instead of a formal business plan. Keep it up dated and it will be a valuable guide and measure of whether you are moving forward or running in place. Include your training and management goals and the budget for them in the plan. Know your strengths and areas that need improvement. Think about how you will measure success in the areas of improvement.

Success is easily measured in dollars. Other less tangible measures happen when the workplace runs smoothly, requiring less time and stress (turnover and unhappy employees) in management. Better trained and happier employees may buy you more quality time away from the business. Time may be found to think about expansion or new products and services when all your energy is not consumed just getting by.

Have realistic expectations. Changing the work environment will be similar to a diet. It takes time to add the pounds to our bodies and it takes time to get the fat off. The rewards for sticking with the plan are worth the effort.

#### **Recommended Resources:**

Project Quest

<http://www.questsa.com/>

Annie E. Case Foundation

<http://www.aecf.org/initiatives/>

Basic Soft Skills - Montana Business Culture 101

<http://www.montana-jobs.net/mbc101>

#### **Havre SCORE**

Barry Remus, Co-Chair [406.265.5847 - rings at Havre Job Service]

Gus Korb, Co-Chair

518 1st Street, Box 308

Havre MT 59501

Phone: (406) 265-4383

Fax: (406) 265-7548

E-mail: [remo55@mtintouch.net](mailto:remo55@mtintouch.net) or [korgb@msun.edu](mailto:korgb@msun.edu)

Hawkpoint Consulting Inc.  
Mary Larson (Butte, MT native)  
7234 NE 147th PL  
Kenmore, WA 98028-4936  
Telephone (206)854-1429  
<http://www.hawkpointinc.com>

Coleen Callahan, President  
Workforce Solutions of Montana, LLP  
(406) 439-4369  
[wfsolutions@msn.com](mailto:wfsolutions@msn.com)

Montana Job Training Partnership, Inc.  
<http://www.mjtp.org/>  
302 N. Last Chance Gulch, Suite 409  
Helena, MT 59601  
Phone: (406) 444-1330 Toll Free: (800) 845-0318  
Fax: (406) 444-1316

Human Resource Management Discussion Group (Yahoo)  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HRNET/>

Training and Development Discussion Group (Yahoo)  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/trdev/>

Learnativity  
<http://www.learnativity.com/>

Montana Manufacturing Center  
<http://www.mtmanufacturingcenter.com/>

Reading:

Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence  
by Daniel Goleman, Annie McKee, Richard E. Boyatzis

First Break All the Rules : What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently"  
by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman

Discipline Without Punishment : "The Proven Strategy That Turns Problem Employees into Superior Performers"  
by Dick Grote

## **Main Topic: Business**

### **Issue: Business Development**

All the previous workforce and youth issues impact business development. Transitioning from traditional agriculture is a challenge. Being resistant to change is normal but must be overcome.

The low price of wheat and commodities and global market competition is an issue. A poor national economy is reflected even more in Liberty County after 7 years of drought, low commodity prices, and a trend toward putting croplands into CRP.

Children that in traditional times would be taking over the family farm have moved away for career opportunities. Not only does this leave no one to run the farm but the knowledge that is passed down from generation to generation is lost.

**There is not a diversified economy. The existing economy is too dependent on agriculture. Many businesses that were ag related have left the community. Assets that do exist for business opportunities have not been put to use.**

- State regulations make it difficult to start new businesses.
- Young people leave and do not return.
- The population continues to decline.
- Lack of public transportation and location of Liberty County is considered an obstacle.
- BurlingtonNorthern / SanteFe Railroad - the cost of getting product to market is an issue.
- Not shopping local is a problem for local businesses.
- There is not a readily available pool of skilled talent.
- A variety of "things to do" for young people and adults are not available.
- Cultural and social amenities are not plentiful.
- New comers may not be warmly welcomed and made to feel that this is home.

When driving by on Hwy 2 the visual impact is unattractive. There is no signage to let anyone know what is available in town.

Relationship between Chester and Joplin is tense, which is currently due mainly to a school consolidation issue.

### **Recommendations:**

Assets:

- Comment from a resource session "This is our home"
- Great people and community (safe, caring, beautiful, peaceful, generous, hard working, educated).
- Excellent healthcare facility.
- Excellent recreation opportunities - Sweet Grass Hills / Tiber, hunting, fishing
- Culture and art beginning to develop with the art gallery, museum, Sweet Grass music, stained glass and others. A culture of Western Heritage, colorful population and town history.
- High Speed Internet, Library, Schools and educators.
- Distance from Great Falls - many will take advantage of services in Liberty Co. when available.
- Hardworking, committed, community leaders, Chamber, and local government officials.

- Good place for elders to retire.
- Churches - strong faith based communities.

### **Community Visions:**

Alternative energy facilities, bowling, movie theatre, paint ball, youth center, baseball, feed lot, flour plant, vacant lots and houses to be fixed up or developed, Border Patrol office in Chester, value added agriculture, irrigation project, clothing store, capitalize on homeland security, golf course, RV parks, service station (Joplin), put old grain elevators to use as bakery, restaurant, art gallery, observation tower, or pasta plant. Develop recreation opportunities at Tiber / Lake Elwell; chartered fishing, year round concessionaire, hotel, bar. More services for retirees. Swimming pool, waterslide, amusement park. Manufacturing, call center, distribution center, Wheat Montana franchise. A nice restaurant, micro-brewery. Train watching. Visitor center. Large community center for events like weddings and the High School reunion.

Business development includes growing new locally conceived business and expanding existing businesses. **The growth that takes place in Liberty County should be governed by the community vision. The way growth would look has been addressed. All of the above are ripe for anyone with an entrepreneurial spirit to undertake.**

People make economic development. Do all that is possible to attract outsiders, retain, and regain people.

Communication. **Aggressively let those outside the community know of your assets and vision for growth.** Create a brochure. Send it to all the alums on record at the high school. Place the information on the web, in the visitor center, in the local cafes. Make sure visitors coming through town will find the information easily.

"This is our home". New comers want to have that feeling too. Accepting a new comer to town is not the same as warmly welcoming them and actively bringing them into the fold, making sure they are included in community decisions, events, church, etc. **Tolerance and acceptance of diversity by a community has proven to be a key factor in economic development.**

Recreation, and culture are important economic development pieces. Talented entrepreneurs want these things to be part of their lives. Sweet Grass Music, the museum, and the art gallery are the beginning and the anchors. **Expand on these and support them.**

Ingrained perceptions are very difficult to overcome. Try hard not to create negative perceptions. The young people have lived half their lives hearing the challenges. **Have they heard the opportunities and assets as much?** It is important to recapture a percentage of the young people after they return from seeing the world. That will not happen if they don't perceive something to come back to.

Employees are one of the best assets for strengthening or growing business. Make organized efforts to get them involved and obtain their ideas.



**Community support for existing business could be stronger.** Entrepreneurs go where the least barriers to entry exist. If the community is not supporting existing business that is a sign that it will be more difficult for them to succeed here. If a local business has prices that are too high, hours that do not fit, or poor customer service or product. Communicate that to the owner. Push them to change.

People will shop online. Consider setting up affiliate relationships with companies that offer them, and many do. The local merchant will make something on each transaction.

Work with Bear Paw Development, SCORE, local bankers, and community groups to make it easy to start a business in Liberty County. **Create a shopping basket of things a new business startup might need.** Low cost business property or lease, a loan, customers, insurance, marketing, friendship, mentoring, housing and family needs. Locate every community figure that has a stake in the town surviving and ask which of the basket items they can help with. Develop a simple process to help, not support, a new business.

**Value added agriculture is happening.** The article "Revitalizing Rural Communities through Agriculture" speaks to your heart. The articles in American Farmer say it can be done and provide resources for doing so. SBIR (Small Business Innovation Research) is a federally funded endeavor to increase the ability of small business to compete in developing products or services for the federal government. There is a lot of opportunity in this program. It also requires a lot of work. Don't get bogged down researching it online. Contact Linda and she will connect you to someone that will help.

**When making the transition to a valued added ag product, or if you are going to begin an entirely new business, research and plan, and do something you really enjoy doing.**

Pride is an asset and a fault. Make sure the community pride is an asset. The town has great Internet access. Use it to contact other communities with models in rural revitalization and ask for their suggestions.

### **Resources:**

Montana Associated Technology Roundtables  
Russ Fletcher - russ@matr.net  
<http://www.matr.net>

Linda Brander  
Montana SBIR Program  
Montana Department of Commerce  
301 South Park  
POB 200505  
Helena, MT 59620-0505  
Phone: (406) 841-2749  
Fax: (406) 841-2728  
[http://sbir.state.mt.us/BRD\\_SBIR\\_News.asp](http://sbir.state.mt.us/BRD_SBIR_News.asp)

Montana NxLevel Training (Online)!!

Philip Belangie  
Phone: (406) 721-3663  
[pbelangie@state.mt.us](mailto:pbelangie@state.mt.us)  
<http://www.nxlevelmontana.org/>

The Heartland Center  
<http://www.heartlandcenter.info/>

"Revitalizing Rural Communities through Agriculture"  
<http://www.ssu.missouri.edu/faculty/jikerd/papers/BrandonRuralRev.html>

American Farmer [click on Big Sandy, MT - Quinn]  
<http://www.sare.org/newfarmer/toc.htm>

King Arthur Flour  
<http://www.kingarthurflour.com/cgi-bin/start/ahome/main.html>

Funding through Sustainable Agriculture Program  
<http://www.sare.org/htdocs/sare/funding.html>

Montana State University  
<http://www.montana.edu/wwwpb/2002report/anrptcom.html>

Montana World Trade Center  
Gallagher Business Building, Suite 257  
The University of Montana  
Missoula, MT 59812-6798  
<http://www.mwtc.org/>

Example Affiliate Program at Amazon  
<http://associates.amazon.com/exec/panama/associates/ntg/browse/-/567864/102-6743269-5046561>

Wind Powered Kites  
<http://www.windpowersports.com/>

Montana Jobs Network  
<http://www.montana-job.nset>

## **Main Topic: Youth**

### **Issue: Retaining Our Youth**

Keeping young people in the community was a challenge listed by every community group, except the young people. Most young people prepare to leave, most believing they will not ever return, and more importantly leaving with the perception that there are no opportunities for them in their home town and the future will not hold different anything to return to.

Challenges mentioned by the Liberty High School class of 2003.

- Nothing to do. They hang out at Subway.

- No jobs.
- They are in the middle of nowhere.
- People don't shop locally.

Assets mentioned by the Liberty High School class of 2003.

- They know everybody in town.
- Low crime rate. Safe town.
- Community support.
- Tiber / The lake.

Community Vision of the Liberty High School class of 2003.

- Bowling alley.
- Theatre
- Baseball / Paint ball
- Youth Center - it would have a lounge with comfortable seating, games, stereo, the younger kids would be included
- Internships with real world skills
- Better jobs for adults.
- Tiber. They like the lake how it is because there aren't many people or boats there.

Notes on the conversation with the Seniors.

- They never see the mayor.
- More would come back if there were good jobs.
- Computer applications and technology skills are not strong enough.
- Adults do not know how to use the computers.
- For some students keyboarding is the extent of their computer skills.
- Many know how to surf and do email.

We asked the Seniors if they thought they could run a Youth Center with some mentoring from adults. They said yes, but the adults would never let them do it.

### **Recommendations:**

Most young people do leave their hometown. To reach their potential and to learn to really value their home town it is essential that they leave, see the world, and get a bigger sense of where they belong in that world.

Encourage the young graduates to go. **Prior to their going, make sure the community has instilled in them an invitation to return.** The invitation will include knowledge of opportunity and curiosity. Because the community is taking control of the population decline and economic diversification in the very recent past what can be left with those that will leave this year is the knowledge that something is being done to create opportunities and plant the seed of curiosity to check back frequently.

Why do they feel like they never see the mayor? Are they included in community leadership roles? Included means their opinions and ideas are listened to and given serious consideration.

The young people should see themselves as valued members of the community.

Include the young people in projects that have meaning for them. Establishing a youth center, getting the bowling alley going or starting a baseball team. Help them enter roles of responsibility in a local projects, projects they can see results from, take pride in, and receive recognition for. These kinds of experiences are the memories they will have when ready to consider returning.

The Tiber area is something that most of the community mentioned they wanted to develop. The Seniors are the only ones that want to keep Tiber the way it is. Involving these young people in the plans for Tiber's future is essential. This lake is very important to them.

**Begin a mentoring program.** If the expertise to begin is not available locally bring someone in to help get the relationship between young and adults to blossom.

These thoughts mentioned by the seniors in the hour long session are a quick glimpse of how they view the world. Through mentors and community involvement a more in depth look into their thoughts will hopefully be drawn. As the seniors obtain a mentor, encourage them in turn to choose a younger person to begin mentoring.

**Working successfully with community young people will utilize many of the same methods that create happy productive employees.** What motives each individual will be different. Take the time to get to know these young members of society and capitalize on the their strengths when including them in projects. Find a good fit.

#### **Resources:**

National Mentoring Partnership  
<http://www.mentoring.org/>

Youth As Resources  
<http://www.yar.org/>

Youth-Based Community Development Opportunities  
<http://lone-eagles.com/chap7.htm>

Great List of Questions to Ask Yourself When Talking With those Under 25.  
<http://www.essexchips.org/walktalk.htm>

#### **Main Topic: Youth**

##### **Issue: School To Work**

Young people would like an opportunity to learn and to exercise the skills they will use in the career path they have chosen. Of the High School Seniors we talked with about 80% has selected a career to pursue and would be entering college or some form of higher education.

**Students felt that technology was not covered in enough depth.** Courses that everyone should master were not required. The adults did not know how to use the computers well enough.

Students, parents, for the most part the entire community say there are no job opportunities for young people.

**Recommendations:**

**Examine the existing curriculum.** Make sure the necessary skills are being taught and develop opportunities for these skills to be put to use in a value exchange manner.

**Create a curriculum committee** made up of students, employers, parents, teachers, and other community members. If possible invite a few outside the community to participate, someone from the University of Great Falls, or the a College of Technology.

Educational attempts to share knowledge of technology often bypass the teachers. Take good look at this possibility and take steps to correct if this is the case.

Technology covers a big educational area. To provide education on technology a teacher that teaches only tech and is well trained themselves should be brought in. Funding is always a problem. **Collaborate with Joplin, brain storm with the community to find the funds.**

**Office programs like Word, Excel, and Access are programs that all students and teachers should know how to use.** Basic computer use and minor fixes such as installing, uninstalling, backing up data, moving and copying files should be known. Programs other than Microsoft should be known. Front Page should not be the only program used to teach web site building skills. Introduction to networking, commerce and research could be covered. The technology list is long and without a teacher to focus on that topic much will be left uncovered.

Young people need to be provided opportunities to use the skills they are developing. Internship / School To Career programs are the most widely used protocol for this to happen.

**If a paid salary is out of the question get creative.** As a business person with a use for these skills what assets (value) do you possess that could be exchanged for the value of the skills?

If the community wants these young people to come back and or stay begin talking with them about their career goals. Many of the seniors knew what career choice they were going to pursue. These upcoming graduates need to know the community is going to be making improvements in the area of locally available opportunities.

What do they like to do? Is it painting, building, welding, growing things, adding up numbers? Whatever their talents are, as a community take it upon yourselves to make sure young people get to exercise their talent and skill.

Encourage entrepreneurship in the schools. **Create a business / entrepreneur club.** There are many resources available online. Liberty County has the wonderful asset of access to high speed Internet. Use that access to help overcome the barriers every chance you get.

**Resources:**

School To Work Ideas For Improvement  
<http://www.ncrel.org/cscd/pubs/lead21/2-1k.htm>

Preparing Technology Competent Teachers  
<http://www.ncrel.org/tech/challenge/>

Going Solo - Tools for Teaching Entrepreneurship  
<http://www.goingsolo.uiuc.edu/goingsolo/about/about.asp>

Online Entrepreneurship Training  
<http://www.nfte.com/biztech/>

Mississippi Governor puts a computers in every classroom with the help of students.  
<http://www.govtech.net/news/news.phtml?docid=2003.01.02-36986>  
Montana Associated Technology Roundtables  
<http://www.matr.net>

Montana Business Culture 101  
<http://www.montana-jobs.net/mbc101/>

Education World  
<http://www.education-world.com/vocational/>

## **Main Topic: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **Issue or Project:**

Individual centered economic development.

Most jobs are created by small businesses.

Many local people have good ideas for business, but need support of knowledgeable marketing, financial, or product experts to make their ideas successful.

Most of this knowledge is available within the community or region for little or no cost.

### **Recommendations & Objectives:**

Take another look at the project Sirolli in the Golden Triangle project. Find a way to participate in this project. Much will be learned.

### **Contact / Recommended Resource(s):**

- [www.sirolli.com](http://www.sirolli.com) There is contact information at this site.

*Ripples on the Zambezi: Passion Entrepreneurship and the Rebirth of Local Economies*, Ernesto Sirolli. Order from you local bookstore (\$14.95) or available from Amazon.com (used copies starting at \$7.95.)

- Craig Erickson, Bearpaw Development, [cerickson@bearpaw.org](mailto:cerickson@bearpaw.org)

**Report by: Gloria O'Rourke**  
**MEDA – Montana Economic Developers Association**  
**MEDA – Montana Economic Development Services**  
**118 E. Seventh St.; Suite 2A**  
**Anaconda, MT 59711**  
**Ph: 406.563.5259 Fx: 406.563.5476**  
**Email: [gloria@medamembers.org](mailto:gloria@medamembers.org)**  
**Web: <http://www.medamembers.org>**

My fellow team members have done an excellent job of responding to almost each and every main issue that was brought up during our Liberty County Resource Team Assessment. Each team member reported on areas according to their strengths and experience and I will strive to do the same in my comments below.

### **MAIN TOPIC: AGRICULTURE**

#### **Issue: BNSF**

I have had the privilege of participating in almost all of the Resource Teams held along the Hi-Line. Over and over, a problem or issue expressed by every community has been issues with the BNSF RailRoad.

#### **Recommendation:**

Bring the Hi-Line communities together for a workshop with John Karl. I spoke with John Karl, Manager of Economic Development for this region for BNSF. He said that he would be happy to come to a workshop organized by the Hi-Line communities to discuss ways to foster economic growth utilizing BNSF transportation. He would be interested in a positive dialogue as to how groups can work together, broaden the agriculture base, and provide product diversity.

John made it clear that he is not the point of contact for complaints regarding grain rates or service problems. He said that you could speak with your local train masters regarding local issues and/or write to the address below:

BNSF  
VP of Ag Products  
P.O. Box 961051  
Ft. Worth, TX 76161-0051

John Karl, Manager Economic Development  
Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway  
2454 Occidental Ave.; Suite 1-A  
Seattle, WA 98134  
Ph: 206.625.6176 Fx: 206.625.6471  
Email: [john.karl@bnsf.com](mailto:john.karl@bnsf.com)  
Web: <http://www.bnsf.com>

## MAIN TOPIC: COMMUNITY

### **Issue: Beautification**

Many communities are struggling to deal with the issue of blight, abandoned homes, neglected yards and your basic junk and clutter.

### **Recommendation:**

Dale Longfellow, Mayor of Hobson, made this problem a priority for the people of Hobson and worked to establish a Decay Ordinance. As a result, beautification is happening in Hobson. Dale is now very experienced in this area and would be glad to tell other communities/counties how to get the job done. Baker, Montana, is another community that has had great success in this area.

### **Contact:**

Dale Longfellow, Mayor of Hobson  
Hobson Insurance  
Hobson, MT 59452  
Ph: 406.423.5428

Roger Schmidt, Planner  
Baker, MT  
[rds@midrivers.com](mailto:rds@midrivers.com)

## MAIN TOPIC: COMMUNITY

### **Issue: Volunteerism**

A common problem in both big towns and small – is the STP rule – the Same Three People do all the work. But it is possible to find new volunteers and encourage longevity in the volunteers currently working.

### **Recommendation:**

Do use the volunteer survey sheets that were collected during the Liberty County Resource Team Assessment as a database for new volunteers. Individuals have already indicated their area of interest and are expecting to be approached. Here are ideas as to where to find more volunteers:

1. Business/Corporate volunteer programs - provide opportunities for employees to become involved in service to the community. Some businesses even allow their employees to work with nonprofit organizations during the workday. You might even discover a new funding source when obtaining corporate or business volunteers.
2. Scope out other organizations - churches and other institutions with volunteer programs offer a wealth of volunteer prospects who are motivated by their beliefs to serve their community.



Service committees and youth groups within these organizations can be a great source of volunteers for special events or other group activities.

3. Try internship programs - at colleges and high schools. Some internship programs require a stipend for the students while many others provide interns free of charge in exchange for a meaningful volunteer project. For example, interns can develop a marketing plan, perform prospect research, organize a special event, or manage a telemarketing campaign. With the internet, an intern never has to step foot in your community.

4. Career counseling centers - can help you identify individuals who are changing careers and considering entering the nonprofit sector as volunteers. These individuals may need to build their nonprofit resume by volunteering with nonprofit organizations in the community.

5. Civic clubs, fraternal organizations, sororities and fraternities - can be great resources for large numbers of volunteers needed for group projects. For example, a local Rotary Club may assist you with security along the route of a 10K Run or distribute refreshments at a school carnival.

6. Newspapers, radio, television - are excellent vehicles to promote your volunteer needs. Press and media can be enlisted as sponsors of your events and encourage people throughout the community to become involved with and attend your events. Some offer free or as-available space to help you advertise.

7. Governmental offices at local, state, and federal levels may also be a source of volunteers to assist your organization. Many governmental organizations allow employees to leave work for up to one half day a week to serve as volunteers in the community.

8. Court systems offer a ready source of individuals who have committed minor offenses and who have to provide community service in lieu of jail. These volunteers can be of great assistance in performing tasks such as setting up or cleaning up a special event. Our own office benefited greatly from the skills of a high school student who was sentenced to community service. The student was sentenced for hacking into and harming our local high school computer network. Our office realized his computer skills would be of value to us in servicing our computer network. It turned out to be a win-win situation for everyone involved.

9. Volunteer recruitment fairs can be conducted along with other nonprofit organizations to reach a wide audience of volunteer prospects.

10. Other nonprofit organizations can be a tremendous resource in identifying and recruiting volunteers for your organization. If the volunteer needs are made clear to our associates in other nonprofit organizations they can steer volunteers your way who may not fit within their current volunteer needs.

### **How do you keep and encourage the volunteers you currently have in your community?**

1. Ask first if they'd like to be publicly acknowledged, then include them in an event
2. Send a letter to their supervisor at work...tell the manager how much you appreciate their hard work and special qualities.
3. Write an article in your newsletter

4. Have a board or staff member call them to advise them of how much they are appreciated
5. Send a visitor with a flower
6. Have a board member or other special person invite them to an executive lunch in a special place
7. Invite them to a special event or dinner...and honor them there
8. Write an article about their work in your neighborhood or city newspaper
9. Call them to talk and get their ideas
10. Give them more responsibility - but watch for burnout!

## **MAIN TOPIC: COMMUNITY**

### **Issue: Faith-based Opportunities**

Investigate faith-based funding for providing child care, transportation or many other services that may be lacking in your community.

#### **Recommendation:**

More and more communities are learning how to tap into Faith Based fund to create programs that meet specific community needs. I have listed two sources below – one Montana based and the other in Washington, DC. The following restrictions do apply: *Compassion Capital Funds cannot be used for direct services to needy individuals or families nor to replace/supplant existing funding available for similar activities. Funds cannot be used to support 'inherently religious' activities and/or practices such as religious instruction, worship, prayer or any form of proselytization nor can they be used to purchase any religious or scriptural materials.*

#### **Faith and Communities Engaged in Service (FACES)**

FACES helps national service grantees and programs to reach out to these organizations and assists such organizations in learning about opportunities available through the Corporation.

[Colleen Minson](#)

[Sarita Hill Coletrane](#)

1000 Connecticut Avenue, NW

13th Floor

Washington, DC 20036

800-355-1200

[faces@ncpc.org](mailto:faces@ncpc.org)

<http://nsrc.etr.org/article/view/236/1/10/>

#### **Montana Faith Based Cooperative:**

The Montana Faith-Health Cooperative was officially formed in June of 2001, and planning, development and implementation of the state-wide collaborative effort is being directed by a [Steering Committee](#) consisting of representatives from the faith community and health care establishment. One project of the Montana Faith-Health Cooperative is the [Montana Faith-Health Demonstration Project](#), funded through the [Compassion Capital Fund](#) (see [Restrictions](#) below), [Administration for Children and Families](#), [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#). The overarching goal of the project is to provide technical assistance and sub-awards to assist Faith-Based and Community-Based Organizations in the delivery of health and [social services](#) to poor and needy individuals and families. In addition to making sub-awards, the Montana Faith-Health Demonstration Project will be providing funds to support the following ongoing programs: Parish Nurse training and Congregational Health Ministry training through

the Parish Nurse Center, Carroll College; continuing education through the Northern Rockies Institute of Theology; and prisoner-community re-entry through Teach, Encourage, Assist and Model (T.E.A.M.) Mentoring, Inc.

Additional information about the Montana Faith-Health Cooperative can be found at <http://faithhealthcoop.montana.edu/aboutus.html>.

## **MAIN ISSUE: COMMUNITY**

### **Issue: Local Clothing Store**

#### **Recommendation:**

Talk to other community leaders that been involved in opening a local community owned clothing store for their area. Colstrip's store is called "Got Sox" – aptly named because it was not possible to buy a pair of socks without traveling to Billings. Local people pulled together and made it all happen. Colstrip was guided through the process by Anne Boothe of Malta.

#### **Talk with:**

Anne Boothe, Executive Director  
PhillCo Economic Growth Council  
P.O. Box 1637  
Malta, MT 59538  
Ph: 406.654.1776 Fx: same  
Email: [phillco@ttc-cmc.net](mailto:phillco@ttc-cmc.net)

Jim Atchison, Executive Director  
Southeastern MT Development Corp.  
P.O. Box 1935  
Colstrip, MT 59323  
Ph: 406.748.2990 Fx: same  
Email: [semcd@mcn.net](mailto:semcd@mcn.net)

## **MAIN TOPIC: YOUTH**

### **Issue: After School Programs and Youth Involvement**

The youth of Big Sandy are the heart of Big Sandy. In addition, no doubt some of these young people will be the future leaders of Big Sandy. Get the students involved in the community – most of the time, they only need to be asked and given a job to do.

#### **Recommendation:**

In my search for answers dealing with youth development, I came across a wonderful website sponsored by the National Youth Employment Coalition. NYEC is a non-partisan national organization dedicated to promoting policies and initiatives that help youth succeed in becoming lifelong learners, productive workers and self-sufficient citizens. The program has a special section called "Youth Zone" and gives practical advice and examples of youth projects: "Whether you have a youth center or want ideas on how to enhance your employment program

to effectively engage youth, check out the resources on this page for examples of programs already out there, resources for planning and information on how to serve youth.” Visit the website at <http://www.nyec.org/Jettcon2001/designguide.htm> and receive information on:

[Examples of Youth Centers/Programs](#)

[Examples of Programs Using Technology Tools for Planning](#)

[Tools for Assessment and Improvement](#)

**[Resources on Youth Development](#)**

**[Resources on Afterschool/Out-of-School Programming](#)**

[Tools for Planning](#)

[Tools for Assessment & Improvement](#)

[Resources on Youth Development](#)

## **MAIN TOPIC: EDUCATION**

### **Issue: Maintaining Local Schools**

It became very apparent to the team that the topic of school consolidation was a “hot button” between the communities of Chester and Joplin.

**Recommendation:** Don’t use the “c” word - consolidation. Instead, explore ways that Joplin and Chester school systems can support and enhance each other. Surely Joplin has assets that Chester does not, and vice versa. My recommendation is to bring in some “experts” on problem solving and conflict resolution. The Montana Consensus Council has a mission to step in and facilitate “hot button” issues. I would like to think that Chester and Joplin could successfully work through this problem and thereby create a model for other communities to follow. I know that the people of Liberty County can do it!

#### **Contact:**

The Montana Consensus Council  
State Capitol  
Helena, Mt 59620-0801  
406-444-2075

## **MAIN TOPIC: BUSINESS**

### **Issue: Shopping Local – Supporting Local Businesses**

#### **Recommendation:**

Simply put, education can be the key to improving local support for your local businesses. Put up signs or fliers with the statistics of just what it costs locals to drive out of town for “bargains.” The information below was provided by Al Jones, SouthCentral Regional Development Officer for Montana Department of Commerce.

Al writes: " Most folks barely account for the cost of gas when they drive 100 miles to shop at big box stores, grocers, etc. and this mileage cost from AAA assumes THEIR TIME IS WORTH NOTHING. In other words that they're unemployed, pay no one for time-saving services like day care or lawn-mowing, and that they'd just be home watching tv during the hours spent driving. So by running to the distant stores 1x-4x a month, in most cases the shopper is actually reducing their purchasing power while also wasting a day in the process.

Take AAA's current numbers, i.e. .501 cents a mile and multiply that by the actual mileage to the 1-2 primary shopping destinations of your town, (don't forget to figure it as a round trip.)

60 mile jaunt = 120 miles @ .501= \$60 cost so if they really saved 20% shopping there on everything (very unlikely), they have to buy \$300 worth of stuff or about a full week's after tax wages for the average Montanan. Just a thought since penny-pinchers tend to be often be penny-wise, pound-foolish. It's also why the large discount stores have far higher net profit rates than average retail stores (see [www.chainstoreage.com](http://www.chainstoreage.com) for the breakdown by store type.)"

Take the AAA driving cost per mile, multiply that with the roundtrip mileage to the retail centers your shoppers regularly drive to "to save big money" and then show the math, perhaps on billboards on the way out of town.

**Resource:**

[www.chainstoreage.com](http://www.chainstoreage.com)

**In closing: Many thanks to the people of Liberty County for sharing their lives, hopes and dreams with us. Please do not hesitate to contact any of the team members for additional information or technical support.**

**Report by: Bill Barr**  
**Cooperative Development Specialist**  
**USDA-Rural Development**

**Contact Information:**

**USDA-Rural Development**  
**900 Technology Blvd, Suite B**  
**Bozeman, MT 59771**

**E-Mail: [Bill.Barr@mt.usda.gov](mailto:Bill.Barr@mt.usda.gov)**

**Phone: 406-585-2545      TDD: 406-585-2562**

**Website: [www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt/](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mt/)**

**CHESTER RESOURCE TEAM ASSESSMENT**  
**DISCUSSION AND IMPLEMENTATION**  
**Main Topic, Issue, Recommendation, and Recommended Resources**

- **MAIN TOPIC:      COMMUNITY**
  
- **Issue: Economic development interest in Chester and Liberty County appears to depend on leadership volunteers.**
  
- **Recommendation:** While volunteers form a critical catalyst and serve as a focal point for emerging economic development activities in Chester and Liberty County, a professional full-time or at least a part-time individual is recommended. This individual would serve as an **on-site contact person** who would support and direct the local activities and coordinate with Bear Paw Economic Development Corporation. This individual could assist in facilitating discussions, addressing prioritization and resourcing of local economic development projects. This individual could be key in strategic planning for Chester and Liberty County, especially in assisting Bear Paw with refining input to the Chester component of the district Comprehensive Economic Development Survey (CEDS). Asset mapping and community resource building are two other terms which describe ways in which a community addresses its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and takes that analysis to realistically design an economic development process which is attainable for that community. The process also assists in “community buy-in” to the process and results.
  
- **Recommended Resources:** The nearest local resource for this person is local government and county government officials. Their commitment to economic development and directing financing for this position is essential if this path to professionalizing and coordinating economic development for Chester is to be improved. Bear Paw Economic Development could also play a key role in this job identification and description process. Call Paul Tuss or Craig Ericson, (406) 265-9226.

- **MAIN TOPIC: COMMUNITY**
- **Issue:** In several listening sessions, the matter of **beautification** arose in terms of the aesthetics of various areas of the community, of **closed businesses and of ways to attract tourists and travelers to stop** and enter the business areas of the community.
- **Recommendations:** Community beautification is often best addressed by a Chamber of Commerce led community resource team which works with local businesses and community leaders to work to instill a sense of community pride through clean-up activities and ways to make Chester and Joplin more attractive to those passing through it and to those who live here. This approach also helps to focus Chamber resources in areas which, while related to economic development, are not as focused on business recruitment, new job creation, and on longer term economic development issues. It is an approach that can produce results in a shorter term and which can help improve the community position for presenting itself more favorably to new business development opportunities when they arise. Such an approach includes but is not limited to improving signage both at the entrances to the communities, improving signage 40 to 50 miles from Chester and Joplin advising travelers of what available in town (ie: gasoline, restaurants, the museum), identifying and prioritizing projects, involving the local media, involving city and county government resources, and appointing a chairperson who understands the problems, who has a strong sense of community pride and community aesthetics. Projects should be undertaken year round, and develop a program of recognizing individuals and groups who are trying to make a difference.
- **Recommended Resources:** Networking with existing Chambers of Commerce (Havre, the State Chamber of Commerce in Helena, Great Falls, and the Montana Economic Developers Association) can provide concrete examples of similar programs in those communities and state wide. The Montana Department of Commerce (Victor Bjornberg, Tourism Development Coordinator, Travel Montana 406-444-4366, PO Box 200533, Helena MT 59620; The Community Tourism Assessment Program –CTAP; Tourism Infrastructure Investment Program –TIIP can also be accessed through Victor Bjornberg; Randy Hansen, Regional Development Office, Montana Department of Commerce, 406-262-9579 and Anna Marie Moe 406-444-2654 of Travel Montana can also help) has competitive tourism assessment grants which can assist Chester and Joplin. The Montana Community Foundation, 101 N. Last Chance Gulch, Suite 211 in Helena can provide small grants for cultural development projects. County Extension Agents are another resource for working with youth and adult groups on community projects. The local media (The Liberty County Times) can play a large role in garnering the services of volunteer groups and in providing educational information about beautification tips. Implementation of local, county, or state laws can facilitate clean up and beautification efforts. Bear Paw Economic Development is another resource to tap for ideas and resources for projects. Volunteers can burn out easily, if the same people are always showing up to help. Spread the load: many hands make light work. Service and business clubs and church groups can form a useful resource base for community projects, as well.

- **MAIN TOPIC: COMMUNITY**
- **Issue: Zoning and land use planning** can be a source of vital long and short range planning strategies that can result in the coordination of resources and help identify infrastructure needs that need to be in place if the community is to be ready for economic development opportunities when they arise.
- **Recommendation: Zoning and land use planning can result in zoning ordinances that can correct deficiencies in community appearance.** Abandoned dwellings and businesses can be purchased by private entities, both individual and organizations, remodeled, and sold or rented. Terms can be made to attract new businesses to the community. Zoning can separate areas of Chester, establish standards for dwellings and businesses, and encourage the quality in the community. As a start, use the County Planner as a chairperson to lead a committee of government, business, and community leaders to identify what planning documents currently exist and through a process of community visioning, assess who was involved in those plans and performance to those plans. Is the plan relevant to the current situation, in what ways and in what ways does it need to be modified? The plan should be integrated with community economic development plans and strategies, and linked to regional development. Identify the resources needed to implement the revised plan, prioritize and assign responsibility, and develop an action plan and assessment vehicle. Periodic reports on progress to the community should be part of this process.
- **Recommended Resources:** Dave Sharpe, Community Development Specialist, MSU Extension Service, 106 Taylor Hall, MSU-Bozeman, Bozeman, MT 59717, 406-994-2962 is a valuable resource for this type of process. Bear Paw Economic Development can be of invaluable guidance as can networking with other County Planners, County Commissioner, and Mayors. The Montana Economic Developers Association can provide a networking link to local development organizations that have gone through similar exercises.

- **MAIN TOPIC: COMMUNITY**
- **Issue: The need for a clothing store** was identified in several listening sessions but there is a recognition that the customer base and customer support for such a venture may be economically limited. Prices, customer loyalty, and the proximity of box stores in Great Falls and a retail center in Havre affect the potential success of this desired business.
- **Recommendation:** Finding an investor or local entrepreneur to start such a venture is difficult. Some communities have had success in forming a local clothing store cooperative to satisfy community needs and address capitalization needs.
- **Recommended Resources:** There are several resources available to assist a group that may be interested in forming a cooperative business. The USDA-Rural Development has a cooperative development specialist available to provide technical assistance and resource guidance. (Bill Barr, 406-585-2545) The Montana Cooperative Development Center has



resources for the same purposes. (Ty Duncan, (406) 265-3771. Colstrip has formed a clothing store cooperative and the lead contact for that venture is Jim Atchison, (406) 748-2990. Anne Boothe in Malta has experience in assistance with this type of cooperative. Her phone number is (406) 654-1776.

- **MAIN TOPIC: NATURAL RESOURCES**

- **Issue:** **Alternative Energy development** is a timely interest and was mentioned as an economic development interest in several listening sessions

- **Recommendation:** If a group of interested people is interested in exploring this topic, they need to form an interest group and begin assessing what opportunities realistically exist for them to exploit. **Alternative power generation represents one issue, but transmission and distribution poses another set of issues.** Viable wind generation sites need to be specifically identified, hydro sources tend to center on Tiber Dam and development is under way, and bio fuel serves as another source of alternative energy development. There are programs to assist in their development, but the group will need to recognize that equity investment will be required and decisions will have to be made about uses of the power. Will it be for local consumption or for resale or for both? A number of regulatory development issues will face this group as well as fiscal concerns, and while not insurmountable, they are significant.

- **Recommended Resources:** The US Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Labs and the American Wind Energy Association have website available and are full of information and specific contacts. The closest NREL location is in Boulder, CO. If the proposed organizational structure is a cooperative, resources exist at USDA-Rural Development in Bozeman (Bill Barr, (406) 585-2545), The Montana Cooperative Development Center (Ty Duncan, (406) 265-3771) . USDA-Rural Development has a Renewable Energy producer grant which is available to assist projects ready for commercialization. John Guthmiller (406) 585-2540 is the contact person for this new grant program. USDA-Rural Development's Value-Added Producer Grant Program (contact person: Bill Barr, (406) 585-2545) may provide another option for alternative energy development. Exploration of increased use of Lake Elwell resources is underway and will involve the Bureau of Reclamation and Bear Paw Economic Development as the lead contact. The process will be deliberate, but three separate water use projects have already emerged in their early stages.

- **MAIN TOPIC: AGRICULTURE**

- **Issue:** Many of the listening sessions supported the contention that the economy in Liberty County is historically and currently agriculture based. Agriculture success or the lack of it drives local attitudes and contributes to other problems. When drought problems dissipate, other problems will do so as well. Commodity production is the mainstay of agriculture, and interest in changing that is driven by hard times. CRP is blamed for many of

the county's problems, from out migration to loss of local businesses. Conservation of natural resources by taking marginal crop land out production has been successful in achieving this objective, but negative consequences have resulted which have had major adverse impacts on rural communities. **Economic diversification and value-added agriculture have been proposed as alternatives to traditional commodity production.**

- **Recommendation:** **Lake Elwell and Tiber Dam offer unique resources for value-added agriculture development.** The challenge of accessing those resources is a difficult one, but one that can be undertaken. If the resources are to be used, the task of seeking access must be started. Commodity processing is possible if producers are willing to take the risk and raise alternative high value crops or at least investigate value-added alternatives. Adding value to what the region does best is still a viable alternative to doing things the same way and getting the same results. Seeking ways to develop positive relationships with gatekeepers of resources is more likely to open positive avenues for development than not.
- **Recommended Resources:** Changing a commodity through processing it into another form or marketing of a commodity in a unique way (such as “organic”) is a form of value-added agriculture. **USDA-Rural Development has a value-added producer grant available to assist producer majority operated ventures.** (Bill Barr, (406) 585-2545.) Three potential projects utilizing irrigation to expand the production of high value crops and utilizing value-added processing are already being explored. Some may utilize a cooperative form of business structure and will receive assistance from Ty Duncan (Montana Cooperative Development Center, 406-265-3771), Craig Ericson (Bear Paw Economic Development and a cooperative development technical assistance provider, 265-9226), or Bill Barr, USDA-Rural Development Cooperative Development Specialist, 406-585-2545.) Technical assistance and other resource development can be provided to interested groups. The Montana Department of Agriculture (Brent Poppe, 444-2402) can provide marketing development assistance and other forms of guidance. Assistance in dealing with the Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, state and federal regulatory agencies and related matters can be found with Gary Amestoy, a private consultant in Helena at 406-443-2370. Gary is working with projects in Liberty County through the assistance of Bear Paw Economic Development. There are many good ideas prevalent in Liberty County and several groups seeking focus and guidance on how to organize and how to get started. Assistance with farmers markets, for example, can be obtained from Bruce Smith, an extension agent who is also a technical assistance provider with the Montana Cooperative Development Center. His phone number is 406-377-4277. Groups need not re-invent the wheel. There are many good models already in existence. **The willingness and ability to invest in a new business venture, coupled with grant and loan capabilities, coupled with utilizing available technical assistance can make a difference in Liberty County and its agricultural and economic future.** Depending on the project, there are many other resources, both state and federal, which can be brought to bear in making projects work. Value-added businesses create jobs on and off the farm and assist rural community main street businesses as well. **It is one way in which agriculture can deal with the changing world economy.**

- **MAIN TOPIC: WORKFORCE**

- **Issue: Concerns about out migration, loss of businesses, young people leaving Chester and Joplin because of lack of jobs were common at the listening sessions.** In the same sessions, comments were made about there being a limited labor supply, low salaries, a skilled workforce, and the lack of well-paying jobs in the communities.
- **Recommendations: Labor support for local business that currently exist, and having an available, trained workforce for businesses which might seek to locate in Liberty County is a critical resource for a community.** Identifying and assessing business needs is an important first step. Providing business opportunities is another valuable tool for on the job training. Providing needed training and filling gaps in the skills of a workforce is also important. **Providing training needed for starting a business or for running an existing business is part of the skill development process.** This can be done on site, locally, through existing resources or through special programs brought into the community. Training programs also exist which can be delivered electronically. Programs exist which can help a community develop and re-vitalize its Main Street businesses. Investment in existing business training and developing a work force training program helps generate jobs and interest in staying in Liberty County. Businesses close and leave if they are not patronized, if they can't make a profit, and if there is not enough demand for their services.
- **Recommended Resources: The local economic development focal point can assemble a task for of business and community leaders to assess business training needs.** This assessment can include identifying gaps in businesses and services that should be part of the county business infrastructure. Available state assistance for workforce training can be obtained from Randy Hansen, Montana Department of Commerce Regional Development Office, 406-262-9579. Bear Paw Economic Development (406-265-9226) can also assist in organizing training resources for local needs. MSU-Northern is also available for this purpose and the Montana Economic Developers Association (406-563-5259 can network with local development organizations who have dealt with similar issues. Training can include how to start a business, as well. **Programs to encourage school alumni to relocate their businesses to Liberty County can be successful and can help fill those business gaps.** (Contact Leslie Messer, Richland Economic Development, Sidney, MT 406-482-4679 on how to organize such a project.). The **Main Street Program**, 1785 Massachusetts Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20036 (202)588-6219 may be of assistance in reinvigorating Main Street "centers of commerce." Work with Bear Paw Economic Development to create **regional recruitment and training programs** regionally. Information on Montana Department of Commerce tax incentive programs for business development and Community Development Block Grant Programs can be obtained from Randy Hansen or from Nick Rich at 406-444-4485. **Creating a job list for spouses and a network for them to access can be an important key for recruiting or retaining families in Liberty County.** Expanding the School to Work Program may provide additional opportunities and incentives for young people to stay in Liberty County. This involves expanding the partnership with the schools and with local businesses. There are local school resources and education department resources available to assist with this endeavor.

- **MAIN TOPIC: HEALTH CARE**

- **Issue:** **The health care resources in Liberty County are a significant asset for the region.** Concern with how to expand services within limited financial resources was voiced.
- **Recommendation:** Expanding the partnership with Benefis holds part of the answer when local resources are limited. The concepts, firmly in place, of a **“cradle to grave”** medical facility network, can be bolstered by improving outreach capabilities following a cooperative model used in Minnesota.
- **Recommended Resources:** Contact Bill Barr, USDA-Rural Development, Cooperative Development Specialist, 406-585-2545. **Utilizing retired medical practitioners, a cooperative business can be formed to deliver in-home medical services in rural areas. The training and resources were provided by the “home” medical facility or hospital which contracted the cooperative to deliver services on an out patient basis, services which could otherwise not have been provided.** If a group is interested in forming such a business, or in learning more about how it works, assistance with implementing this model can be provided. This type of venture could assist not only Liberty County’s hospital, but Benefis.

- **MAIN TOPIC: HOUSING**

- **Issue:** In the Chinook Listening Sessions, **housing** was not brought up a lot. But the information below is helpful and could be of use to Liberty County in the near future.
- **Recommendations:** An adequate supply of decent, affordable housing that a person would like to purchase is preferable to having a supply of overpriced housing of questionable quality. Inadequate housing needs to be fixed up or removed. Few people will want to invest in property and a house in a location that will not support the growth of their investment. Resalability of homes is important to a homebuyer. With that consideration, they are more likely to take care of the property and at least try to maintain its value.
- **Resources:** There are several programs available for assisting first time homebuyers, renovating homes, and even building homes. For specific information about programs and how they fit the needs of Chinook, call the following resources:
- USDA-Rural Development, Rural Housing Service.  
The Program Director is Deborah Chorlton, (406) 585-2515.

There is a USDA-RD Community Development Office in Great Falls, MT run by Cindy Stene, (406) 727-7580.

The 504 Program is a Home improvement Loan and Grant Program designed to improve or modernize an existing home.

A 502 Direct Loan Program is designed to assist low and very low-income families with little or no down payment, at a low interest rate, with home purchase.

Single Family Housing Guaranteed Loans are used to assist low to moderate income families who cannot obtain conventional financing without assistance. USDA-RD can provide a 90% guarantee to traditional lender loans.

The 515 Multi-Family Housing Direct Loan Program is designed to address rental housing needs and to provide eligible low and very low income persons with economically designed and constructed rental facilities and rental assistance subsidies.

The Multi-Family Housing Guaranteed Loans 538 Program is designed to serve the housing needs of low and moderate income families. It complements other affordable housing programs and seeks to meet the needs of rural America not being served by the Section 515 Direct Rural Rental Housing Program.

The Rural Housing Service Housing Preservation Grant 533 Program is designed to aid in the repair and rehabilitation of individual housing, rental properties, or co-ops owned and/or occupied by very low and low-income families.

The Farm Labor Housing 514 and 516 Program objectives are designed to provide safe, sanitary, and affordable housing for U.S. farm workers through loans and grants to finance construction of on and off-site housing.

The Community Facilities Direct and Guaranteed Loan Program and the CF Grant Program eligible organizations receive help to construct, enlarge, and improve community facilities that provide essential services in rural areas and town. This assistance can include support for hospitals, health clinics, nursing homes, fire and police facilities, community centers, roads and streets, libraries, schools, criminal justice centers, etc. Specific questions should be directed to Sue Gantz, CF Specialist, (406) 585-2555.

The Self-Help Housing Program provides technical assistance grants to non-profit organizations to help very low and low-income families finance and build their own homes.

Information about HUD programs can be obtained from Larry Gallagher, (406) 449-5040.

Classes for first time home buyers and others are available to assist people with this process. Contact any of the organizations above to schedule them.

**LIBERTY COUNTY RESOURCE TEAM  
LISTENING SESSION  
CHALLENGES – LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

- 10 people: City/County/Sheriff's Office
- Getting help for sheriff's office – lack of funding for wages
- Lack of advertisers – lack of funding
- Ditto to previous two comments
- Multiple jobs holders
- Lack of well paying jobs
- Ditto
- Poor economy
- Businesses leaving Chester/empty storefronts
- CRP – farming practices and there impacts on local economy
- Decreasing population
- Community reduction program (CRP)
- Young people leaving – nothing to come back for
- Ditto to all of the above
- Lack of support for local retailers
- Drought
- Young people leaving
- Ditto – local support for retailers
- Vacant housing and lots with water and sewer

**LIBERTY COUNTY RESOURCE TEAM  
LISTENING SESSION  
CHALLENGES –AG**

- Need help in getting the information out about Ag problems.
- Ag prices - not enough dollars to go around.
- Not getting full value of ag products we are producing
- Lack of future for children to remain on family farm
- Lack of opportunities for kids to come home to – jobs
- Distance to market
- Monopolization of transportation, i.e., BNSF
- Current knowledge base of farmers are dying – will miss a generation of knowledge
- CRP – never helped the farmers, just helped the bankers
- No suppliers – no elevator companies left, few chemical companies left
- Need more industry other than ag
- Commodity prices don't keep pace with cost of operations and cost of living
- Ditto CRP problem
- Government programs
- CRP – should be based on FSA farm basis – break down to producer not county wide.
- CRP has gutted the Hi-Line...we have to live with it, must go on
- Freight – need to process our own product
- Need state government that is willing to be business friendly with local ag

- People are becoming very discouraged and depressed from the drought and government red tape
- Crops just do not support us anymore, due to prices and cost of production
- We need light at the end of the tunnel – a hope for the future

### **LIBERTY COUNTY RESOURCE TEAM CHALLENGES – HIGH SCHOOL**

- Nothing to do here
- Shrinking school population
- No jobs
- Underage drinking
- We are in the middle of nowhere
- Prices go up and income goes down
- Need computer classes to be required

### **COMMUNITY OF JOPLIN - CHALLENGES**

- Shrinking population
- Ditto
- Loss of business
- Ditto
- Getting the community involved in different projects
- Depressed ag economy
- CRP – effects on economy
- Ditto
- Prices for ag production – can't survive with what we are getting
- All the combined above problems explain why we are in trouble
- Aging population
- Transportation for ag products
- Same problem with elevators
- Shrinking school population – is a drain on business as well
- No money in farming for our young people – nothing to support the next generation
- Keeping local grocery store open
- No service station – too many regulations
- State regulations
- Keeping school open
- Need jobs for couples – i.e., a pastor won't move here if there isn't a good job for his wife
- Need to be more open minded- not just ag based, or we will die
- Regulations keep smaller communities from making a "go" of a business
- Follow through...Straw Board plant – why can't we get projects done?
- Not enough for our youth

## **LIBERTY COUNTY RESOURCE TEAM CHALLENGES – FOUNDATIONS**

- Streets improved
- Need to provide activities for youth – use empty buildings
- Economy in our area – people just don't have money
- Facilities for our youth
- Sustain businesses – too many open then close
- Tax base, schools, no young families....difficult cycle
- Ditto youth activities
- Need an “anchor tenant” – manufacturing or call center or.....
- Need higher paying jobs with benefits
- Need quality workers – and alert workers – too many people have to work two or three jobs; how can we be assured work is high quality and done right
- People suffering from burnout
- Need small businesses to advertise in local papers – sometimes large businesses do not
- Not a culture in Chester for customer service – need to be more service oriented.
- Spend too much money outside of the community – go out of town for services not offered here – so spend hundreds of dollars in Great Falls
- Easier to order off the internet than buy from local merchants
- Not a culture mix – need diversity in our population
- Ditto
- No place for weddings – no hall, no place for lots of people to stay
- People travel out of town for recreation – we lose the money

## **LIBERTY COUNTY RESOURCE TEAM CHALLENGES – EDUCATORS**

- Declining job opportunities lead to declining population and declining funding for schools
- Ditto
- Declining population
- Ditto
- Drought
- Wheat prices
- Declining jobs – declining population
- Ditto
- Do not have jobs for bread-winners – just minimum wage
- Geographic location – isolated
- Community doesn't see that it needs anything besides agriculture
- Streets
- Housing
- Kids can't return here because there are no jobs
- More creative job opportunities that are not minimum wage
- Town doesn't emphasize the things it does have to offer – museum, Sweet Grass Hills, Tiber Lake, etc.
- No reason for kids to come back here



- Affordable housing, people don't want to sell their home for what the market would dictate in a declining population
- High end houses, low end houses – nothing in between
- No rentals
- Teacherages – don't accommodate families. Well kept but, small. Can't stay in them for more than five years.
- Student Council needs to be more active
- Increase in alcohol syndrome students; students need more support in general based on unstable families
- Drug and alcohol problems are here
- Lack of support services (counseling, domestic violence, etc.)

### **LIBERTY COUNTY RESOURCE TEAM CHALLENGES – FINANCE, BANK, INSURANCE**

- CRP is hurting our small towns and businesses
- Lack of population – not many of us – partially due to CRP and naturally smaller families
- No replacement for young people leaving – they don't come back
- Need to not rely on Ag – and government funding
- CRP – ditto
- No diversification in economy
- 12 inches of rain and \$5 wheat is needed
- People/farmers cannot afford health insurance
- Cash flow – uncertainty of cash flow, buckling down
- Ditto
- Hard to say what drought has cost us – some are seeing a 2/3 drop in net income.
- No crop insurance for our main street businesses – when they hurt, they close
- Equity is being eaten away
- Fuel costs going sky high – will recreate more problems for fuel intensive operations
- School funding is going to be a huge issue – possible forced consolidations
- Depression, hard to keep a positive outlook
- Wealth held by older population – when they pass away – the wealth will leave, too.
- People don't believe Chester can attract new businesses, etc.
- Some people like Chester as the status quo
- Tough finance standards because of the economic base –our business people have to be far better because of the tough business environment
- CRP land, when it is returned back into production – has been robbed of most nutrients

### **LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION CHALLENGES – COMMERCE/RETAIL**

- Good work force, stable employee base, high turnover
- Aesthetic work - make the town look like a place people would want to stop in.
- Shrinking tax base.
- Young people have no opportunity here
- Fear, afraid to start something and fail among their peers.

- Age of community. Resources exist for elderly and not younger community.
- Problems between the two communities, Joplin and Chester.
- Problem is 150 years old, had to do with the county seat.
- Problem manifests itself in the school issue, sports, road block to problem solving.
- So darn sports oriented. Lots of competition.
- Work force, can't find people to apply, even for good wage jobs.
- CRP – need to be able to refinance development loans.
- Keeping business modern, capital for improvements, being competitive.
- Housing is low quality. Not a lot of higher quality homes.
- Average earning income may not be able to find affordable housing. Rent is \$400 per month and some feel that is high because of their income level.
- Difficult to meet and make friends, loose newcomer status. Meeting places are in the bar or churches. If not a native of Chester you are considered an outsider.
- Talk state into placing a stoplight on Hwy 2 by Spuds.
- Ditto on getting to know folks and fitting in.
- Need places to socialize that aren't geared toward the bar.
- CRP – Ditto. All those people that got CRP have left the community. Those dollars no longer enter the community.
- Use it or loose it in the business community. Support local biz.
- Access to Sweet Grass hills. Private ownership, tribal, and BLM issues. Landowners are happy with current access.

### **CHESTER LISTENING SESSION CHALLENGES – HEALTH CARE/SOCIAL SERVICES**

- CRP – decreasing population
- School consolidation
- Finding qualified staff – from laundry to dietary to providers
- Difficulty in finding spouse a job
- Expenses are high and reimbursements are low - in both ag and healthcare
- Take up point needed for the economy –
- Growth needed all along the Hi-Line
- Big city nearness – need to acknowledge and utilize businesses we have
- Burn people out – tend to overwork those who are willing to work
- Financial stability – same people are paying for everything
- Need people who are willing to stop complaining and get involved
- Improve communications between hospital, community and service groups
- Transportation – Amtrac doesn't stop here, no commercial bus to take people to Great Falls or other places,
- Child care – spouses would like to work but there is not a good availability of daycare
- Can't shop locally- when I am off work, the stores are closed
- Need a daycare within the hospital
- Getting people to stop instead of driving by
- Get people to accept change – let go of the status quo
- No mental health facilities – available with call-in

## **LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION CHALLENGES - CHURCHES**

- Declining way of life. Gradual shift to aging population.
- Declining young population.
- Feel of being hospice chaplains dealing with gradual death of way of life.
- Way of life is changing. Difficult.
- Ditto
- Declining tax base.
- Nothing for youth to do.
- Young kids don't come back to the farm and ranch.
- Churches have a big problem with money coming in as population declines.
- Kids spend their money in Shelby or Havre, Great Falls because they are going there to find something "to do".
- Apathy – Depression – Feeling that there is nothing they can do.
- Part-time community. Not enough work to justify a full-time person. Everyone has multiple jobs.
- Low wages are a problem. Minimum wage.
- No spousal opportunities.
- Cost of living is high for low income people.
- People don't want to work in the nursing home.
- Ditto – first 7 bullets.
- Youth Center if kids would use it. Thought is maybe the kids would not.
- How to give the kids "ownership" and "leadership" opportunities in the youth center, church council, etc.
- Ditto – first 7
- CRP
- Drought
- Alcohol and drug problems not openly discussed or admitted. Perceived that folks aren't doing anything, but law enforcement does deal with it.

## **LIBERTY COUNTY RESOURCE TEAM CHALLENGES – SENIOR CITIZENS**

- Find away to keep our young people here
- Ditto
- Need something for our kids to do in town
- Ditto
- More businesses – used to have a lot more
- Ditto
- Ditto – need employment
- The town needs money
- Higher paying jobs
- Ditto all of the above
- Ditto
- Need more people but we don't have any place to put them

- Decent price for grain and cattle
- Rain!
- Ditto
- People need to shop locally – will lose more business
- Ditto
- Less wind!
- Ditto
- Agriculture down – the town gets down
- Ditto
- People are underpaid and overworked
- Surplus of housing
- Difficult to hire workforce – because not always honest, reliable or dependable
- Can't compete with wage scale in, say, East Glacier
- Difficult to make changes on a fixed income

### **LIBERTY COUNTY RESOURCE TEAM CHALLENGES – WRITTEN COMMENTS**

- Dwindling population. We do not have business opportunities that attract families to move to or stay in our area. The poor economy is a vicious circle of not enough jobs to support the people here, not enough kids in school – high tax base, not enough money in community to support itself.
- Too much money being spent outside community – it doesn't have a chance to recirculate, can't rely on the few summer months that construction brings in outside money to our area.
- Demographics. The majority of our community is retirement age, we aren't replenishing our community with young people. We need more entertainment for younger people, 5 – 45.
- CRP, Drought & Grain Market. The CRP program has taken local money out of our community. People collect their CRP checks and live elsewhere. Taking this land out of production, has also killed the economy base of small communities who rely on local money to recirculate. Trying to survive a 7 year drought is tough, but when the market has no bottom the once optimistic farmer is beaten.
- Apathy seems to be a problem. You can hold meetings and information for the community and no one will show.
- Low industry
- Limited economic base
- CRP
- Drought
- I see the major problem is that we are an agricultural community and still think agriculture. We need to make an active approach to acquiring businesses that can survive here and provide jobs. The poor agricultural economy is probably the single biggest factor contributing to the poor business climate in Liberty County. (Loss of jobs, businesses and people)
- With the businesses we have left, we are no longer self-sufficient. When there are things (like clothes) that are needed, our residents are forced to go out of town to make those kinds of purchases; if they go elsewhere to buy one item they are

bound to buy more; if they aren't in our community for an entire day, that is an entire day they spend no money here. Like many other rural communities, and actually the entire state, our young people are leaving the state "graduating classes" at a time.

- major problem locally is everyone wants to see a local bus do good they just don't want to see you make any money off of them. Challenge is to keep what business we have here and keep them from closing.
- lack of high paying jobs with full benefits
- school funding
- no diversity
- resistance to change
- too "sportscentric"
- needs to be more aesthetically inviting to encourage people to stop on the way through
  - Aging population,
  - Shrinking population
  - Decline of Agriculture
  - Reduction in State Funding-Primarily school funding
  - Lack of good relationships between Chester and Joplin communities

**LIBERTY COUNTY RESOURCE TEAM  
LISTENING SESSION  
STRENGTHS– LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

- Good water
- Volunteers
- Safe community
- Friendly people
- Supportive, close-knit community
- People
- Quality education
- A number of well educated people
- Caring people
- Ditto-volunteers
- People
- Ditto
- Location to Lake Elwell
- Distance from Great Falls – far enough away
- Ditto – people, Lake Elwell
- High speed Internet
- Border patrol development – Whitlash
- Good place to raise family – marketable assets: education, safety, quality of life

**LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION  
STRENGTHS –AG**

- Still have an ag base that is willing to stick it out
- Great place to raise kids
- Good school system
- Tiber Lake...ready for development and irrigation purposes
- Intelligent and knowledgeable people
- Clean crime free
- To notch schools
- Close to larger city
- Still have own identity
- Tenacity of Ag producers
- Liberty County is a nice community –
- Lake – if developed
- People are honest and hard working
- Alternative energy opportunities – wind farms, hydrogen fuel development
- Ag and land base to capitalize on
- Not just a town – it is our home
- Stick-to-it people
- Sweet Grass Hills are a huge asset, need some development
- Massage service
- The three Hutterite Colonies are a great asset

## **LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION**

### **STRENGTHS - HIGH SCHOOL**

- Everyone knows each other
- Low crime
- Supportive community for athletics and other school activities
- Lake
- Safe place for kids
- School to work program
- Good school

### **COMMUNITY OF JOPLIN STRENGTHS**

- Great people
- Wide open spaces to hunt, fish and trap
- Recreation at the lakes
- Good schools
- Great place to raise a family – great quality of life
- Low crime – safe
- Great community support – in good times and bad
- Great school – nicest on the Hi-Line
- Low cost of housing
- Driving is relatively relaxing, low traffic
- General low cost of living
- Flower shop
- Well educated work force
- High tech- good broadband access
- Clean air, good environment, slower pace of life
- Community Center is a great strength
- Our park

### **LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION STRENGTHS – FOUNDATIONS**

- Good school system
- Everyone is willing to help when there is a need
- Ditto
- Medical facility – work hard to keep up-to-date
- Ditto
- People are our biggest asset
- Quality of care in hospital is excellent
- Physical beauty, geographic beauty and serenity
- Generous spirits, caring spirits offer support
- “Can do” attitude

- U Shop
- Sense of partnership
- Girl Scouts, Senior Trip – people and businesses support
- Stained glass shop,
- Fur shop
- Art Center
- Library
- Museum
- Excellent day care facility
- Six churches and a lot of participation in those churches
- Right on the highway
- Lake – excellent fishery
- Pool and Rec foundation – primary focus is new pool and to increase rec opportunities
- Arts Without Boundaries – high caliber artists (of all kinds of disciplines) brought in
- School foundation – for scholarships and supplies (so teachers don't spend their own money on supplies)

### **LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION STRENGTHS – EDUCATORS**

- Safe community
- Unity of community- pull together
- Loyalty to community – want to see it do well
- Activity level is high
- Services that are here – dry cleaners, library, two banks, museum, art center, CPAs, hospital, Coyote's Den
- Ditto
- Great school, great teachers
- Safe place – chose to live here as a single parent
- Community support
- Close knit
- Liberty Arts Village
- Recreation – hunting, fishing, clean air
- Safety for my kids
- Ditto
- Ditto
- School, hospital and rural life
- Fewer people is also an advantage
- Neighbors look out for each other and their kids
- Camaraderie among the Hi-Line
- Escape from crowds
- Education attainment level – 82% have at least a H.S. diploma
- Foundation
- Library has computers
- Wired-In
- Lions
- Rotary



- Five year all school reunions
- Hi-Line ministerial association

**LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION  
STRENGTHS – FINANCE, BANK, INSURANCE**

- Clean safe place to live
- Hospital
- Schools
- Assisted living
- Friendly people
- Easy to get along with
- If you have a need or a tragedy- people are there for you
- The people
- Optimism in spite of hardship
- Fitness Center
- Wired-In
- CRP – while there are negatives, some people would not still be in businesses without CRP

**LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION  
STRENGTHS – RETAIL AND COMMERCE**

- School system
- Performing arts program
- Medical facility
- Community is supportive
- Great water
- Safe place to live
- Recreation, Sweet Grass Hills
- Low cost of living on the hi-line
- Strong family ties
- Assisted living
- Ditto on school, hospital, community
- Rest area
- Museum
- Ditto on all above
- Willingness to “do” things
- Infrastructure, banks, all above items great to have in a small town, infrastructure here for growth
- Library
- A lot of organizations to get involved with via the library
- Great internet access at the Library
- People in the county. People are pretty tough.
- Very attractive community.
- City park used a lot, especially on bike tours. Has a free shower.
- Volunteerism, giving of time and energy to make the town go. People pull together.

- Unsung hero is Town Council. Very active, worked on sewer, water systems.
- Ministerial system works well together and brings all denominations together. Newcomer opportunity for leadership and participation exist in this group.
- Low income housing is pretty good. Good management.
- Ditto on people. Greatest asset may be the lack of people.
- EMT is excellent and the fireman.
- Good law enforcement.
- The U-Shoppe.
- Good food bank.

**LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION  
STRENGTHS – HEALTH CARE/SOCIAL SERVICES**

- A lot of human resources
- The people – willing to give and share, but have to watch out for burnout
- People prefer to come to our hospital, not a big city hospital
- There is so much to do –
- Very educated and intelligent people live here that get involved
- We are a “Leave it to Beaver” land
- Good school system
- Our western heritage
- Excellent medical facility – especially considering the size of our community
- Excellent school system
- Ditto
- Ditto
- We use our resources and expand on them i.e., school provides adult ed
- Our problems and obstacles tend to make us stronger
- Goal oriented people – get projects completed
- Community pride
- Very colorful Senior Citizens that we should use as a resource – living history
- Good access to broadband telecommunications – putting in teleradiology soon
- Dr. Buker and his heritage
- Proximity to Glacier Park

**LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION  
STRENGTHS - CHURCHES**

- Medical facility
- Ambulance
- Museums – 2
- Arts Council – has not been that active due to funds this year.
- Wide range of churches
- Committed people
- Education and background of townspeople is diverse and intelligent.
- Farmers tenacious, inventive, creative, they will survive and stick with it
- Strong community minded base

- Pride
- Community Leadership
- Educated community
- Have some really large wealthy farms in the area. There are finances out there.
- Community supportive
- Community Spirit
- Youth in the community, their spirit, courage and drive to do things.
- Highway 2
- Strong ministerial association

### **LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION STRENGTHS – SENIOR CITIZENS**

- Safe – don't have to lock your doors
- Good climate
- Senior Center and our cook
- Ditto
- Hospital – need to keep it going
- People
- Good emergency facility
- Good schools
- Good water and streets, good place to retire
- Friendly nature of entire town
- Walk from place to place
- Good schools
- Churches of all faiths that work well together
- Good director for Senior Center
- Good Commissioners
- We stick together
- Very happy here – love the people
- Kids are safe
- Assisted Living – Sweet Grass Lodge
- Not too many bars around here
- Three banks
- A professional musician – Philip Allberg
  - Lewis and Clark chapter is putting up an interpretive center near Tiber School Board
  - Quality of education
  - Low class sizes. Kids get individual attention.
  - Students
  - Teachers
  - Relationship between students and teaches
  - Community is involved a lot
  - Community support
  - People
  - Life style

- Schools
- Talented students, win awards, won a science fair award, home ec, everything
- Well rounded curriculum
- Low crime rate
- A good place to live
- Hospital
- All current businesses
- People
- Safe environment
- Communities working together
- Healthcare facility
- Library
- Old fashioned traditions
- Community identify – small community – everyone knows everybody
- On a small scale the community has everything you could want
- Law enforcement
- Proud people, a lot of respect for each other
- Say what they mean and mean what they say – set of values, they struggle to maintain those values among a lot of things that come down to them
- Their strength is themselves

### **LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION STRENGTHS – WRITTEN COMMENTS**

- Community. Our biggest asset is the people. We have a very safe, caring, close-knit community. There are a lot of people that are dedicated to the area and will work hard to make our community a better place. But we need some direction. Everyone is working towards the same goal, but we need to pull together and work on individual projects one at a time.
- Medical. We have the only medical facility within 40 miles, and we need to capitalize on that. The nursing home, assisted living, and retirement home are one of the main reasons the population in Chester is retired.
- School. We have a very active support community that puts the school and education as a top priority.
- Wired Inn
- Some very strong community-minded people.
- People who want to see the community not only survive, but be a quality community.
- Medical Care Facilities
- MSU Liberty County Extension Office
- We have a excellent health care facility and good school. Additionally, we will have new streets in Chester and should strive to have inexpensive water so the town can be kept green and nice looking.
- We do have some things a lot of other communities are not so fortunate to
- have: high-speed internet access; a good water source; a quality airport; an excellent school system; an arts/cultural center;
- a pro-active Chamber of Commerce; (and more...)

- strengths and assets are school and hospital problem don't feel they do a lot for local business though.
- Willingness to help someone in trouble
- Some community leaders are very proactive in terms of improving Chester
- Location on Hwy 2 can be a big asset
- Good services and facilities
- Safe community
- Good school systems
- Educated population
- Low cost of housing
- Good health care facility
- High speed Internet availability

## **LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION PROJECTS – LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

- Attract people to area during summer – using vacant lots
- Pave Whitlash road and develop border station
- Water treatment plant at Elwell
- Marina development and better recreation at Elwell
- Capitalize on homeland security money
- Reversing exodus of local businesses
- Stabilize local Ag economy
- Increase local wages
- More irrigation from Lake Elwell
- Stabilize recreation at Lake Elwell
- 10 to 20 years – smaller or medium size industry using Ag products
- Clothing store
- Upgrade communications system – Sheriff’s Dept.
- More recreation in Chester – swimming pool
- More recreation at Lake Elwell
- Develop wind electrical generation infrastructure
- 9 hole golf course
- Revise BOR management of Lake Elwell – restrictive
- Open the Sweet Grass Hills to recreation
- Change BOR management practices at Lake Elwell
- Complete swimming pool project
- Ditto
- Develop electrical generation at Tiber Dam
- Improve recreation assets at Lake Elwell i.e. Marina
- Pave 366 to Tiber Dam from 223
- Ditto wind power
- Develop RV Park

Brent Poppe: Can you give the panel insight on level of willingness and ability as a community to invest personnel funds into developing new business and industry and leverage the state and federal funding that could be accessed for these types of projects.

Answer: Farm community has money, but the business community does not. What we need is rain – it starts to rain; the project will start to flow.

Kris – who hold the vision in the community?

Answer: I think the Chamber of Commerce does.

## **LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION PROJECTS –AG**

- Facilities to take care of RV travelers
- Alternative energy development – hydro, solar, wind, natural gas
- Work with coops to create alternative energy development – research and begin soon!

- See vacant lots (have water and sewer already) and houses used – perhaps for summer visitors
- Full farm implement dealership here again
- Wind and bio diesel, ethanol long term projects
- BNSF – truck our grain to Butte and return with fertilizer – short term goal
- Flour plant – produce and process our own products – how do you go about it? Private coop???
- Irrigation
- Feed lot put into the area – feed them our feed
- Ditto
- Barley – better use of this product
- Utilize nearness to Glacier, Tiber Lake – market it
- Need development right here in Liberty County
- Improve manufacturing base in Montana
- Cost effective freight for the area
- Use surplus housing
- Ag tourism?

Closest commercial flour plant – GF (Ft. Benton has a facility)

Are there investment dollars in the community, say, to build a flour plant?  
Once someone takes the leap, others follow

### **LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION PROJECTS – HIGH SCHOOL**

- Bowling alley
- Movie theater
- Lounge with couches
- Internship opportunities to help prepare for career choice and earn money
- Marina improved at the Lake
- Youth center – hold rallies for it
- Better jobs to return to, with good pay, good benefits and retirement
- Growth in the community
- Windmills for power
- Make sure everyone knows how to use computers/technology
- Skateboard Park
- Paintball center/field

### **COMMUNITY OF JOPLIN - PROJECTS**

- Value added businesses
- Ditto
- Opening a service station – perhaps on the highway
- Retain our church and our school
- Wind Chargers
- Improve the park – RV access
- Signage on highway to let people know the RV park is here
- Use the closed elevators for something....bakery, tours, small restaurant, arts, crafts

- No longer pay freight both ways
- Border patrol to take advantage of us here - \$\$ to be spent in Whitlash
- More diversification – not just ag based
- Help businesses overcome paperwork that the state issues
- Use Bear Paw to overcome paperwork jams and to serve as go-between on regulatory issues
- Straw board plant project completed
- Energy producing exporting county
- Road to Tiber paved – 366 – 27 total miles – 17 in Liberty County
- Improved camping facilities at Tiber
- Water project completed – irrigation, treatment, reliable source
- Retirement facilities increased - assisted living and snowbirds
- Activities – need more than to go to the bar
- Activities – for youth
- Access HUD’s faith based initiatives

### **LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION PROJECTS – FOUNDATIONS**

- Hi-Line widened to four lanes
- Implement a plan to beautify Chester to make people want to stop
- Improve signage on all entrances – let people know what is here
- Improve signage on Main Street and First Street East – tie in store fronts, have a theme, possibly
- 2 years – need new swimming pool
- Community Center for over 50 people to meet
- Information Center for tourists coming to town
- Recreational – bowling alley, theater, golf course
- Place for RV’s to stay
- 20 years – the same amount of business that we had here 20 years ago
- Swimming pool and recreational place for the youth
- Community center – need a place to have receptions, etc.
- Make sure medical facility stays open working better than ever
- Swimming pool – and community center
- Ditto
- Decorating the town – so not just another small town to drive through
- Utilize Tiber Lake
- Use train depot to create a train-watching platform for “trainiacs”

### **LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION PROJECTS – EDUCATORS**

- An ethanol plant in Chester
- Whitlash road paved
- New pool
- Development at Tiber – built homes, marina functional all year long



- Franchise of Wheat and Montana
- Ditto
- Shopping mall
- Store to buy clothes
- Attraction to bring people here – a reason to come here
- Golf course
- Joplin streets paved
- Utilize our bandwidth – have high paying jobs i.e., medical placement job
- Movie theater
- Bowling alley
- Rec Center for children
- Swimming pool, bowling, theater – things for young people to do
- Rec center for all ages – a place for kids to go so don't leave town.
- Attraction – golf course
- Museum to be a destination point – from there do circle tours, historical tours, digs, etc.
- Waterslide – have it with the pool
- Consolidation – of schools – so that we can offer more – need to do what is best for kids
- Straw board plant in Chester
- More little league programs such as soccer
- Transportation – if we lose Amtrac – nothing
- Outfitters to start businesses
- More money for schools
- More Tennis courts
- Rubberized track
- Miniature golf
- Racquetball court
- Consolidation
- Really good restaurant/motel complex
- Summer drama program for kids of all ages
- Outdoor theater
- 4 for 2 – but not to bypass the town
- Utilize Vista program for volunteers – even in summer

**LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION  
PROJECTS – FINANCE, BANK, INSURANCE**

- Create funding legacies and foundations for those willing to leave their money here when they pass on
- More recreational things – movie theater, bowling alley – things we used to have
- Governments (county, city, state and federal) and chambers combine together more instead of separately – i.e. – visitors center – work together cooperatively
- Remove the barriers to have some development at the Lake
- Improve value added with beef and pork products, and grain products as well
- Hog plant
- Big marina with a bar and motel at the lake
- Golf Course at the lake

- Chamber works closely with Bureau to bring about change
- Border Patrol activity here
- Private investors utilized – given tax break for investing private funds in Liberty County
- Improve business skills – especially in the marketing area

### **LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION PROJECTS – COMMERCE AND RETAIL**

- Combine some large ranches to create habitat for bird hunting, utilize beauty of surroundings.
- Attract retirees.
- Irrigation brought in around the lake.
- Gourmet restaurant.
- More population. Get population up to 1000 or 1500.
- Pool
- Beauty all approaches to town. Signage as to why people should stop.
- Community center and place for kids to hang out.
- Senior Citizens Center should be in the Lodge. The Lodge is by the Catholic Church. Currently The Lodge is retirement housing.
- Bowling Alley
- Promote tourism. Let tourists know what is in Chester. Website.
- Develop the lake.
- Zamboni at the lake.
- Ditto on pool.
- Place for 250 people to congregate – multi purpose building.
- Stronger medical base so townspeople don't have to go to GF for some services, which promotes spending outside of the local community.
- RV camps
- Golf course
- More recreation
- See what was here 20 years ago – today.
- Another major employer like the hospital with good benefits and pay.
- Take strongest asset and go with it, The Lodge, the hospital, create a retirement community / center.
- Something for younger children to do and a place for that to happen.
- 10 years from now Great Falls meets to figure out how to fight business competition from Chester.
- Tennis courts open more. Open all summer. And maintained.

### **LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION PROJECTS – HEALTH CARE/SOCIAL SERVICES**

- School consolidation done – in a way that doesn't divide the county
- Reduce the hospital debt
- Remove the CRP program
- Inner structure that will employ spouses

- Advance our technology and keep up-to-date
- Stable and viable staff readily available at the hospital
- In-house daycare within the hospital to provide day care for staff
- Develop a theme – to cause people to want to stop
- Encourage more internet small businesses
- Home health needed here – a business opportunity for someone
- Keep events local – use a community center and/or a pool to draw others
- See the hospital prosper
- Seek out the assistance of Bear Paw for grant writing assistance
- Have a grant writer in place for the community that works closely with the chamber and Town Council
- Small manufacturing plant started
- Make sure we keep up with technology and medical cutting edge services via Benefis
- See the hospital facility grow
- Pool waterpark recreation area
- Work with current daycares available to get them trained
- Community Center –place to have weddings, dinner
- Internet based companies – like our Physician Recruitment business
- Assisted Living Center viable
- Businesses extend hours for after work shoppers
- Community racquetball court
- Feed lot, Big R supply store
- Needs zoning for temporary housing – have foresight to head off problems
- Hospital stable
- Brewery here

### **LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION PROJECTS - CHURCHES**

- Land to do things on
- Community center where people could do wood working, whittle, whatever, R&A Hall would make a good place. Get the retired folks involved in the community, utilize their value. Opportunities for participation are the garden club, outdoor classroom, etc.
- Finish pool.
- Assembly of God may buy R&A Hall for a youth center – something like this would be good. Royal Neighbors of America – was a community organization.
- New pool. Water park.
- Signage to get people to stop in town.
- Bigger retail stores. Mini Mall – could take 10 to 15 years to get up and running.
- Sustainable agriculture
- A place to market the ag products from sustainable ag and other things people make.
- Youth Center.
- CRP phased out. Bring the land back into production.
- Create a sense of family – a family atmosphere.

- Fun summer activities for the community. An evening band, community band. Water follies – died off due to lack of interest.
- Explore Faith Based Funds with Bear Paw Dev and Larry Gallagher to create a rec center.

### **LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION PROJECTS – SENIOR CITIZENS**

- Covered/indoor swimming pool
- Electric plant connected to Tiber Dam
- More businesses – like a clothing store
- Variety of dry goods store
- Place for kids to spend time – youth center
- Little kids soccer
- Recreation area at Tiber Dam – develop it
- Movie theater
- More improved roads
- Museum improved – becomes a destination
- Community cleaned up
- People shop and recreate locally
- Roads improved
- Replace shovel factory or bring it back – any business!
- Border Patrol established here

### **LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION PROJECTS – SCHOOL BOARD**

- Do things to keep this place, this life style intact
- Places that hire kids, so kids don't have to away
- Show kids the benefits of the place, create a project that would allow them to come back and let them know there was something to come back home to when they are ready. Bring some industry. Use technology. Have sustainability.
- Would be happy to see the community here in 20 years.
- Golf course at the lake
- Water slides
- Hay cuber
- Irrigation projects. They have the water. 180,000 feet of water that goes down the river. Technology has changed. Land types vary, some would be candidates for irrigation projects. Old soil tests may not be providing accurate facts.
- Golf course in town tied on to a recreation facility, an all weather track to host meets, place for trailer hook ups, 25 M – 9 lane pool, water slide, large gymnasium.
- Have federal government support ag – family farms would be able to survive on cost of production, raw materials must add value
- Agriculture has to be the number one industry – bio enterprises, value added bold ideas, irrigation projects. Can't support industry unless there is a profit in a commodity.

- Build a new school with all the amenities, all the courses that you could think of, all the sports, find the best teachers
- Base salary of a teacher in Chester is base is under \$20,000, 2 year is \$20,600. Joplin is \$19,600
- Teacher salaries are mid range in comparison to other salaries in Liberty Co. Per capita income in Liberty Co. is \$16,000+

### **LIBERTY COUNTY LISTENING SESSION PROJECTS – HANDWRITTEN COMMENTS**

- 2 years – Community Center – Information Center – New Swimming Pool
- 5 years – Stronger Business/Medical Base – Completion of Regional Water System
- help keep local people in town for shopping & doctoring needs
- 10 years – Recreational Businesses – Better Agriculture Program (rather than CRP)
- golf course, water slides, RV & camp grounds, theater, bowling alley, Marina, etc.
- 20 years – Implement & Ag related businesses, Technology businesses, etc.
- Types of businesses that employ 10-20 people
- The businesses that Chester had 20 years ago and has lost.
- Recreational Opportunities
- Completion of Swimming Pool project
- Community Center (center for people to rent, as it stands now not much to rent for receptions etc.)
- Performing Arts Programs --
- Hobby, Recreational Area for Retired People -- Like to see retired people of County become more influential in the community.
- Involve Retired Community in community projects. Make them feel useful
- Civic center, swimming pool.
- Also, a nice campground along highway 2 to attract tourists to stay.
- Additionally get the central office for the regional water supply in Chester. Attract border patrol office here.
- Promote a building of a large elevator at Tiber or nearby.
- Within 2 Years: Congressional Funding released for the construction of the Rocky Boy's/Northcentral Montana Regional Water System (almost a certainty);
- adequate housing for construction crew and their families (with a corresponding increase in student numbers in the schools);
- a manned Chamber of Commerce office;
- a new community swimming pool;
- successful Tiber Marina concessionaire/expansion of recreational opportunities at Lake Elwell;
- 5 Years: Establishment of a clothing store, either privately owned or a co-operative effort; opening of a steakhouse/supper club
- projects is a really hard one seems to me something to bring younger people to the area not ag related seems hard to say that but look at how much ag has changed the last 5 or ten years. Almost all of the ag related bus are gone from town now
- Business development push to bring in an anchor business, weather manufacturing, call center

- Beautification project with signage to make this an inviting place to stop
- Tiber recreation development
- Encourage diversity in the population (this one is tough but really necessary)
- 2 Yrs- Full time chamber office
- Improved communication between county government, city government and chamber
- Increase in border patrol including offices in Liberty Co.
- Completion of new swim pool facility
- 5 Yrs- Improved recreation areas in Sweetgrass Hills and Lake Elwell
- Rocky Boy Water System office located in Liberty Co.
- 10 Yrs- A new major employer in Liberty Co. (i.e. Manufacturing, distribution center or technical support calling center)