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Date: Thursday, September 23, 2021 10:54:25 AM

Public Comments for the Local Government Interim Committee

Date: 23rd September 2021 10:54

First Name:

Timothy

Last Name:

Peterson

Email Address:

timothyp@lpwarchitecture.com

Subject:

Testimony on SJ23

Comment:

Good morning ladies and gentlemen of the committee, my name is Tim Peterson and I reside in Great Falls. I am president of LPW Architecture and am speaking in favor of allowing public notices via electronic publications. The current law that requires publication in newspapers exclusively is expensive for clients we work with, particularly school districts. We often hear people say that they don't see public notices we put in traditional newspapers have received no response to some notices for projects. I'm supporting the proposal to allow public notices via electronic publications, such as The Electric in Great Falls, as it gives the public more options to see information about public business.

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Public Comments for the Local Government Interim Committee

Date: 23rd September 2021 16:07

First Name:

Jenn

Last Name:

Rowell

Email Address:

jenn@theelectricgf.com

Subject:

SJ23

Comment:

Jennifer Rowell testimony Sept. 24, 2021 testimony SJ-23 Local Government Interim Committee Ladies and gentlemen of the committee, my name is Jenn Rowell and I reside in Great Falls. I run a local online news organization and am speaking in favor of allowing public notices via electronic publications. As the law stands currently, public notices for a wide variety of government actions, such as public hearings on land use actions, taxes and local policies are required in newspapers of general circulation. I have about 20 years of journalism experience and my heart has always belonged to print newspapers, but the reality of the modern news industry makes the current laws antiquated and impractical. According to the Greater Montana Foundation's 2019 News Media Preferences and Issues Survey, 25 percent of Montanans regularly read a Montana daily newspaper and 21 percent read a weekly community newspaper. In that same study, 93 percent of adults in Montana reported that they used the internet and 58 percent reported using a mobile device to access news and information. Many of those Montanans are likely accessing the websites of traditional news outlets, but it demonstrates that more and more people are favoring electronic publications over the traditional print product and as the industry is changing, it is not unreasonable to expect at least some major print publications will reduce or eliminate their print products in the near future. Montana could be forward thinking in anticipating such shifts and adjusting the public notice laws before, or at least at the same time, that the industry is changing so that government entities have the best chance of meeting the goal of public notices, actually informing the public of government actions. According to 2019 article in the Virginia Journal of Social Policy & the Law, during the 2008-2009 legislative session, roughly 40 state legislatures considered proposals to amend public notice laws and within the last decade, 12 states had amended their laws to at least accommodate the growing popularity of Internet-based newspapers and the declining circulation of print newspapers. Current public notice

laws in Montana are exclusive to print newspapers and it would be well worth the Legislature's time and effort consider allowing the use of electronic publications, that meet the standards of professional journalism and other criteria to provide information to the public while also recognizing the realities of digital media use. It's likely ideal to create laws that would allow local governments the option of print or electronic publications for public notices as it best suits the media landscape in their communities and this interim study affords the Legislature an opportunity to consider the options, challenges and craft a law that best serves the government, the media industry and most importantly, the public.

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