

# Interview with Cele Pohle (Outgoing County Commissioner, District 1)

## Interview Information

- **Date:** Monday 12/29/2014
- **Location:** Powell County Courthouse, 409 Missouri Ave., Suite 112 Deer Lodge, MT 59722
- **Present:** Cele Pohle, John Stavlo, Rob Kersch

## Cele's Background

- 6 years as Powell County Commissioner
- Prior extended experience as Powell County Assessor

## Difficulties Experienced as Powell County Commissioner

- Slowness of Government Operations
- Personnel Issues. The County Commissioners are relied on to resolve personnel issues instead of those issues being dealt with adequately by the corresponding supervisors.
  - Supervisors require more training to know how to handle personnel issues.
    - Recommendations:
      - Use the Personnel Manual when dealing with personnel issues to ensure that issues are handled correctly.
      - Attempt to solve issues at a Supervisor-Employee level prior to involving County Commissioners.

## Questions from the Study Commission:

1. Why did the voters agree to a study commission?

**Answer:** Deconsolidation of Law Enforcement into the two current entities of the Powell County Sheriff's Office and Deer Lodge City Police Department was one of the most influential factors.

2. Do you believe that a consolidated form of City-County government is viable and is this the best choice?

**Answer:** I have concerns of the outer cities picking up Deer Lodge City costs such as water treatment plant, water supply, etc. in their taxes. A charter would have to cover any such arrangement. I would not be in favor of a consolidated form of City-County government.

3. What do you believe the responsibilities of a County Commissioner include?

**Answer:** To run the county budget as a responsible steward.

4. Do you believe that Powell County is in better shape now than it was when you were elected as a County Commissioner 6 years ago?

**Answer:** Yes. It is more open to the public and the creation of the Personnel Manual has been very helpful.

5. What are some negative issues that you encountered as a Powell County Commissioner?

**Answer:** The County Commissioners (nor anyone, other than the voter) can't mandate elected officials to do certain things, such as training, following certain procedures, etc. Cooperation between the various County offices within the court house is challenging and not as common as it was several years ago. It is to the point that it has become a barrier for the public to receive County services to some extent.

6. What are the most pressing issues to the current form of government?

**Answer:** The budget. We owe approximately \$3 million dollars to the Federal Government. The available tax base has not grown enough to keep up with costs. Expenditures have not allowed for saving money for infrastructure maintenance and enhancements. There has been no sustained residential/industrial growth to make up for programs that have become unavailable through Federal grants and other resources (such as Rural School grants that had been created to offset the reduction in the timber industry due to closure of some lands to logging). The road district cannot even pay for salaries out of their budget.

7. Is the current form of government financially efficient?

**Answer:** No. There is no financial ability to sustain without Federal or State aide.

8. Is the current form of Government meeting the needs of the citizens of Powell County?

**Answer:** Only the basic needs.

  
Robert C Kersch, SECRETARY

