

League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Pullman Planning Commission Date: 11/20/2019

Observer Reporting: Helen Catanese Length of Meeting: 2 H 35 M

Members Present: _____

Members Absent: Stephanie Rink, Joe O'Callaghan, Brent Carper

Others Present (e.g., media, public) 15 members of the public

Business pertaining to League Positions or topics of interest:

The meeting was a quasi-judicial public hearing to review a proposal to amend the comprehensive plan map. The area being changed was up by North Grand Ave and Albion Rd. The area would be changed from industrial to residential zoning.

Thoughts of the Committee:

City Planning Director Dickinson says that staff thinks the change is a bad idea because:

There is limited room for industrial zones in Pullman

The proposed area would place residential next to industrial zones

Other areas for additional residential zones exist

Commissioner John Anderson reiterates the issue of placing residential adjacent to industrial zoning

Testimony by Proponents of the change:

Owner of the property in question:

She says the port commission supports the transition due to a lack of demand for industrial property. She says a design process with the community found that commercial use would be more beneficial to the community. She says that they will retain 8 acres of industrial land to later build some kind of commercial center. In a later comment in response to a question, she says that the residential development would be necessary to support the commercial center.

Another gentleman who I think is a developer makes two points:

Pullman's industrial growth is <2%, which indicates extremely low demand.

He says the properties cited by staff as alternative residential sites are not good for residential development because several are not for sale and one is too steep. When questioned further he argues there are very few remaining sites to develop residential housing.

Another gentleman who owns nearby commercial property says:

That getting the land used will be a tax-base benefit to the town. He says if the zoning doesn't change it will probably sit vacant. He also says that some of his land will be developed if the change is accepted.

Aspen Heights developer (the proposed developer of the site):

Argues that the development will be high quality.

Another Aspen employee from Seattle:

He says the reason the company here is because WSU wants to boost enrollment, and that will demand housing. Commissioner Scott Hodge asked whether the Pullman campus of WSU had been growing. The speaker cites overfilling of dormitories. Noted by a speaker that enrollment was down this year, but is up in the long term.

An engineering consultant for Aspen Heights:

He reiterates that there will be an elevation buffer between the residential and leftover industrial area.

A traffic impact expert working for the developer:

Confirms the project will lead to more traffic than industrial use would. He says the developer would run a shuttle service to account for that.

Testimony against or neutral to the change:

None

Process & Protocol

This meeting was moved up a week to avoid conflicting with Thanksgiving.