

League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Whitman County Planning Commission

Date: February 3, 2021

Observer Reporting: Shelley Chambers Fox

Length of Meeting: 1 hour 15 minutes

Members Present: Chad Whetzel, Dave Gibney, Brian Davies, Keith Paulson, Erina Hammer, Alan Thomson (county planner), Grace DiBiasi (new assistant county planner), Mark Storey (Whitman County Public Works)

Absent: Gary Moore, Robert Hill, Guy Williams, Russ Jamison

Others Present (i.e., media, public): Ken Duft, Hailey Wexler

Reports:

- a. Board of Adjustment **forthcoming hearings** – NW Grain Growers commercial agricultural commodity warehouse outside Endicott. Date yet to be determined.
- b. Whitman County Emergency Management would like to build a **tower on Bald Butte**. Botanist has visited, not much Palouse Prairie up there. Phoenix Conservancy will go up with the botanist and remove some plants before the construction begins. Projected start date will be beginning of May. Weis Towers will build their **tower up near Dusty**. Permit issued January 12.
- c. The **moratorium on Marijuana businesses was lifted** on February 1, 2021. Marijuana Ordinance is in effect.
- d. The **old bridge over the Palouse River** near Manning Road burned and will be replaced. Shoreline substantial development permit required.

Old business: Update to the Whitman County Comprehensive Plan.

- A. The current Whitman County Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1978. It is available at <https://whitmancounty.org/DocumentCenter/View/1033/Whitman-County-Comprehensive-Plan-PDF>
 - a. Over 200 **responses** to the survey so far. Commissioners are pleased with the response so far. **Public workshops** will take place in March. Important to do an educational piece so that the public will understand why the county is being planned.
 - b. Commissioners discussed whether **tiny homes** would become something that could be built in the unincorporated county. They are treated like mobile homes and governed by L&I. RVs are not designed to be lived in year-round but mobile homes are. Could they be part of the solution to affordable housing. It is possible that the demand for tiny homes be mostly on the outskirts of Pullman. People seem to want a tiny home and 5 acres so they can have goats, rabbits and chickens. There is significant demand for **RV parks**. There was one permitted on the Palouse Albion Road and a second location. A new RV park is going into Uniontown right before the Dahmen Barn. This is a project by Ty and Kay Meier who run Red Barn. You need water rights for a permanent mobile home park and Ecology is not giving out any more of those. There was a **mobile home park** at Wawawai when they were building the dam and there is still a well there that could be used to re-establish a park. The pandemic has shown people that they do not need to live where they work. And they may want to live in the country. Housing in the unincorporated county needs to be addressed by the Comprehensive plan. The state would also like the Plan to address **climate change**.
 - c. The county is still agricultural but it has changed from **family farms to very large family farms** or family farm land that is leased to large entities outside the county.
 - d. **Transportation:** overwhelming public support for building **more trails**. Financing is the issue that will determine whether more trails can be built and maintained. Commissioners seem to agree that the Comprehensive plan should support the building of trails. Commissioners discussed whether trails should be designated to include horses as well as bikes and walkers.
 - e. The consultants will compile the surveys and summarize the data that can be viewed graphically. Not all the content can be summarized numerically.

- f. **Guy Williams, Bob Hill and Gary Moore are resigning from the Commission.** This means that there is an opening in each of the 3 commission districts. Please get the word out that we need applicants for the Commission. There is also an opening on the Whitman County Board of Adjustment that does conditional use permits.
- g. Continue to encourage people to complete the survey.

Public Meetings of interest to League

1. None noted.

Process & Protocol: (Observations about participants and procedures of the meeting) *e.g.*, *Did the members appear to have done their "homework"?* **Yes.** *Were members courteous to each other and the public?* **Yes.** *Was access to materials for certain agenda items available to you?* **Yes,** the most recent copy of the Comprehensive Plan, agenda and supporting materials were available on the website at <https://whitmancounty.org/272/Planning-Division>

Next meeting: March 3. Will be on Zoom. Stay tuned.