

# League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Whitman County Planning Commission

Date: March 20, 2019

Observer Reporting: Shelley Chambers Fox

Length of Meeting: 1 hr 30 min

Members Present: Gary Moore, Robert Hill, Guy Williams, Chad Whetzel, Dave Gibney, Ryan Davies, Russ Jamison, Keith Paulson, Matt Sutherland, Alan Thomson (county planner), Ginny Ruminder (note taker), Katrin Kunz (assistant county planner)

Absent: none

Others Present (i.e., media, public): 10 members of the public and 3 County Commissioners Kinzer, Swannack, Largent.

## Content:

### 1. Chad Whetzel reviewed how the meeting was to be a **workshop on planning and zoning for marijuana businesses.**

- a. Each commissioner took a turn talking about how he viewed the issue. Commissioner Swannack handed out a document with points to consider. He noted the process may take more than 6 months allotted. The county received \$87,000 in taxes in 2018. (Check with the county treasurer about tax revenue for 2018-might not be correct). The county only receives tax revenue on retail sales, they don't tax production. Things the commissioners identified that should be considered: does the county want marijuana in the county, what are the needs for different types of businesses (in particular grow and processing operations), do we want to supply for the county, the state, how to regulate/manage smell, what is a reasonable distance to a residence from the next grow operation? Things to consider continued: water use, solvents or hazardous chemicals stored/used on site, pesticides, what is special about growing marijuana that should be addressed in regulations or zoning? Employment and business weighed against criminal justice. How does it affect the neighbors and how can we regulate marijuana businesses so that they don't impinge on neighbors? Is the smell a health hazard? Has there been an increase or decrease in crime? What concerns should we have for fire fighting in marijuana businesses? Not looking for a growth cap on it but what is unique about MJ that needs to be regulated beyond other agricultural crops. Use science instead of opinion. Look for peer reviewed materials about the topic. Planning commissioners are encouraged to look at what other counties are doing in this area. Okanogan County has a cannabis advisory board that includes people from the industry as well as concerned citizen. State Dept of Ecology controls water consumption not the county so the regulations need to keep in mind the county's jurisdiction. Rules for commissioner engagement is that they can look at materials and can clarify points with staff but cannot discuss outside of the meeting room.
- b. Chair Whetzel would like to bring in some people to testify: the sheriff, the fire dept, other counties materials. Alan proposes that the Commissioners meet on April 3 in his absence to have some of these people come in to advise about their piece. You can grow and process in the same place although it is not clear what processing can be done where in Whitman County. In other counties type 1 processors take the buds and put in jars, type 2 processors extract (using solvents in some cases) and make edibles and topicals. Growing is regulated/limited by the state so that excess is not produced and does not end up on the black market. Retail operation is separate from grow and processing, dependent on population. Alan suggests inviting the planning director from Spokane County to gain their experience. There was some public comment. Chris Boyd from Palouse is the landlord of a MJ business that is going bankrupt and he has an interest in what is happening here because he is hoping the industry will thrive. Ken Duft points out that many other crops have objectionable odors and require pesticides that are potential health hazards (like glyphosate) so it will be difficult to justify greater regulation of MJ growth.

**Public Meetings of interest to League**

1. Board of Adjustment forthcoming hearings – The **McCoy Land Co. conditional use permit hearing** for property south of Dusty is scheduled for April 25, 2019. This will be reviewed by the Board of Adjustment and a hearing examiner since the value of the project exceeds \$5 million. The Land Co in conjunction with PNW has addressed all the concerns that were expressed in the original public meeting using contract experts.

**Process & Protocol (Observations about participants, conduct, and procedures of the meeting):**

The Commissioners interact with civility.