

League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Pullman City Council

Date: August 31, 2021

Observer Reporting: Anne Lewis

Length of Meeting: 7 pm- 9 pm

Members Present: Mayor Johnson; Councilmembers Weller, Chapman, Macoll, Parks, Records

Members Absent: Al Sorenson & Pat Wright (both excused)

Others Present (e.g., media, public): Uncertain (I watched the recording on You Tube)

Business pertaining to League Positions or topics of interest:

League Priority: Public Safety:

Report: Fireworks Enforcement Report. Gary Jenkins/Police Chief. Fewest July 4 calls since began keeping track in 2006. Assistant Fire Chief- proactive prior to holiday, less fireworks available/sold.

No local league action recommended.

League Priority: Accountability of City/Leaders:

Quarterly Financial Update 2021Q2-

General Fund Revenue- Collection rate of 101% on estimates. Sub category: Liquor items up 9.8%, marijuana down 1.2%. Sales Tax Revenue- Collection Rate of 104.2% of estimate. One time Tax from Construction down 39.8%. Note: Coming down to more normal levels (2020 was a huge construction tax year).

Property Tax Revenue- up 10.3%. Unemployment Rate of Whitman County for June is 4.7% (5.3% state). Building Permit Revenue up 214%.

Moratorium for utility shut-offs until Sept 30; Interest and Fees until Oct 27.

Weller asks if there are "plans" for when the moratorium expires as he expects difficulty for many residents. Thinking about it, but not "all in" as moratorium keeps being extended.

Legislative Expenses- up 4.5%. "Increase attributable to election/voter registration fees from Whitman County Auditor." *Observer's Comment: I wonder what this means/is attributable to?*

Law Enforcement – 89.6% of estimate

Parks & Rec up from last year (but far below normal); arterial street expense significantly higher

American Rescue Plan- just found out receiving an additional \$9400 in funds.

No local action recommended.

League Priority: Bond Use, Parks

Lawson Garden House: Initial bids all over projection.

New/alternative option: Open air pavilion. Significantly different (i.e. No windows, doors) although same footprint. Restrooms enclosed and heated, remainder open to the garden. Not what was originally planned (voted on), but possibly more uses than original.

This is the lowest cost option- 1.6 million. Available budget just under 1.3 million so STILL an issue even with this lowest cost option.

Looking for guidance from council: Which project are they interested in advancing? Will they direct staff to look for additional project funds? Need to immediately prepare redesign contract amendment in order to be ready to bid for construction in Feb 2022 timeframe (best time of year or costs expected to increase even more).

Council reaction:

Weller- confirms walls can be added later. Concern-**voters saw the original (don't want a shell game)** and will it attract trespassers (homeless, kids). Design West not concerned with the vandalism, homeless possibility.

Macoll- Is this needed/wanted by citizens? And how about input from Arts Committee? Wants it true to original design/what was put before the voters.

Records and Chapman also speak. Both concerned with **appearance to voters (of not getting what they voted on)**.

Several councilmembers wish Pat Wright and Al Sorenson were available to weigh in.

Attorney- Notes that in terms of legality, the funds can be spent on any parks project- council discretion. Re: Bond Proceeds- must spend within certain period of time (By October 2023). Another option: bond proceeds to fund debt service (i.e. Don't do any project).

Motion to delay to next council meeting, Sept. 14.

No league action needed at this time unless members/the board have a strong "feeling" on what the ultimate structure should be (or if there should be any project at all).

Public Meetings of interest to League: No. There might be something down the lines re: Lawson Garden/Parks & Rec Bond. Perhaps should gauge interest level of board?