

League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Pullman Planning Commission Regular Meeting

Date: 05/22/2024

Observer Reporting: Jessica D. Cassleman

Length of meeting: 2 hours and 18 minutes

Commission Members Present:

John Anderson (Chair), Brent Carper (Vice-chair), Scott Hodge, Jeff Joswig-Jones, Joe O'Callaghan, Lorena O'English, and Angela Taylor.

Others Present: RJ Lott (Pullman Director of Community Development); Ariel Medeiros and Cynthia Goodwater (City of Pullman); and Jessica Cassleman (LWV observer).
Carolyn Gordon, Helene Hopkins, Karl Olsen, Sean Robertson

Minutes:

Minutes of Regular Meeting of March 27, 2024 – *Approved unanimously.*

New Business:

1. Conduct a public meeting to review and recommend action on the proposed 2025-2030 Capital Improvement Program for Pullman and on the proposed 2025-2030 Transportation Improvement Program for Pullman.
2. Conduct a workshop on the draft Pullman City Code updates

Items discussed:

1. RJ Lott indicated that the Capital Improvement Program for Pullman (CIP) meeting went well on May 8th. There will be a meeting and discussion with the City Council on June 11th and on June 25th after which the City Council will make final decisions.
 - Mr. O'Callaghan indicated that this was his third time attending CIP and each year the meeting has been better. Very well organized and presented, so there were very few questions addressed.
 - Grants are still being pursued to be able to accomplish the goals stated. Areas discussed include transportation, water and water treatment, IT, and cyber security.
 - Carper asked if there is enough support to deal with cyber security and it was confirmed that the City Council has offered enough budget, and the city has applied for grants for a cyber security analysis. Trying to work on a "full proof" system but admitted that it is not 100% secured.

2. During the workshop regarding the draft on Pullman City Code updates, the Planning Commission took comments from a few members of the community present at the meeting. This was not a public hearing, and no recommendations will be sent forward until a later public hearing.

The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) involves the annual formulation of a schedule for the financing of major public improvements in the city over the coming six-year period. For a definition of "capital improvement" and the criteria the city uses to evaluate proposed CIP.

To start, Ariel Medeiros gave a short presentation on how the CIP updates were going and indicated the changes being proposed.

- Zoning Code language updates suggested:
 - Updated images from over 20 years ago – meet policy
 - Suggestions such as: take out the “shalls” and use “will”; use numeric rather than words throughout the document; gender neutral; capitalize proper nouns and titles, etc. and place items throughout the document in the right place.
 - With the changes they are hoping the document will read more uniformly.
 - The suggestions were well received by the Commission.

The process of formulating the program each year starts with department heads submitting proposals to the City’s CIP Committee for review. The current members of this Committee are:

Eric Fejeran, City Council Member
Pat Wright, City Council Member
Joe O’Callaghan, Planning Commission Member
Angela Taylor, Planning Commission Member and
Devon Felsted, Citizen-At-Large.

This year, the CIP Committee met on May 8th to consider the various funding requests and to prepare a draft CIP for the years 2025 through 2030.

In accordance with City Code, the Planning Commission is requested to review and make recommendations to the City Council on the proposed CIP as it relates to land use or the Comprehensive Plan. The following attachments were available to the Commissioners for further discussion:

- CIP evaluation criteria;
- CIP Committee draft minutes;

- Proposed 2025-2030 CIP program;
- Proposed 2025-2030 TIP program.

● Regarding access of dwelling units: looked at other cities

Short term rentals: need to follow codes as they become commercial.

Issues brought up: duplexes, transients, parking and the need to change to Short Term Rental section.

Change of code is the reflection made at the state level but can vary.

Public comments included:

Carolyn Gordon – on short term rentals.

She did her own research and requested information on complaints from the police department regarding Airbnb, VRBO, and weekend rentals. Basically, no problems were found and suggested not to over legislate on them. Reviews from renters in social media keep owners in check.

Homeowners are requested to change applications from \$350 to \$100 and it was not approved as the \$350 pays for personnel and staff.

Boarding houses are very restrictive – few, very restrictive and behind times, so people violate rules. Should be done correctly. Codes must be updated.

It was requested that Ms. Gordon's data is shared with the City.

Helen Hopkins – from Helen's Properties. (Airbnb rooms going for \$250-\$350)

Over regulating causes issues as it is very hard to find staff that is licensed for example.

John Anderson's comment: Are we over-regulating?

Karl Olsen: 3 Airbnb's – Clarity in codes is good!

Danger in overregulating

Sean Robertson: One complaint on an Airbnb before 2019.

Appreciative to City of Pullman for making things clearer.

Asked why the City needs to know what platform owners are using to rent their properties. Simply make sure people are paying their taxes on their short-term rentals, and let people, neighbors know the plan to rent, who is coming, as people need to know who to call in case of emergencies for example. Let tenants know of regulations as it helps everyone.

Carper shared his concern that the City might be trying to get too much information and sharing with others. Security concerns and importance to share with neighbors.

Suggested: 3 strikes and City can close them down, but not only by calls – there must be a real offense. Noise is standard.

Helen: Long-term rental registry was developed five years ago. City has not contacted her or charged what is owed. It is obsolete. She thinks few owners/rentals know that they have to be registered.

Scott Hodge suggested that for the public hearing next month there must be advertising. Need to go page by page reviewing codes.

Clean-up of regulations document was very good and to have the figures mentioned was excellent work.

Mr. Anderson suggested to tally about codes in June and July, when anyone can talk and then in August have the public hearing.

Medeiros encouraged public comments throughout the process. Written comments are preferred.

It was suggested to RJ Lott that the information is shared with the community more effectively as there are concerns. The information is on the website.

Upcoming Meetings:

- June 26th, 2024 – Zoning codes workshop – public invited. Three commissioners will be unable to attend: Brent Carper, Hodge and Joswig-Jones.
- July 24th, 2024 – Zoning Codes workshop
- August 28th, 2024 – Legislative, public hearing.

Adjournment: 21:18 hrs.