

League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Whitman County Board of Commissioners Date: January 18, 2022
Observer Reporting: Mary Collins Length of Meeting: 10 am to 1:30pm, recess 11:00am-1pm
Members Present: Commissioners Largent, and Handy
Members Absent: Commissioner Swannack
Others Present (e.g., media, public): 16 others including reporters, department heads and other unknown individuals.

Business pertaining to League Positions or topics of interest

Before the meeting began there was a **legislative update by a lobbyist**, not sure who he works for. He reported on several bills he thought would be of interest to the County Commissioners including a **salmon bill** that imposes mandatory buffers for agriculture and other users along streams, one dealing with **local control of open-carry laws**, one **updating the 911 system**, and one dealing with **hunting with dog**. The only topic to draw much conversation was the 911 bill and the question of associated funding was raised.

The meeting included a number of administrative actions such as check signing authorizations.

The **Building Department made an annual report**. The report noted that permit revenues were up and the building department was almost self sufficient as a result. They also relayed a nice story. A Christian group in Spokane is funding the **construction of a number of houses in Malden**. They contracted with a group of Amish in Montana to come and do the work. The houses all have the same basic plan, are modest in size (less than 1000 ft. square), and have each been built in one week. In 2021 they built six and plan to build 9 more in 2022. A number of those who lost their homes in Malden were either uninsured or under covered given current construction costs and these homes were an unexpected and very welcome gift. The health department was able to waive fees for inspecting water and sewage systems.

The **Road Department** reported that snow and wind have kept them busy and that road restrictions have been put in place. These are weight limits on gravel roads which shut down agricultural and other shipping. This occurs annually but the timing changes according to the road conditions.

The afternoon session was a report by the **Greater Columbia Behavioral Health group**. They reported that a **“Community Court” will be starting this month in the District Court. There already is one for the Superior Court.** The Community Court is an alternative system for dealing with misdemeanor, especially substance abuse, offences. It works through collaboration between organizations addressing behavioral health, housing, education, and employment. One can be charged twice in Community Court, a third charge would be elevated to the regular court.

Process & Protocol

*The meeting was on **Zoom and live** but most people participated by Zoom. Everyone was very cordial.*