

# League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Whitman County Planning Commission

Date: Oct 6, 2021

Observer Reporting: Shelley Chambers Fox

Length of Meeting: 1 hr 50 mins

Members Present: Dave Gibney, Erina Hammer, Chad Whetzel, Brian Davies, Keith Paulson, Fred Wexler,

Staff: Alan Thomson, Whitman County Planner; Grace Di Biase, Whitman County Assistant Planner; Mark Storey, Whitman County Director/Engineer; Brandon Johnson, Public Works

Absent: Matt Webb, Weston Kane, Russ Jamison

Others Present (i.e., media, public): Sheri Farr, Karen Hinnenkemp, Ken, Duft, Ashley, Debbie Snell (Port of Whitman), Barney Buckley, Lisa Carloye.

## Reports:

- a. Update on previous administrative use permits – Weis Towers new cell tower on Big Alkali Road. Permit was issued on September 27, 2021.

**Old business:** Discuss progress on the updating of the Whitman County Comprehensive Plan. The current Whitman County Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1978. It is available at [Comprehensive Plan | Whitman County, WA](#). The proposal is to go through the Plan line by line, chapter by chapter. In the next 2 months the Commission will start reviewing, answering questions and discussing the plan at each meeting. This may require meeting the first and third Wednesday of the month. Chapter 1, the introduction, will be reviewed last since they will have a better picture of what the introduction should look like at the end of the process.

1. Started off with a discussion of the language in the **railbanking** section. There have been several emails from Tom Handy, Art Swanneck and others requesting new language. They discussed striking the **phrase ‘freight and people’** since there is no passenger rail in the area. They also discussed whether the term ‘easement’ was appropriate since most of the land used for railways is owned rather than an easement. It was **agreed to use the term ‘railroad corridor’** rather than easement. Dave Gibney and Chad Whetzel commented that they were satisfied with all the language in this section with the mentioned changes. The entire plan will be reviewed by the legal department and the County Commissioners for final language to be used.
2. Alan would like to **strike ‘in unincorporated towns’ and ‘agricultural district’** from section LU 1.7. Commissioners agreed with these changes.
3. The discussion moved to **Chapter 3, Transportation**. The first several pages are a description of the transportation system in the county. The part that needs work is the goals and policies section. Preservation means some value is added to a section that gives it a longer life span. Maintenance means that you are maintaining what already exists. Construction is creating new roads. State highways were added to the network since the planning commission makes land use planning decisions on the state highways although they do not make decisions about constructing, preserving or maintaining the highways themselves.
4. Alan questioned whether they want to prohibit or restrict bike paths along the two roads with high freight traffic. There was discussion about this and the commissioners rephrased it to read ‘discourage bike paths where they might conflict with high freight traffic.’
5. The descriptions of each of the major highways in the county were discussed and fine-tuned for accuracy. The commissioners added a statement pointing to the importance of the lower Snake River dams in the ability of the county to have 3 ports that transport freight on the river.
6. The commissioners fine tuned the parks and trails section, moving the Bill Chipman Trail to parks and adding the Snake River Trail at Boyer Park to the trails section.
7. The Regional Transportation Planning Organization prepares a plan that allows transportation entities such as Pullman Transit to qualify for federal grant dollars.
8. Road and bridge monitoring section needs redone because the county has adopted a new gis-based system used to describe mobility.
9. Discussion of Framework goals section will be held at the next meeting.

### **Public Meetings of interest to League**

1. The Pullman Planning Commission will continue to discuss the draft of its Comprehensive Plan on Wednesday, November 3, 2021. The draft of the Comprehensive Plan can be found at [Comprehensive Plan | Whitman County, WA](#). The details on remote participation can be found at the Whitman County Planning Commission website.

**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 sent via email.

Next meeting: November 3, 2021