

# League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Whitman County Planning Commission

Date: Dec 1, 2021

Observer Reporting: Shelley Chambers Fox

Length of Meeting: 2 hrs

Members Present: Chad Whetzel, Dave Gibney, Brian Davies, Matt Webb, Russ Jamison, Keith Paulson, Fred Wexler. Staff: Alan Thomson, Whitman County Planner; Grace Di Biase, Whitman County Assistant Planner; Brandon Johnson, Public Works; Elinor Huber, Notetaker

Absent: Erina Hammer, Weston Kane

Others Present: Debbie Snell (Port of Whitman), Karen Hinnenkamp, Gerianne Buckley, Karen, Ashley.

## Reports:

- a. There were no administrative reports this month.

**Old business: Continue 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. 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. Starting at the **Economic Development** chapter
  - a. The commission discussed a number of wording changes in the introductory section.
  - b. The large employer data needs to be updated and verified through the Department of Labor Statistics. Alan will do this.
  - c. The wages section has an error: 'The median hourly wage in 2019 was \$23.60, which is less than the state's median hourly wage of \$23.14 (less King County).' The consultant will be asked to correct this.
  - d. The tax sharing district includes a ring around Pullman and the Pullman Moscow corridor.
  - e. Palouse Knowledge Corridor: what is rec-tech? Robotic, Electronic and Computer technology.
  - f. There was a discussion of the challenge that the county's agricultural economy presents. While Pullman's economy has diversified, the unincorporated county is mostly agricultural and susceptible to climate change and market forces on commodities. Much of the language in this paragraph comes from the SEWDA strategic planning report.
  - g. Goals and Policies
    - i. ED 2.1 needs reworded. It implies we don't support businesses that aren't perceived as critical. Add 'all' businesses.
    - ii. Debbie Snell points out that telecommunications infrastructure needs to be developed throughout the county to move economic development forward in the small towns and unincorporated county. Tourism is also added to ED 3.1.
    - iii. There are provisions to ensure that wind towers will be built and make money so that property owners are not left with obligations.
    - iv. Dave Gibney questions why the plan would specify that 'Limit commercial growth in unincorporated rural communities to agriculturally-supportive and tourist/traveler supporting businesses...' This may be about water availability. Alan and Mark will reword to 'encourage more intensive industrial and manufacturing uses within urban areas and along the Pullman-Moscow Corridor.'
2. Next Chapter 6 is **Environmental Protection and Climate Change**. It was decided not to move to Chapter 6. Alan would like to schedule a second meeting on Dec 15 to move the Comprehensive Plan forward.

## New Business

1. We have a new business agenda item this month to elect a new chair and vice chair of the planning commission.

- a. Chad Whetzel was nominated and elected to continue as chair
- b. Brian Davies was nominated and elected to continue as vice chair.
- c. A future agenda item will need to be to review the bylaws.
- d. Next project is to update the Shoreline Master plan which will be done jointly with the towns and the unincorporated county.

**Public Meetings of interest to League**

1. The Pullman Planning Commission will continue to discuss the draft of its Comprehensive Plan on Wednesday, **December 15, 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: December 15, 2021 assuming there are enough commissioners who can attend.