

# League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Whitman County Planning Commission Date: Dec 15, 2021

Observer Reporting: Shelley Chambers Fox

Length of Meeting: 2 hrs

Members Present: Chad Whetzel, Dave Gibney, Brian Davies, Fred Wexler, Weston Kane, Keith Paulson.

Absent: Erina Hammer, Matt Webb, Russ Jamison

Others Present (i.e., media, public): Staff: Alan Thomson, Whitman County Planner; Grace Di Biase, Whitman County Assistant Planner; Mark Storey, County Engineer, Brandon Johnson, Public Works, Elinor Huber, Notetaker, Public: Karen Hinnenkamp, Gerianne Buckley, Ken Duft.

## Reports:

- a. Board of Adjustment meeting on a side **setback variance for Phil Henderson residence** will be on Jan 6 2022

**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. In the next meetings the Commission will continue 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. Looking at the previous Chapter we can look at the changes that Alan was tasked to make last meeting, commissioners were asked to comment if they have concerns.
  - a. There is a nice summary of the **manufacturing growth** that occurred in Whitman County between 2001 and 2019. Most of the growth has occurred in the Port's **industrial park and ports** on the Snake river.
  - b. Alan was unable to get statistics on the number of employees at specific businesses in Whitman County. This appears to be private information.
  - c. This was **corrected: 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).
  - d. There was a small section that describes the **activities of the Port of Whitman** enhance fiberoptic service for businesses, operation of 3 ports on the Snake River
2. **Chapter 6 is Environmental Protection and Climate Change.** The commission discussed a number of wording changes in the introductory section.
  - a. First part describes the **Critical Areas Ordinance**.
  - b. Should they have **live links** in the document to take the reader to the RCW and WAC? The consensus was that live links would quickly age and make the document out of date.
  - c. Goals will be to protect environmental quality and encourage the development of sustainable, renewable energy generation. Chad points out that we should not have a goal to work with the state and federal government to **monitor air and water quality** because the county will not be doing the monitoring. **The goal was reworded:** The County should strive to adopt land use policies that are consistent with air and water quality requirements of both state and federal law.
3. **Chapter 7 Facilities and Utilities:**
  - a. This chapter addresses **public and private utilities**, including transmissions lines, highways, major transportation facilities such as airports, solid waste facilities, reservoirs and water-related projects, and similar state and federally initiated projects. It lists the buildings, county services, law enforcement, fire protection, water/sewers, solid waste, parks, trails, open spaces, roads, bridges, electricity, gas, telecommunications, cable, satellite, internet,
  - b. The commissioners do not like the phrase '**Public Services**' so this was reworded throughout.
  - c. **Fire protection in the unincorporated county** is largely volunteer. Same with EMS/Ambulance service.

- d. County is responsible for 1900+ miles of road and 300 bridges. They are **reducing the number of roads that the county maintains** because many roads go to one residence which makes them a driveway.
  - e. **Avista** does not operate the dams on the Snake. It does purchase energy from hydropower, wind, solar, biomass and natural gas sources.
  - f. The commissioners discussed the **need for a list or inventory of utilities in the county both public and private**. There is an inventory of all of the parcel numbers in the county because they are the basis of the property taxes. It is not yet a gis (geographic information system) file that is available to the public. They agreed that an inventory of utilities could be developed but it will have to wait until the parcel inventory is complete.
  - g. Policy 3.3 was reworded to ‘Collaborate with the City of Pullman to promote effective and ongoing collaboration and communicate between incorporated towns and other agencies to improve the **Joint Planning Area Tax Sharing Agreement Area.**’
  - h. Review completed through Policies 3.4 and 3.5 on page 81.
4. **Almost done. 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, **January 5, 2022**. 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: January 5, 2022 assuming there are enough commissioners who can attend.