

## League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Whitman County Planning Commission

Date: March 10, 2021

Observer Reporting: Shelley Chambers Fox Length of Meeting: 2 hours

Members Present: Chad Whetzel, Dave Gibney, Keith Paulson, Erina Hammer, Brian Davies, Hailey Wexler (new member, PHS 2010), Alan Thomson (county planner), Grace DiBiasi (new assistant county planner), Mark Storey (Whitman County Public Works)

Absent: Russ Jamison

Others Present (i.e., media, public): County Commissioners: Tom Handy, Art Swannack, Michael Largent; Ken Duft, Uta Hutnak, Abbie, James Lincoln, Brad Johnson, Anthony Kuipers (Daily News), Kim Weerts, Matt Webb, Madysen McLain, Kylie Fullner, Palouse Conservation District representative; Consultants: Todd Hall, Matt Covert, Sami Adams.

### Reports:

- a. **Board of Adjustment forthcoming hearings** – NW Grain Growers commercial **agricultural commodity warehouse outside Endicott**. No application yet. Date yet to be determined. Kyle Schultheis variance setback for grain bins near Colton and Uniontown. Date yet to be determined.
- b. **Forthcoming Administrative Use Permits** – Whitman County Emergency Management will build a **new cell tower on Bald Butte**. Permit issued March 8. Comment period ended on March 4, 2021. Will go up to the site next month after April 15 and remove all of the Palouse Prairie plants.
- c. **Forthcoming Variances** – Kyle Schultheis grain bins.
- d. Forthcoming Shoreline of the State Substantial Development Permits - Todd Krause requesting to **replace the old bridge over the Palouse River near Manning Road**. Comment period ends tomorrow. This will be an exemption from the Shoreline Development requirements because it is a replacement.

**Old business:** Continue with update to the Whitman County Comprehensive Plan. The current Whitman County Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1978. It is available at

<https://whitmancounty.org/DocumentCenter/View/1033/Whitman-County-Comprehensive-Plan-PDF>

1. Todd Hall with Consultant LDC provided an **overview of the comprehensive plan progress**. The purpose of planning is to take inventory, identify issues, develop new goals with public input, enhance public decision making, mitigate negative impact of development activity and improve community outcomes. The process is driven to some extent by the Growth Management Act although because Whitman County has a smaller population, it is only required to plan environmental quality and land use. Nevertheless the County will include planning for other elements including transportation, economic development, public services, facilities, and parks, trails and recreation.
2. There have been 280 responses to the **survey**. It is still open at <https://s.surveypal.com/TRI-bh-He> . The **3 top priorities cited by participants** in the survey are diversification of business, preservation of agricultural land and protection of natural resources.
3. The following questions were posed to the people in attendance:
  - a. In what way has Whitman County changed in 40 years?
  - b. Is there an optimal balance between agriculture, commercial and residential development? There are 2 major natural resources in Whitman County: agricultural land and quarriable stone. Starting a new quarry is always a contentious issue but gravel is a necessary resource for the county. Can we identify potential quarries and protect them from residential development so there are not conflicts over the development of a new quarry? Right now we have to get a waiver from the land owner if a home is less than 1000 ft from the site. Quarries may be used for 10 to 80 years.
  - c. Where should commercial development be allowed? Retail and commercial taxes are shared between the county and the city within a designated area around Pullman.
  - d. How can we allow business flexibility in agricultural zones? There may be some businesses that could be compatible with agriculture. Could be made permissible so such uses do not require a

contentious zone change. Some ideas for business uses of agricultural land would be ministorage or RV parks.

- e. What changes should be made in residential cluster zoning? In 2004-2005 the county created residential cluster zones in the county ½ mile from Pullman city limits. The idea was to provide an option for living in the country while providing Pullman some protection from residential expansion. There has been relatively little interest in residential building in these areas. There cannot be unlimited residential expansion because residences in the county are dependent on exempt wells that can only draw 5000 gallons/day or less. A housing policy enacted in 2007 allows 1 house per legal lot in the county. Some farmers would like to put a second residence on their lots for family members but current housing policy does not allow this. Mike Largent would like to see families move closer to some of the smaller communities in the county.
4. The public is encouraged to continue to participate in the discussion of these issues.

**Public Meetings of interest to League** None noted.

**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 available on the website at <https://whitmancounty.org/272/Planning-Division>**

Next meeting: April 7. Will be on Zoom. Stay tuned.