

League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Whitman County Planning Commission

Date: July 7, 2021

Observer Reporting: Shelley Chambers Fox

Length of Meeting: 1 hour 52 minutes

Members Present: Dave Gibney, Weston Kane, Erina Hammer, Chad Whetzel, Keith Paulson, Brian Davies, Russ Jamison, Matt Webb, Hailey Wexler (Fred), Alan Thomson (county planner), Grace DiBiasi (assistant county planner), Mark Storey and Brandon (Whitman County Public Works)

Others Present (i.e., media, public): Ken Duft

Reports:

1. Board of Adjustment **forthcoming hearings** – Jeff Motley CUP for an industrial park on SR 270 and Airport Road. Hearing date to be determined.
2. Forthcoming **Administrative Use Permits** – Weis Towers new cell tower on Big Alkali Road.
3. Update on previous administrative use permits – Racom new cell tower on Tekoa Mountain was approved on June 25, 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

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

The proposal is to go through the Plan line by line, chapter by chapter. Erina Hammer, Chad Whetzel, Keith Paulson, Brian Davies, Russ Jamison, Matt Webb, 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. Mark Storey proposes that they start with **Chapter 2** and save chapter 1, the introduction, for last since they will have a better picture of what the introduction should look like at the end of the process.

1. **Land Use, Natural Resources and Agricultural Conservation: agriculture, mining and forestry.**
 - a. Critical areas are different than natural resources but we are also obligated to protect them both.
 - b. Russ comments that it is not true that **small towns in WC** have grown slowly. They **have not grown**; Pullman has grown but not the small towns.
 - c. Dave Gibney asks does the county want to limit **business development** to the **Pullman Moscow corridor**. Alan points out that the wording does not limit it but most businesses want to be close to Pullman. He would like it to be less of a chore to **change the zoning of land outside of Pullman** since this has been difficult to do in the past. They agree that the wording will be changed to clarify the meaning of this section. The population of Pullman is 29,799 in the latest count due to the students not being in Pullman during the pandemic. In 2021 the estimate is 32,450.
 - d. The **agricultural land section** needs revision as it has **inaccurate descriptions of the soils and their distribution**. Ag land includes rangeland, grazing land and land used for growing food, feed, forage, fiber and oil seed crops. Do we want to treat **scabland** differently than prime farm land? Dave asks would it make more sense to build a house or warehouse on scabland rather than on prime farm land? Russ would like to see the scabland used for houses. There is a **small amount of free range** land off Rock Springs road. Otherwise must keep animals fenced. Russ and Dave discuss the purpose of the comprehensive plan is to guide land use decisions.
 - e. If we want to continue doing **cluster residential development** (WC code limits this to within half a mile of Pullman, 4 houses on 20 acres) must include it in the Comprehensive plan. Should we expand the cluster zone; could change the code to allow clusters elsewhere. There are 50 to 100 cluster houses out there mostly on Kitzmiller and Sunshine Rd. There are 20 to 25 lots that have not been built on. The port district is paying for dark fiber to home in all the little towns, Garfield, Farmington, Oakesdale, just need a provider to provide service. Cluster development could take place around any of the small towns if there is demand for it. Do we want to make it

easier for residents to build outside of incorporated areas in the county? Or do we want to protect ag land? The Druffel land that is adjacent to Moscow is able to develop because they have water rights. Brian comments that what is happening in Uniontown is construction of a bedroom community because people do not support services in small towns. They want to drive in to WalMart.

- f. **Rural community residential** includes 12 unincorporated communities.
- g. **Commercial Industrial land** includes grain elevators,
- h. **Mineral Resource land**: it is important to note that the county needs to permit the use of mineral resources such as quarries to provide rock for our roads.
- i. **Institutional Land** is the area occupied by WSU-1 square mile, a section of land.
- j. **Renewable energy**: solar and wind farms are encouraged within the county. Although wind possibilities are less desirable than those in other areas along the Snake and Columbia rivers, they are viable. The buttes in the county are Palouse Prairie and cannot be used for wind farms.
- k. **Rail Banking**: the county supports the use of rail banking to preserve existing rail corridors while allowing other uses including agricultural access and recreational trails.

Public Meetings of interest to League

1. The Pullman Planning Commission will **continue to discuss the draft of its Comprehensive Plan** during its meeting on July 21. The draft of the Comprehensive Plan can be found at [Comprehensive Plan | Whitman County, WA](#) The meeting will be hybrid. 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 available on the website at <https://whitmancounty.org/272/Planning-Division>

Next meeting: July 21, 2021