

League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Whitman County Planning Commission

Date: Aug 4, 2021

Observer Reporting: Shelley Chambers Fox

Length of Meeting: 2 HOURS

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

Absent: Russ Jamison, Keith Paulson

Others Present (i.e., media, public): Ken Duft, Lisa Carloye, Bobbie Ryder, Cyndi, Karen Johnston.

Reports:

- a. Board of Adjustment forthcoming hearings – Jeff Motley CUP for an industrial park on SR 270 and Airport Road to build 3 buildings, Platt Electric and 2 wholesale businesses. Hearing date to be determined.
- b. Forthcoming Administrative Use Permits – Weis Towers new cell tower on Big Alkali Road. First, they will need access to the building site. In addition, there has been a request by the Maders to move dirt from the building site on SR 27 to fill another area on Albion Rd.

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. 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. This month they start with Chapter 2. 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. **Land Use, Natural Resources and Agricultural Conservation: agriculture, mining and forestry.**
 - a. The language in the old Plan referring to family farms was changed to read ‘farms and agricultural character’ since this reflects the consolidation and incorporation of farms.
 - b. The statements about not allowing residential growth in unincorporated areas has been removed since the county now allows building of residences in designated cluster areas and is more permissive about building residences on agricultural land.
 - c. The statement ‘Non-farm residential uses should be kept separate from agricultural uses to the maximum extent feasible to prevent increasing incompatible uses and limit the legal liability of agricultural uses’ was discussed since it could be considered incompatible with the desire to allow building on agricultural land. It may simply be unnecessary since there is already a rider on the deed of any land sold in the agricultural area that prevents suing for use of pesticides, noise, dust when living adjacent to agricultural properties.
 - d. There was a discussion about eliminating the language ‘the county should allow residential plats in designated unincorporated communities.’ It should read ‘the county should allow residential short plats in the agricultural district, unincorporated areas and areas adjacent to towns and cities and those designated areas for cluster development.’
 - e. Sections LU 2 through 6 should be combined and reworded to clarify all allowable construction including bunkhouses or cabins for workers.
 - f. Dirt roads are shut down between November and March. This is why you cannot build houses on ‘unimproved’, dirt roads
 - g. Rural community zoning codes are different from agricultural district zones. Water is the limiting factor for all this development. If you have 3 to 9 homes you will be a group B water system which has to be approved by the state.

- h. Many things are mentioned in the Comprehensive Plan so it can be allowed under the county's development regulations. Expansions of quarries by 10% is allowed without additional permitting if there is not a house within 1000 ft.
- i. For building grain elevators, it is preferable to zone as heavy commercial so they can build their business to include scales, etc. as they have the funds without coming back to the county for additional zone changes.
- j. The county would like to support efforts by the Port of Whitman County and private partners to expand the availability of high-speed internet throughout the county.
- k. In section LU 7.3 the statement 'the county should protect the scenic and environmental qualities of the Pullman Moscow corridor through encouraging the clustering of development' would seem to be in conflict with the intention for the area to be the business and transportation corridor. Lisa Carloye notes that we don't want a strip of human development along the corridor. Others note that the Chipman trail and Paradise creek prevent development of the south side of the Moscow Pullman highway and has resulted in clustering of development on the north side. Alan notes that availability of water will determine where businesses can locate. The city of Pullman can extend utilities but it is more difficult for Moscow to do this since it would require movement of water across the state line.
- l. The statement on Rail Banking now reads: The Whitman County Comprehensive Plan supports the use of rail banking to preserve currently unused rail easements for future use while allowing other uses, including agriculture and recreational trails, for example, to use those spaces on a temporary basis until such time as they are needed again for rail transport. This approach is preferable to permanent abandonment of rail easements. Lisa Carloye points out that railbanked land cannot be used for agriculture, it can only be used for trails. The commissioners note perhaps this is intended to allow crossing of trails with agricultural equipment to allow farmers to access their fields or to allow appropriate weed control.

Public Meetings of interest to League

- 1. The Pullman Planning Commission will continue to discuss the draft of its Comprehensive Plan moving on to Chapter 3 during its meeting on August 18.
- 2. 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: Aug 18, 2021