

League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Whitman County Planning Commission Date: Jan 5, 2022

Observer Reporting: Shelley Chambers Fox

Length of Meeting: 2 hrs.

Members Present: Chad Whetzel, Dave Gibney, Brian Davies, Matt Webb, Weston Kane, Keith Paulson.

Absent: Erina Hammer, Russ Jamison, Fred Wexler.

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 start 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. Chapter 7 Facilities and Utilities:

- a. Mark Storey has updated the list of county buildings in the document. Commissioners reviewed and concurred.
- b. Goal F4: **Minimize the irreversible loss of agricultural land to building of State or federal projects.** There was a discussion of which policies should be retained under this goal. Alan will clarify with the consultant.
- c. Goal F5: Facilities constructed to serve **local energy needs** should be located so as to minimize impacts on adjacent land uses, including agricultural and residential land use. It was decided to **eliminate the word *local* energy needs since it makes sense to minimize impacts for facilities for all energy needs in the county.**
- d. **Encourage private and public water system planning** to encourage efficient use. It was decided to **strike “private and public”**. The department of ecology controls water use in the state; they are presently not granting any new water rights but they do allow drilling exempt wells which allow the withdrawal of small amounts of water. Technically exempt wells are a kind of water right. The dropping of the water table in the Palouse Basin is limited to the Pullman-Moscow area. Parts of Whitman County (such as Uniontown) do not have problems with the water level dropping. **Since this is controlled by the department of ecology, perhaps it doesn’t make sense to include this statement.**
- e. F7: **Encourage the maintenance and improvement of communications infrastructure.** Some editing was done to simplify this section.

2. The last section for consideration is Chapter 1, page 4, Introduction.

- a. Introduction to Whitman County: The word ‘**lentils**’ was replaced by ‘**pulse crops**’ since few lentils are grown in the Palouse now.
- b. **Population and demographics:** The consultants and staff will ensure that the population data is correct to the 2021 count. They will also ensure that the accompanying graphs are up to date.
- c. About the **Comprehensive Plan:** The Plan will serve as a guide for countywide decision making **over the next 20 years.** This section is a description of what a comprehensive plan is. Commissioners discussed using photos to create better page breaks, such as trying to format all

the Framework goals on one page. This does not appear to be possible. They worked to make the wording consistent from goal to goal.

- d. **Plan Elements** section was moved forward to page 10 to introduce the elements earlier in the Introduction.
 - e. **Plan Update Process** is accurately portrayed in the diagram. Dave Gibney suggests that Alan add a statement that the planning commission met x number of times to discuss the plan.
 - f. The commission will finish up the discussion in 2 weeks and then the consultants will be asked to finalize it and **put together the SEPA. State Environmental Policy Act**
3. **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 19, 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 19, 2022** assuming there are enough commissioners who can attend.