

League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Whitman County Planning Commission

Date: Mar 16, 2022

Observer Reporting: Shelley Chambers Fox

Length of Meeting: 1 hr 30 minutes

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

Absent: none

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: Ron Miller, Karen Hinnekamp, Ashley, Ken Duft, M.R, Mousel, Larry Fox

Content (What is being discussed):

Old Business:

1. It was decided to table the vote on the update of the Planning Commission By-laws and Rules of Procedure.
2. Brian Davies led the **discussion of the Comprehensive Plan**.
 - a. Commissioners reviewed the description of the process that the Commission followed in the development of the Plan (Findings of Fact)
 - i. Brian Davies notes that comments ended on Feb 22 and no comments were received.
 - b. There was a petition submitted on the **rail banking section** that had been forwarded to the commissioners this week. Dave Gibney commented that these changes could be made by the County Commissioners because they are the elected officials who answer to the public. Russ Jamison concurred.
 - c. The meeting was opened to the public at about 7:30.
 - i. Ron Miller commented he has cattle and horses in the proposed rail to trail corridor and he was hoping that the direction would be a more neutral position rather than a stand promoting **railbanking**.
 - ii. Rusty Jamison stated that he looked into the rules on railroad property that is no longer used for a railroad. He found that once the railroad abandons the railroad, the land reverts to the adjacent landowners. He took down the rails and now farms the land. He urged property owners to be ready to make claims on the property as soon as it is abandoned.
 - iii. Dave Gibney commented that it is in the county's interest to maintain the **transportation corridor** that the railway represents, and not have them abandoned.
 - iv. Alan Thomson notes that 68% of the respondents to the plan development survey were in favor of railbanking.
 - v. Keith Paulson and Mark Storey commented that the County Commissioners will change what the Planning Commission has developed as they see fit. Rusty Jamison urged Mr. Miller to call his County Commissioner about this issue.
 - vi. Public comment period was ended at 8:09 pm.
 - vii. They added the finding of fact that there was a public meeting tonight that included public comment.
3. The Commission discussed whether the Comprehensive Plan should address **water conservation** more explicitly. They thought that it had been addressed to some extent already; but the Department of Ecology takes the lead on water and the County has little control over it. PBAC addresses the water issues around Pullman but not in most of the county where water is not necessarily an issue.
4. **It was moved and seconded that the draft Comprehensive Plan be forwarded to the County Commissioners for adoption. The motion passed unanimously.**
5. The Public Hearing was closed at 8:17.
6. At 8:23 the Public Hearing was reopened to restate the motion for adopting the plan using very specific language proposed by County staff.

- a. The motion passed unanimously. The public hearing was closed again at 8:25 pm.
7. Next project is to update the Shoreline Master plan which will be done jointly with the towns and the unincorporated county.

Reports: were heard after the public hearing.

- a. **Board of Adjustment hearings:** Panhandle Truck and Equipment Repair, LLC. Hearing is set for March 24, 2022. Opening southwest of the town of Tekoa.
- b. **Administrative Use Permits** – Cell tower reconstruction for Whitman County Emergency Management Department located on Story Road was issued on February 16, 2022. Tully Gunsmithing, LLC, home-based business was issued on February 18, 2022.
- c. Update on previous **Shoreline of the State Substantial Development permits** – Permit for Helena Agri-Enterprises barge line pipe installation at Central Ferry was issued on February 28, 2022.

Public Meetings of interest to League

1. Whitman County Board of Commissioners will hold a public meeting to discuss the Comprehensive Plan. This has not yet been scheduled.

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 agenda and meeting link were sent via email. The most recent draft of the Comprehensive Plan can be found at [Comprehensive Plan | Whitman County, WA](#)

Next meeting is April 6, 2022, and commissioners are available on that date.