

# League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Whitman County Planning Commission

Date: 7/1/2026

Observer Reporting: Chambers-Fox Shelley

Length of Meeting: 2 hrs, 48 min

Members Present: Brian Davies (Chair), Bill Myers (Colfax), Dean Kinzer (Pullman), Chris Melhus (Malden), Tammy Southern (Garfield), David McKeirnan (Pullman), Weston Kane (LaCrosse-on Zoom).

Members Absent: None. Julian Mathews (Pullman) and Dave Gibney (vice Chair Pullman) have resigned.

Others Present (e.g., media, public): Staff: Alan Thomson (Whitman County Planner), Grace DiBiasi (Assistant Planner), Brandon Johnson (Public Works), David Werner, clerk Mark Storey (County Engineer). Public audience: on zoom and in the auditorium: Julie Clarkson Gullick, Carol Black, Tom Thompson, Carryn Vande Griend.

**Business pertaining to League Positions or Topics of Interest:** *Include in this section 1) issues discussed that relate to League priorities or positions. Do you recommend local league action? If so, please refer to the League position that supports your suggestion. 2) links to further information available on an issue, if available.*

The permit for the cell tower for Smartlink Group on Barbee Road has not yet been issued. The applicant is securing legal access, which has delayed the issuing of the permit.

The Board of County Commissioners adopted the Critical Areas Ordinance on June 29, 2026.

Planning staff has confirmation that there are additional grants monies to fund technical consultant expertise to complete the solar and BESS, to make adjustments to the Critical Areas Ordinance and prepare new regulations on Natural Resources.

Tonight the Commission will work on the solar ordinance language. They decide to use 'community scale and utility scale' in lieu of 'commercial' in definitions and in Section 19.65.030. They add or modify the following definitions to the solar code: Applicant, Commercial Operations, Community-Scale Solar Energy Facility, Utility Scale Solar Energy Facility, Decommissioning, Decommissioning and Site Restoration Plan, Irrevocable Standby Trust Fund, Landowner, Micrositing, Non-participating landowner, Notice of Intent to Terminate Community-scale or Utility-scale Operations, Occupied Building, Operator, Participating Landowner, Project corridor/area, Project site, Site Preparation, and Site Restoration.

Commissioners discuss the various entities that will be responsible for the facility: 'applicant, operator, facility owner' and would like the consultant or Denis Tracy to weigh in on which definitions may be redundant. Surety Bonds, needs additional wordsmithing.

The section limiting the number of acres devoted to solar was re-worded to read: the total number of acres available for utility-scale solar energy facility projects shall not exceed 5000 acres within the County. They discussed limiting the size of a single utility-scale energy facility to 500 acres. For perspective: 640 acres = 1

sq mile = 1 section of land. Grace DiBiasi displayed the County map color coded in zones: agricultural, Pullman Moscow corridor, heavy industrial, light industrial. She showed how a 1500 ft setback on buildings would affect eligibility for building a community project in the Pullman Moscow corridor. A circle with a radius of 1500 ft would occupy 160 acres. She advised that the Commissioners consider different setbacks for community scale projects than utility scale projects. Waivers could be used to reduce the setbacks for participating landowners.

As a last order of business Commissioners elected Weston Kane as vice chair to replace Dave Gibney.

Public Input: Carol Black stated that it is very important that the Standards and Criteria section be clearly written so that businesses will know if they can develop projects here or not. Julie Clarkson Gullick urges that facilities be decommissioned after a specific period of inactivity.

Announcement: Alan Thomson is retiring as of August 31 after 24 years. This will be his last WCPC meeting. There will be another position eventually hired. Alan was thanked for his leadership of County Planning.

Next meeting will be September 2. There will be no meeting in August.

**Public Meetings of Interest to League:** *Were there any public meetings announced that you think League members may be interested in attending and/or becoming involved with that relate to League positions?*

None

**Process & Protocol:** (Observations about participants and procedures of the meeting) *e.g., Did the members appear to have done their "homework"? Were members courteous to each other and the public? Was access to materials for certain agenda items available to you?*

Members are courteous to each other and the public. The draft ordinance materials were displayed on Zoom while being discussed and the Planning staff draft was posted at the Agenda Center

**Your additional comments/opinions:**

### **Reminders** 😊

*A LWV Observer is impartial, silent, and respectful. It is, however, acceptable to ask questions for clarification following the meeting.*

*Remember to wear your awesome ID Badge!*

*Please attach any materials, or links to such, received at the meeting that you feel are important to your report.*

*Please submit your report to the LWV Observer Chair within one week of the meeting. [rogerc63@outlook.com](mailto:rogerc63@outlook.com)*