

League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Whitman County Planning Commission

Date: 9/2/2026

Observer Reporting: Chambers-Fox Shelley

Length of Meeting: 1 hr 17 min

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

Members Absent: none

Others Present (e.g., media, public): Staff: Grace DiBiasi (Whitman County Planner), Brandon Johnson (Public Works), David Werner, clerk, Mark Storey (Public Works Director). Public audience: on zoom and in the auditorium: Carol Black, Nora Harren, Tom Thompson, Jamie Anderson, Nicole Frazier, Ken Duft. Presenters: Amanda Richards Dept of Ecology, Lisa Adair Dept of Ecology

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.*

A permit for new cell tower on Barbee Rd was issued August 5.

Year 2 of the Periodic Update Grant starts on September 16, 2026 which will bring back the help of Consulting firms Facet and Kimley Horn. The timelines for completing the Solar and Bess ordinance and Revisions on the CAO (removal of Chapter 17.12 into a separate ordinance and addition of comments from the Dept of Health) have been posted on the County Website. The Commission will also need to prepare a Natural Lands Ordinance.

The main topic for Commission consideration this evening is the creation of a Floodplain Damage Prevention ordinance. The new ordinance will be created by carving out the flood damage prevention section of the Critical Areas Ordinance with additional revisions recommended by the Dept of Ecology. In addition to preparing this new ordinance, the County will need to adopt the new FEMA flood hazard maps of the County to meet the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) requirements by December. Staff from the Dept of Ecology have assisted with this process and presented on the NFIP at tonight's meeting. This will help the County residents who live in flood zones to get flood insurance.

Tonight Amanda Richardson Dept of Ecology, Lisa Adair Dept of Ecology provided an

overview of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) as it relates to the new Floodplain Damage Prevention Ordinance. Goals of the program are to save lives, protect property and reduce federal disaster spending. Redevelopment in flood zones should be done with attention to safety. NFIP is a Partnership between FEMA, Dept of Ecology, Whitman County and Washington Emergency Management Division. NFIP identifies the risk using a study that prepares flood hazard maps of the County, manages the risk through mitigation requirements and insures the risk of flood-prone areas that have been mitigated. Development oversight of flood-prone areas is a local responsibility. To participate the County needs to adopt a Floodplain Management ordinance, adopt the FEMA identified hazard maps and provide oversight of development. Communities that fail to adopt maps and prepare an ordinance by December 23, 2026 will be suspended from the National Flood Insurance Program.

Grace DiBiasi went through the flood damage prevention section 9.05.1500 of the CAO and highlighted the areas relevant to the preparation of the new Floodplain Damage Prevention Ordinance. She explained some of the new text that is recommended by the staff at the Dept of Ecology. The new ordinance will be about building regulations rather than for land use planning as the Critical Areas Ordinance is intended. The highlighted text was extracted from the CAO and placed in the new Chapter 17.12 Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance with new sections drafted by the Dept of Ecology. Maps will be stored in the Assessors office. Commissioners have copies of the new ordinance for review and should ask questions or make suggestions in preparation for the next meeting on September 16. They should be prepared to vote on the new ordinance by October 7 to have it ready for adoption by the December deadline. The Commission will need to meet twice a month for the remainder of the year. Grace will be working without an assistant planner for the foreseeable future.

Carol Black submitted suggestions regarding the Solar and BESS ordinance to be considered on September 16.

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?*

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?*

Your additional comments/opinions:

Members are courteous to each other and the public. The presentation and draft ordinance materials were displayed on Zoom while being discussed and copies sent via email before the meeting.

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.

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