

League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Whitman County Planning Commission

Date: 10/16/2024

Observer Reporting: Chambers-Fox Shelley

Length of Meeting: 2 hours

Members Present: Dave Gibney, Chad Whetzel, Mark Tolman (Pullman), Weston Kane (LaCrosse), Brian Davies.

Members Absent: Matt Webb, Russ Jamison (Garfield), David Tysz (Tekoa).

Others Present (e.g., media, public): Alan Thomson, Mark Storey (County Engineer), Brandon Johnson (Public Works), Elinor Huber (clerk), Tom Handy, Art Swannack, Michael Largent, Paul Kimmel (Avista), Garrett Brown, (Avista). Jamie Anderson, Matt Z., Ken Duft, Adam Simmons, Emily Pearce, Dan, Jack L Kevin Akesson, Tresea Bannister, Beth St. Marie, Mike Dymkoski.

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.*

City and Regional Planning: At this meeting, the Commissioners continued their discussion about creating a solar energy ordinance, Chapter 19.65. A separate battery storage ordinance will be developed that will apply to wind or solar projects. The County Commissioners joined the Planning Commission for this meeting. The Commissioners discussed siting large scale solar facilities in relation to transmission lines with 2 engineers from Avista who had expertise in this area. The Planning Commissioners would like to include a defensible limit on the development of solar farms to protect agricultural land. The draft regulation currently limits development to 5000 acres. Chad Whetzel asked the County Commissioners if there are other limits on siting solar farms that they would like to see such as avoiding towns or County parks. The airport may be off limits because of limits on things that might create reflections that would interfere with visibility. It may be preferable to not allow solar panels on the high point of hills, maybe specify so many ft from the high point. In addition to decommissioning, we need to consider clean-up cost if panels are damaged and spill heavy metals on the soil.

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?*

no

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?*

Yes, the agenda and meeting link were sent via email. The draft regulations were posted on the Zoom screen.