

League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Whitman County Planning Commission

Date: 1/15/2025

Observer Reporting: Chambers-Fox Shelley

Length of Meeting: 100 minutes

Members Present: Dave Gibney, Chad Whetzel, Weston Kane, Brian Davies, Mark Tolman

Members Absent: Matt Webb, Russ Jamison, David Tysz.

Others Present (e.g., media, public): Alan Thomson, Mark Storey, Brandon Johnson, Grace DiBiasi.

Several members of the public were attending in the auditorium and on Zoom, Kevin Atkinson, Tom Thompson, Jamie Anderson, Ken Duft, Beth St Marie.

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.*

This meeting continued the discussion about creating a commercial solar energy ordinance and a battery storage ordinance. Alan announced that the County Commissioners have declared a moratorium on applications for new wind farms. They would like to bring the wind farm ordinance back to the planning commission with guidance from the county commissioners on revisions.

There has been a precedence of the state overruling denials of renewable energy projects that were issued by a Washington county.

Commissioners reviewed a draft document. Solar facilities may be permitted by conditional use permit. The applicant has to hold a community meeting before submitting a conditional use application. Bonding must occur before construction starts. Applicant must enter into a site restoration financial agreement with the County signed 60 days before the construction starts. The owner must complete site restoration within 12 months of project termination including removal of foundations to the depth of 4 feet and remediation of soil contaminated by hazardous materials. Commissioners discussed whether removal foundations to a depth of 4 feet was sufficient and decided that all material installed underground must be removed. Revegetation and soil quality will be reviewed by a qualified biologist and soil scientist at the time of restoration. The financial agreement is based on a detailed engineering estimate of the cost of site restoration. The cost estimate is adjusted for inflation annually and the company's ability to guarantee the restoration cost is reviewed periodically.

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?*

There is a public meeting for a zone change for the Port of Whitman outside of Tekoa on Feb 3.

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?*

Commissioners' discussions and questions revealed that they have reviewed materials.