

# League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Whitman County Planning Commission

Date: 12/3/2025

Observer Reporting: Chambers-Fox Shelley

Length of Meeting: 2 hrs 10 min

Members Present: Dave Gibney (Chair Pullman), Bill Myers (Colfax), David McKeirnan (Pullman-on Zoom), Dean Kinzer (Pullman), Weston Kane (LaCrosse), Julian Mathews (Pullman-on Zoom), Chris Melhus (Malden). Brian Davies (vice chair)

Members Absent: Tammy Southern

Others Present (e.g., media, public): Staff: Alan Thomson (Whitman County Planner), Grace DiBiasi (Assistant Planner-on Zoom), Brandon Johnson (Public Works), Mark Storey, Denis Tracy (District Attorney- on Zoom), Tom Handy on Zoom.

Public audience: Jamie Anderson, Julie, Ashley Hartman, Shane Roche (Steelhead America), Eric Slusher (Steelhead America), Paul Kimmell (Avista), Ken Duft, Nicole Frazier, Willard Morgan, Monica Carrillo, Hans Schmidt, Emily Pearce, Noah Corrin, Jack Lein, Kevin Atkinson, Carol Black, Chantel Maguire.

**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 next meeting is December 17, a Public Hearing on the wind ordinance crafted so far that has been sent out for SEPA (State Environmental Planning Act) review.

As a first order of business, Chair Gibney wanted to address the email from Tom Handy on behalf of the BOCC (Whitman County Board of Commissioners) which asked whether the WCPC (Whitman County Planning Commission) needed more time to work on the wind ordinance. If so, they asked the Commission to please note what work remained to be done and provide a vote on whether a moratorium was necessary and for how long. Chair Gibney asked each of the commissioners what they thought.

David McKiernan wanted more time. Chris Melhaus wanted to revisit a couple of issues. Bill Myers wanted to send the wind ordinance to the Commissioners for approval on the condition that they provided a moratorium of an additional six months. Dean Kinzer wanted to get the code in front of the BOCC as soon as possible but wanted more time to prepare the aerial spraying part. Brian Davies was satisfied with what the commissioners had agreed

upon, which was currently under SEPA review. Weston Kane wanted to get it to the BOCC, noting they could send it back to the WCPC if they wanted something reconsidered such that the Planning Commissioners would then have the BOCC's guidance. Julian Mathews agreed with Weston.

Chair Gibney asked if the things they wanted to do would require a moratorium or could be done without one. They discussed what options the BOCC had. The moratorium might have needed to be extended regardless to permit the BOCC enough time to review the proposed regulation. Denis Tracy said that the BOCC was not asking the WCPC to short-circuit what they were doing. They were asking if they needed to extend the moratorium and, if so, what specific changes the planning commissioners wanted to make that required more time. It was legal to make further changes after the moratorium. Chair Gibney noted that the WCPC could not send the regulation to the BOCC on the condition that they extended the moratorium. Denis Tracy suggested that they could send the regulation to the BOCC for their approval with a request that they be granted another moratorium to address a couple of issues. Brian Davies did not understand the need to extend the moratorium. Bill Myers revised the motion to state that they sent the ordinance to the BOCC to be codified immediately with a request that the moratorium be extended for six months so the planning commission could complete the regulation. The items to be addressed during the moratorium included increased setbacks for nonparticipating neighbors and aerial applications, improved decommissioning and bonding language, and agricultural and view shed aspects from the comprehensive plan. Alan noted that the update of the Critical Areas Ordinance would take precedence over any other work starting in January because the grant relating to this work was to end in the summer of 2026. Chris Melhaus wanted to send the code to the BOCC and let them change what they thought needed to be changed. Chair Gibney thought that the additional issues should take about three months. Denis Tracy noted that the WCPC had approved a 6x setback for nonparticipating neighbors to reduce the chance that they would have damages or difficulty getting fire insurance.

The final motion was that the Planning Commission would send the regulation completed on November 19 forward for BOCC approval and requested that the BOCC extend the moratorium so that the PC could address increased setbacks for nonparticipating neighbors and aerial applications, improved decommissioning language and bonding, and agricultural and view shed aspects from the comprehensive plan. This motion passed.

At the November 19 meeting, Weston Kane had made the motion that wind facilities not be permitted within one mile of areas of national, state, or local significance such as (but not limited to) all state parks, all county parks, public access sites, and recreational lands owned or managed by the Washington Dept of Fish and Wildlife including Rock Lake, Pampa Pond, and Revere, and public lands administered by the BLM. Denis Tracy wanted the PC to clean up the exclusion zones specified in this section. It would have been preferable to use a specific list of excluded areas rather than saying "all county parks" or "all state parks." Commissioners agreed that they would specify the Palouse to Cascades trail, Klemgard Park,

Colfax Trail, and Wawawai County Park, rather than using categories of land.

Denis Tracy also wanted the Commission to clarify that they wanted to extend a two-mile circle around Rural Community Residential District, Rural Community Center, and Rural Community Commercial District zones. The latter might have required that Commissioners work on it during the moratorium period. Denis also wanted commissioners to assist in assembling the supportive materials for the setbacks and other regulations that they had written. Materials from the public were to be resubmitted in advance of the public meeting on December 17.

#### Public Comment

- Carol Black was confused by the public meeting process and asked what the public should do to prepare. Chair Gibney stated that there would be motions put forward by the Commission to establish what they intended to do. Then they would open the meeting for public comment. He asked that they please bring new information with each comment rather than repeating. The Commissioners noted they would then note additional findings and motions and take a vote to forward the regulation to the BOCC with the recommendation to adopt or to reject.
- Emily Pearce was writing an article for the Daily News and noted she would ensure that readers knew that the time of the hearing was 6 pm on December 17 rather than 7. She requested that they resubmit things they wanted to be part of the record in advance.
- Chantel Maguire wanted commissioners to note that wind turbines in the wrong place created operational hazards that could not be mitigated for pilots.
- Kevin Atkinson wanted to understand what information needed to be resubmitted. The Chair responded that they should please resubmit anything that would support the findings used to develop the regulation.
- Bob Guyani of Elberton, Washington, stated that Palouse soil was highly erodible by both wind and water. He noted that concrete slabs were on slopes that should have been terraced to prevent erosion

**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?*

December 17, 2025 Public meeting to hear comment on the Wind Energy facility ordinance

**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:**

**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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