

League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Whitman County Planning Commission

Date: 10/15/2025

Observer Reporting: Chambers-Fox Shelley

Length of Meeting: 2 hours 30 minutes

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

Members Absent: none

Others Present (e.g., media, public): Staff: Alan Thomson, Whitman County Planner, Grace DiBiasi (Assistant Planner), Brandon Johnson, Public Works, Mark Storey, Denis Tracy (District Attorney) on Zoom, David Werner (Clerk). Public audience: Rick McNanny, Mike Dymkoski, Carol Black, Mark Weber, Nicole Frazier, Ken Duft, Jamie Anderson, Theresa Doyle, Tony S, Willard Morgan, Nicole Frazier, Ashley Hartman, Darcy Wettersten, Susie Henningar, Tom Thompson, Kevin Atkinson, Theresa Bannister, Bonnie Rumle, Cary Caruso.

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.*

There will be a meeting to consider a variance for John R Howell to construct a residence with a viewshed set for October 30, 2025.

Jasna Rondeau was invited to talk about the health effects of infrasound from wind energy projects. She is a teacher who took an interest in these issues because of the energy facilities proposed in Alberta, Canada where she lives. She states that what she has to say is based on research of a German scientist, Dr Ursula Bellut-Staack who has practiced emergency and internal medicine since 1984. Jasna learned what there was to know about the health effects of infrasound by reading about this. Jasna talked for about 20 minutes about why she didn't like the previous experts who talked about infrasound on September 10 (primarily Dr. Christopher Ollson, PhD with a few comments about Dr. Robert McCunney, MD). Dr Ollson testifies for the wind industry and therefore has a conflict of interest, his science is dated, and is biased. Ms. Rondeau doesn't believe there is any difference between open access vs peer-reviewed studies, and the list of 150 peer reviewed studies that support no health effects of wind turbines is not provided in their presentation. Ms. Rondeau then cited a study by Dr. Bellut-Staack that is based on the research that won the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 2021. The Nobel research identified sensors in blood vessels that control the vessel diameter and inflammation in the vessels that are affected by infrasound pressure. Dr Bellut-Staack's research is about the effects of infrasound on the pressure sensors in blood vessels resulting in disruption of cardiovascular and embryological functions.

She also cited 2 videos that were released in Copenhagen about how to protect human health from infrasound. The first presenter advocates a minimum of 5 kilometers from the source of infrasound. The other video was in Swedish but she had ChatGPT translate it for her. She reviewed the WHO Sound

exposure recommendations which specified that wind turbine noise should be < 45 dB average sound pressure level over all days, evenings and nights in a year.

Denis Tracy, Prosecuting Attorney: The planning commission can create setbacks to protect the view from Whitman County landmarks such as parks. Consider traveling to the top of the Kamiak Butte and pick out landmarks that are 3 miles or 5 miles away so the Commission can decide what distance is appropriate. The County ordinance can push back the setback for a nonconsenting landowner to a limit similar to that used for a town. Presently the setback for towns is much further than for nonconsenting neighbor properties (1 times the tip height plus 100 ft).

Chair Gibney notes that there are many documents that have been provided to the Commission, some of which will be brought into the record so that they can be used as findings of fact on which to base their specifications. The Commission is going to begin reviewing the language of the ordinance again by reading it first, allowing Alan and the Commissioners to comment or question on the language and finally allowing public comment. He first reads the section on setbacks which they had set aside to allow for legal clarifications that they have now received and some testimony from experts. Setbacks include 1 x tip height + 100 ft for occupied buildings on the participating land and state and improved county right of ways.

Setback will be 4 x tip height from incorporated towns and occupied buildings on nonconsenting land. Dean Kinzer notes that the NIH now recognizes 100dB infrasound as a hazard to human cardiovascular health and would like to offer a motion to increase the setback to 8 x the tip height. David McKeirnan would like the setback for nonconsenting property lines to be the same as for incorporated towns because there is an extra fee for aerial application of pesticide in the area of wind turbines. The public was invited to comment. Mike Dymkoski is confused by the advice to make sure that whatever wind code is written should be defensible. Rick McNanny would like the measurement of tip height clarified. Carol Black would like to see protection of Kamiak Butte and other landmarks similar to specifications used for National Parks (9.5 miles). She also would like the Commissioners to listen to a presentation by a scientist in Sweden. Tom Thompson wanted to emphasize that the science is evolving; Ken Madsen's study shows that 20 percent of population is sensitive to infrasound. He would like to see protection of Kamiak Butte. Kevin Atkinson would like to see local land use respected and not worry about EFSEC overruling the County's ordinance. Teresa Bannister wants to preserve the cultural legacy of the Palouse tribe from the view of wind turbines. Bonnie Rumle would like the Commission to consider homes in the rural County as important as those on the edge of Pullman. Willard Morgan asks if animal barns are considered occupied buildings. Alan states that they are but perhaps should be specifically included as such.

Chair Gibney acknowledged that the Commission would like to protect the viewshed of the County's parks and landmarks. He also would like the code that the Commission comes up with to be based on protecting the residents' health, safety and welfare. One Commissioner would like the tribe to provide specific input. Chair Gibney would like Denis Tracy to comment on what is meant by arbitrary and capricious. Mr. Tracy states that it means not making a decision in a careful and deliberate manner and with good governance. Chair Gibney polled the Commissioners about whether they are inclined to increase the setback from what is currently in the ordinance. Commissioners would like the setback to be more than currently specified. One of the Commissioners would like to make more progress and get the ordinance done by the time the moratorium is over. They moved to add in a meeting on October 29.

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?*

Members are courteous to each other and the public. The presentation materials were displayed on Zoom while being discussed.

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