

# League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Whitman County Planning Commission

Date: 10/1/2025

Observer Reporting: Chambers-Fox Shelley

Length of Meeting: 1 hour 55 minutes

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

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, County engineer. Public: Carol Black, Tom Thompson, Mike Dymkoski, Kevin Atkinson, others

**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 was a speaker scheduled to talk about the health effects of infrasound but she is unable to attend tonight. The Commission will continue to review the commercial wind energy facilities ordinance language. David McKiernan would like to move the discussion forward and make decisions. He is concerned about the setback and height restrictions of turbines and would like to see ample public comment on these subjects. Chair Gibney stated that it is unlikely that the Commission will get to setbacks tonight but at such time that they get to that topic, public comment will be encouraged. Tonight, public comment will be allowed in the last half hour of the workshop. Before the last half hour of the workshop the discussion will be among the Commissioners and the staff.

The first point of discussion is changing the intent of the ordinance to read 'To provide requirements for permitting, operation and decommissioning of commercial wind energy facilities consistent with the support for renewable energy found in the comprehensive plan with safeguards that the impacts of such facilities on the health, safety and welfare to people in the county are avoided, minimized and/or mitigated accordingly.' One of the commissioners believes that this wording opens the County up to litigation. He would like to strike the portion about 'consistent with the support for renewable energy found in the comprehensive plan'. Alan points out that the comprehensive plan allows conflicting land use in the sense that rock quarrying is supported as necessary for road construction, but the comprehensive plan endorses protection of farmland and the aesthetic value of parks.

The Commissioners decided to strike the portion as proposed. The purpose section will now read 'To provide requirements for permitting, operation and decommissioning of commercial wind energy facilities with safeguards that the impacts of such facilities on the health, safety and welfare to people in the county are avoided, minimized and/or mitigated accordingly.' Throughout the ordinance 'wind energy facility' will be preceded by 'commercial' to differentiate from private wind or solar facilities for businesses or residential. There is a separate ordinance for private wind facilities for businesses or residential but not for solar facilities.

Part of the housekeeping process of the ordinance revision will be to add a definitions section. This will be done at the end of the revision process so the Commissioners know all of the definitions that should be included.

There is discussion to increase the number of informational community meetings on a project from one to two or three and that the meetings be held within 20 nautical miles of the location of the project. The final decision was to require that the project applicant holds a minimum of two meetings to inform the public about the proposed project and allow for public comment. One of the meetings will be held within 20 nautical miles of the project and the other will be held in the county seat.

Public Comment: Carol Black requests that the public be given copies of what section of the ordinance the Commission is working on. She also would like to add to the purpose section 'the agricultural practices, and environmental quality' into what needs to be protected in the County. Chair Gibney asks her to find a sympathetic Commissioner to make an amendment to that effect.

Tom Thompson said the Commission should not make assumptions about what the public thinks about renewable energy based on an old survey during the revision of the Comprehensive Plan. He does not recall the survey despite reading 3 local newspapers. He also objects to Alan Thomson making motions about the ordinance. Chair Gibney notes that Alan Thomson is an ex-officio member of the Commission and able to make motions but not allowed to vote. Mike Dymkoski also objects to Alan Thomson making motions. Chair Gibney will clarify.

Kevin Atkinson would like to see the public re-surveyed about support of renewable energy since it is now clear that there is a lot of opposition to wind turbine employment in the County. Kevin then read a long recommendation to specify the design efficiencies and monitoring devices to be used with wind projects that he has provided to the Commission in written form.

This report was taken from the Zoom recording of the meeting on October 1, 2025.

**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:**

### **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](mailto:rogerc63@outlook.com)*