

**WHITMAN COUNTY  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
OPEN HOUSE  
June 30, 2021  
Zoom meeting**

**MEMBERS:** Dave Gibney  
Fred Wexler

**Staff:** Alan Thomson, Whitman County Planning Director; Grace Di Biase, Whitman County Assistant Planner; Tom Handy, Whitman County Commissioner; Brandon Johnson, Public Works; Elinor Huber, Clerk.

**Others:** Matt Covert, LDC; Todd Hall, LDC; Eileen Mitchell, LDC; Bobbie Ryder.

**6:05 p.m.** – Alan Thomson – Let’s get started.

Matt Covert – Thank you, Alan. As Alan mentioned, Todd Hall and I are with LDC. We are the team for assisting Whitman County with the Comprehensive Plan. Todd also mentioned Eileen Mitchell, our permit tech is in “listen only” mode to take notes for a learning opportunity for her. For you to engage with the comp plan updraft.

That is a reminder of why we are doing this. Whitman County last had a full update of the Comp Plan in 1978. Changes and updates have been made since then to certain sections. But the County felt that it was a great time for revising and completely updating that plan and looking to the next twenty years, and while also looking back at things since that 1978 plan and over the preceding days. Just to put this in context for everybody, and we have been over this with the commission a couple of times, but for those folks who are joining us but who have not been here before why does WC need a comp plan.

The Washington State Growth Management Act, RCW 36.70A, put these requirements for management and land resources. There are two different types of counties and cities in the State that have to fully plan and then ones that are only required to partially plan. There is some wiggle room where ones that are only required to partially plan to choose fully planning.

WC is not a fully planning county unlike a lot of the Puget Sound counties that we deal with on a regular basis. WC does not have to update or produce a plan with all of the required elements like land use and transportation and capital facilities and the list goes on. The only things that WC is required to plan for by the State are critical areas and natural resource lands. Natural Resources meaning forestry, agriculture, fisheries, and chief among those in the counties plan is agriculture, which is considered a natural resource. The bare minimum is plan for designated and plan for critical area and natural resource plan.

However that doesn’t mean WC can’t go above and beyond and that is what they have chosen to do here. That is where we come in to help. In addition to critical areas and natural resources, WC is also planning for the future of land use, transportation, economic development public services facilities & utilities, and parks, trails and recreation.

Over the course of the month of June, this is the third of three meetings, and we have held meetings and have gone over all of the elements except these last two. So land use, natural resources and agriculture, is one element. The other is environmental protection and climate change. I'll start with framing the land use issue. This is the one that is the most central to most comp plan efforts and often attracts the most attention. We took a dive into the plan that was in effect the one was adopted and updated a few times.

We didn't want to reinvent the wheel, we didn't want to do a bunch of extra work that wasn't needed. We found there was a lot within the existing plan that was worthy of keeping or revising. So, land use, especially in rural residential uses, urban and residential there was a lot of Pullman–Moscow corridor. There was a lot of good work that has been done on the last forty or so years since this was adopted. We saw fit to keep some of that language and tweak some of that language in our recommended updated goals. There was a lot of in there that was of value.

What we are talking about here is this is any kind of use that humans have for the land. This is agriculture, rural residential, urban and suburban type use, industrial land, commercial land and look at what future uses may be considered. This is where goals and policies come into play. Where we are looking at how do we ensure the good policies for the work that has already been done and supports future changes that can help of things like cluster zoning. I know WC has a lot of areas zoned for cluster residential around the Pullman tax sharing area. To what extent should that continue and how can we plan and support that?

Other big issues in the land use element is the siting of renewable energy facilities, further development of the Pullman-Moscow Corridor and uses within the AG zone, which is as you know the majority of the County. This is of particular interest to agriculture because one of the things the State requires as you see in the right hand of the slide is that counties not fully planning, which is WC is one of them, must designate critical areas and natural resource lands and adopt development regulations that protect resources. We will get to critical areas in a bit because those are a petty recent code update and not as much heavy lifting as needed there because of recent changes.

The existing plan did not have a designation for ag lands and while the vast majority of land is zoned ag we thought this is a good point of discussion tonight, we wanted to approach the subject of what does it mean to designate agricultural land as natural resource lands. What types of ag what soil groups or do we say everything else outside of Pullman urban is this designated ag land. This is the venue to explore these issues.

Before we look at specific changes to goals and policies that can help future land use regulation and future development regulations and efforts, we want to lay out some framework goals that cut across all these different elements. They cut across land use, transportation, critical areas, public facilities, and are some broad statements of values that the community has. Values that WC has that this plan will try to respect and honor throughout all of the elements that we are discussing here.

It is important to note that that they are not in any particular order. None of them is more important than the other, so there are going to be areas where there are some, depending on the way you look, there is some tension between different goals depending on the specifics of a particular site of a particular issue. The important thing is in order to ensure that none can conflict, is to establish the framework to which

we talk about these things and the goals and policies are refinements of these and specifically help us sort through those issues.

**FRAMEWORK GOAL – PROTECTION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS**

*All policies and decisions made by the County, and as guided by the Comprehensive Plan, will strive to protect fundamental property rights of individuals and ensure that Whitman County land use policies and regulations balance the private property rights of all landowners to the degree possible.*

**FRAMEWORK GOAL – PRESERVE RURAL CHARACTER AND FAMILY FARMS**

*Preserve and protect the county’s rural character, which includes productive agricultural lands, large open spaces, and sweeping views of the Palouse hills. This preservation of rural character shall not only include the county’s scenic beauty but also the protection and sustainability of the rural way of life, providing opportunities for employment, income and a tax base while also limiting growth to rural community centers (RCC’s) and near urban centers.*

**FRAMEWORK GOAL – PRESERVE AND PROTECT EXISTING NATURAL RESOURCES**

*In cooperation with farmers, businesses, landowners and State and federal partners, preserve and protect natural resources, which will reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and reduce flooding and other natural disasters.*

**FRAMEWORK GOAL – EFFECTIVE LAND USE PLANNING**

*Develop countywide goals and policies that promote effective and consistent land use decisions that are responsive to local growth but also protect the unique character of Whitman County.*

So, the draft framework goals that we think are going to be important to the land use element are protection of private property rights, preservation of rural character and family farms, preserve and protect existing natural resources, and effective land use planning.

Planning development regulations that are responsive to local growth but also protect the unique character of WC. This is where we would get some of the goals and policies that we have drafted. Before I start I’ll just note for everyone’s sake this is very much a draft. We have worked really closely with County Staff. We’ve had two public meetings already and we have discussed this with the Commissioners and other venues besides official meetings.

So this is the third of three events in June for presenting the draft and talking through some of these big issues. This is not the end of the process. We are just in the middle of things where we have looked at the existing plan, we have evaluated it, we have discussed the big issues and we have come up with the first working draft trying to get at those issues. We are only half way there. The rest of the year and to the end of the year, we are going to be working on refining the draft, doing an audit of the existing code, trying to figure out how future changes of those regulations could help within the plan.

Then there will be a hearing and adoption process later in the fall. So there are plenty more opportunities for you to weigh in on this. This is a good complete, but by no means, finished draft at getting at those issues that folks have said are important at those meetings through talking to people through the review of the existing plan regulations. I won’t touch on all of these land use chapters there are twelve different

goal statements and policies that implement those goals under each of them. Alan, if I am correct, the draft document is available, is that correct?

Alan Thomson – It is on the website, yes. Matt, can I interrupt for a second? Can you go back to the last slide, please? Just want to make a point here for conversation. Under the framework goal to preserve rural character and family farms. That is pretty much what the current comp plan does. So, I think a question to the public and to the BOCC we seemed to be focused on protecting the Palouse and that last sentence in here, *“while also limiting growth to rural community centers and near urban centers.”* That troubles me a little bit because that seems to be somewhat restrictive as far as not around rural community urban centers.

There is a lot of the County that is not near an urban center or a community center. What if someone wants to build a house out in the middle of nowhere or close to a community or near urban? That sentence says to me that you can't do that. You can interpret that in two ways. It is limited to growth only near community centers or is it just somewhat limiting growth? It bothers me that maybe it is too limiting. I just want to open that up for conversation. Tom, Dave? What do you think?

Tom Handy - I had the same exact thought. When I read that the first time that it was too limiting. I think we need to be a little bit more progressive in the way we think we can grow and survive.

Alan Thomson – That is what I am thinking too, because we do have occasionally someone who has a bright idea about a commercial or industrial enterprise that might need to have a zone change out there or, under the ag code it is allowed and then also building a house out in the middle of nowhere. I don't want to have that being limited. That wording seems to limit it just to other community centers and urban centers.

Tom Handy – What about the warehouse that is out there about three miles between Pullman and Palouse? That isn't right inside the middle of an agricultural area but is certainly not agricultural and things like that are good along the highway. It is adding employment to the area and taxes for the County.

Alan Thomson – That is what I'm trying to get to. Then there is language a little further on that backed that up. That limiting factor backs it up.

Dave Gibney – It is clear that the existing plan and policies for the County for a long time have discouraged residential out in the middle of nowhere. I think you are right that we want to ease that. I wish some of the farmers were here because how many actual family farms do we have left? What is a family farm?

Tom Handy – I think you are right on, Dave? I had that same exact thought. It might have been a family farm 50 years ago. Now most of the farms are corporate and owned by several individuals maybe even owned by somebody out of the area. Just calling it a family farm I don't think is all inclusive the way farms are operated anymore. Plus, if it was a corporate farm it leaves them out of the picture.

Grace Di Biase – I am the Assistant County Planner and I'd like to speak on that myself. I am from a family farm and I would say that is one that is typically from one generation to another generation of families. Sure they might have corporations as a name but owned by siblings or parent son or daughter operation. It would be interesting to know what the ratio is between huge corporate farms that aren't really tied to family versus the family farm that I described.

But I would like to say that the presence of family farms is still out there even if it isn't major acreage or maybe at the forefront of people's minds but I would say that is still prominent and should be taken into consideration in talking about it even if we don't know the ratio. Thank you.

Dave Gibney – I would like to see us do what we can to continue to support farming families and the kind of family farm that has been passed down over the generations even if they do a corporation for financial tax purposes. I think those are all worth preserving. I'm not saying the big ones that aren't that are no longer family owned aren't worth preserving and aren't a big part of the economy. I just don't know that this describes things properly.

Tom Handy – I agree. The family farms are very precious and we need to preserve that, by fully addressing in WC as family farms. I think we need to broaden that definition out a little.

Matt Covert – That makes sense.

Alan Thomson – We changed the heading there. Right now it says, "*Preserve rural character and family farms.*" How about, "and farming," in general? Well, family farms are part of farming. We know we do have corporations that have farms out there. So, Dave is right. We need to encompass everything. Everybody.

Todd Hall – We can certainly change that. Family farms was something that was initially put in there from an early conversation that when we had a lot of folks at one of the joint meetings. This was an item that was brought up. I think it was from a commissioner or the public. He just mentioned that, and the tie in to this was the economic thing and about allowing home occupation or some kind of small family business from that family farm. But I hear what you are saying in terms of broadening the scope of the family farm but just say farming, and then the limiting growth part could just be eliminated and giving it more responsibility.

Tom Handy – How about something like "preserve the rural agricultural character." That would take into account any kind of farming.

Matt Covert – All good comments. I like that wording. We will take that into consideration. Also point out with the slides as we go through some of the proposed goals and policies, that one thing we tried to do in the draft is with the updated new goals and policies is start to craft that what we mean when we say like helping out family farms, like things that could be helpful as is mentioned previously.

Thinking a little more progressively about the future of the County. Things like being able to build a secondary home for a family member on a farm site or being able to widen the scope of what is possible in terms of on farm commercial enterprise. So, we started to crack the door open to some of the changes and we look forward to those conversations. That's an area where family farms can be supported without thereby not supporting corporate farms. Just as a point of information as we go along.

Any other comments on the framework goals before we go into the some of these goals and policies?

**Goal LU-1 – Preserve productive agricultural land and the family farm as the primary social and economic base of Whitman County by minimizing conversion of agricultural land to other uses.**

**Policy LU 1.1** – *The County shall maintain, to the greatest extent feasible, an up-to-date map of agricultural land and prime agricultural land in the County to accurately assess impacts of proposed land use changes.*

**Policy LU 1-2** – *Non-farm residential uses should be kept separate from agricultural uses to the maximum extent feasible to prevent increasing the legal liability of agricultural uses.*

This is one that is taken from, and you'll see here some of that same language, one of those that was taken from the adopted plan that is currently in place, with some new added in. There are a couple of areas based on this conversation that we will have to soften this language. For example the one on 1.3.

**Policy LU 1.3** – *The county shall prohibit residential subdivision of lands in all unincorporated areas except designated unincorporated communities and those areas designated for Cluster Residential development.*

Matt Covert – Obviously, a subdivision is a different story but they are talking a house that I remember from short plat regulations but how do you make sure that is not terribly onerous or impossible? In the policy 1.6 here this is in support of the goal of preserving productive agriculture and the family farm as a primary social economic basis for WC.

**Policy LU 1.4** – *The county should discourage non-agricultural residential land use on agricultural lands, except in cases where rural accessory dwelling unit is permitted and except those areas designated for Cluster Residential development.*

**Policy LU 1.5** – *The county should require that all levels of governments and their agencies consider the impact their programs and projects may have on agricultural activities and seek to minimize any impacts that threaten the viability of agriculture and the family farm.*

**Policy LU 1.6** – *The county should create a conditional use process to allow for rural accessory residential uses within the footprint of existing farm home sites to allow flexibility for farm residents and strengthen family farm enterprises.*

On Policy LU 1.6, this is one that I mentioned that I cracked open the door to some additional possibilities so the language here is definitely up for debate. The idea is to create a process to all for a rural accessory residential use. Essentially a second residential unit within the footprint of an existing farm home site. So we aren't talking like an addition to the home but a second structure or a second unit to allow flexibility for farm residences and strengthen family enterprises.

So, it's not quite a short plat because that entails a certain distance between homes and it would be like the legal owner would be totally different like a rural residential use. This is more thinking about in terms of providing like one additional unit in some cases where appropriate on the existing farm site. Just an example of something that we heard at previous meetings, one of the joint meetings how that could really help preserve existing family farms and strengthen those family ties.

Tom Handy – I had two thoughts on this section. One is them, LU 1.2 seems to be worded a little clunky, “...to prevent increasing the legal liability of agricultural uses.” I can understand the intent but I don't think it really states it well. I think we already have a policy for that.

Dave Gibney – That is entirely covered by the rider that anybody has to sign that wants to live out in the county if they want to put a house out there.

Tom handy – In this other section we don't have much of it right now and I don't know whether or not it might become an issue, but if we ever had temporary workers, like if they started growing grapes along the Snake and they brought in people to work. Most of the time the farmers would put up temporary housing for these people. I don't see any provision to allow that. Maybe it's not necessary that is it there.

Matt Covert – That is a good point.

Alan Thomson – I've not in the County

Tom Handy – They might start to grow more grapes. There were a lot of orchards in there before they put the dams in. Maybe it is unnecessary but there is nothing in there that. They might start that again like they did 100 years ago. There were a lot of orchards down there before they put the dams in. I just wanted to point out that there is nothing in there for those kind of dwelling units

Alan Thomson – I've never encountered that in the County. As far as the development regulations are concerned, that is not allowed. If this is something that the BOCC wants, we would have to amend the development regulations for that.

Dave Gibney – That LU 1.3 is exactly the same thing as we talked about a little earlier. You really can't put a house anywhere out in the County.

Alan Thomson – I've got several questions about this. The first one is LU-1. Just a general question and I heard somebody in the public asking a question. Is it true that productive ag land is the primary social and economic base of WC today?

Matt Covert – It is not the primary driver of employment but if you are looking at exports or value of product produced, I think it is at or near the top.

Alan Thomson – We have some public comments about alternatives to agriculture. Some commercial or industrial types of activities have, yes, you are right most of that is in Pullman but that is not WC. So we want to encourage a little bit more of industrial/commercial activity rather than farming or along with farming. I was thinking of what the BOCC might think of that description there. Do you think that is true anymore?

Tom Handy - I can't speak for the other two commissioners because they are farmers for life. I haven't ever been a farmer. But I would tend to agree with you myself, that when we were talking about earlier things, I think we should be little less limiting and focus on how WC develops. There could be a lot of industrial activity that happens in around the port areas and all kinds of things that are major forces. If our plan is written as such that we're discouraging that and some essential people come and look at our plan and in talking to somebody and say that they don't want us here. I'd hate to close that door before it even gets knocked on.

Dave Gibney – All of LU 1.2 through 1.5 all seem restrictive in parallel with what we had and what we have and probably not what we want to be in the future.

Alan Thomson – No, LU 1.3 needs to be changed, personally. *“The county shall prohibit residential subdivisions of lands in all unincorporated areas...”*

Dave Gibney – LU 1.4 is pretty much the same.

Alan Thomson - Yes, so we need to amend them a little bit because “thou shalt prohibit,” is pretty clear. That is not what we do today. We allow subdivisions out there but the subdivision is the parent parcel and the remainder. So if some farmer wants to carve a little section of land, 4-6 acres or something like that, that is a subdivision. That is allowed right now. So that statement is completely out of whack.

Matt Covert – Alan I think there is a difference between the parent parcel and the remainder, that would be considered a short plat by your code, is that right? This is a full plat, subdivision we considered it to be like a full plat short subdivision would be what you are describing. I don’t know if that is too much for this, but that’s the wording was going on that.

Alan Thomson – That’s is not how I interpret the county residential subdivision of lands. That doesn’t say, long plat versus short plat. That is just a subdivision of land which is a generalization of one or the other. We don’t allow long plats for residencies. But we do allow a short plat for residencies. So I still thing that statement is out of whack. A residential subdivision to me could be either one a long plat or a short plat.

Matt Covert – Okay, I think I see the issue. Some of these are adapted from the old comp with some of that language. In this particular case this was one that was reworded from the existing plan but to my ears, so subdivision means long plat. Short subdivision means short plat. We can clean that up.

Alan Thomson – We still allow people to do short plats for residential parcels but it is limited now because of the viewshed. It used to be that you could split 20 acres into three parcels and build a house on each one of those parcels. You can’t do that today because of the viewshed. We still allow short plats out there. It doesn’t have to be near a town or a rural community. It can be anywhere. I just think that statement should reflect that capability.

Then on to LU 1.6, I don’t think we want to go down the conditional use avenue there. We allow accessory dwelling units right now by development code without any permitting other than the building permit. It has to comply with the underlying code in the agricultural district, such as setbacks, water and sewer but we don’t require it to go through a CUP.

Matt Covert – Is that different than the intent about the second home in the farm site? I know there was some discussion on that.

Alan Thomson – The BOCC and I had a talk about that on Monday and I think all three commissioners are open to allowing two regular houses on a plat. Maybe we could massage this a little bit to just not only allow accessory dwelling units but also,

Dave Gibney – It doesn’t say accessory dwelling units there.

Alan Thomson – It does.



Dave Gibney – No, it says, the word accessory is there but dwelling units isn't. If you just strike accessory out of there.

Alan Thomson – For rural residential uses, well, strike conditional uses for one, and allow for rural residential uses, yes. That would work because the limiting factor here is going to be the size of the parcel. As Environmental Health pointed out, if you are going to put a second house on a parcel of land it has to be big enough to put all parts in and also make the residential setbacks to the ag land. A well, septic system, a drain field, so that is dictated by environmental health requirements. We deal with that through development regulations. If you take the conditional use process out of it and then allow for home residential uses that might work.

Tom Handy – That would actually allow for it if you needed to build a bunkhouse. Under this is permitted for doable not prohibited.

Alan Thomson – We need to add things like that into the development regulations, because bunk houses have come up before and we treat bunkhouses or accessory dwelling unit the same way. It has to be up to building code standards. We don't have the word, "bunkhouse" in our regulations. It would be a good thing to add that in.

Matt Covert – If we strike the conditional use process, if the BOCC are okay with allowing that second home subject to the health regulations and the septic and well, then striking that would cover both of those uses as described.

Tom Handy – Do we want to actually put a number on it? When you say second. I could see not building a whole neighborhood there.

Dave Gibney – I don't know, but I suspect that the existing farm home sites are not huge.

Alan Thomson – And Tom, how we would address that would be through the development codes. You don't have to put a number or a limitation in the comp plan. We can definitely address that in the development codes because size is important. There are parcels that can't even allow an accessory unit because it may only be 1-2 acres. If it is large enough, and this is a question for the BOCC, how many houses would you allow on it?

Dave Gibney – You might want to allow that landowner to increase that site a little bit at the expense of some of the tilled land.

Alan Thomson – Right now, in the development codes, we allow this thing called a grouping. So, if a house was there before 2007 when we changed the code, they can use that as their starting point and have another main house within 300 feet of the main house but they have to do a short plat. So, we can toy with that one a little bit.

Tom Handy – As long as it meets the health codes and all that stuff why should we care too much. As long as they are not trying to build a neighborhood and have that kind of a thing going on, I don't know. I just haven't been around all this a lot. I'm not set in any way about it.

Matt Covert – That is a question for the BOCC. The goal here is to have language that is not so overly broad that it would permit anything while also being broad enough to encompass things like a second home to encompass things like a bunkhouse if need be. So maybe that short plat to accommodate the second home to a degree but if there are other uses to discuss we want to be broad enough to allow a little bit of flexibility.

Dave Gibney – I think in general, the people that are here think that this section needs some relaxing, loosening, and more flexibility.

Matt Covert – Definitely, right. Is everyone okay with that?

***GOAL LU-2*** – Allow and encourage development of compatible businesses in agricultural areas to serve farmers as well as to diversify employment opportunities in the region.

***Policy LU 2.1*** – The county should encourage creative, compatible, and beneficial use of resource lands other than agriculture to supplement the income of farm families. Such uses may include: tourism, mining, quarrying, boating, hunting/fishing, recreation, nursery, and renewable energy development.

***Policy LU 2.2*** – The county should allow and encourage home-based businesses as an accessory use in agricultural and rural residential areas through administrative use or conditional use permits, depending on the extent of potential impact on surrounding properties.

***Policy LU 2.3*** – The county should encourage the development of renewable energy facilities where appropriate and in accordance with view shed policies and regulations. Proposed policy on renewable energy. View shed issue gives the county the ability to evaluate view shed regulations at a later date.

Matt Covert – This is where some of those questions about businesses and industrial and commercial uses enter into that discussion to get at some of that tension between goals to preserve agriculture and goals to encourage business. It is not that those are mutually exclusive but you can see areas where somebody could say that that is a commercial use. That is not in ag land. You are destroying Ag land. That is counter to the comp plan.

This is a separate goal with separate policies, so I think it is good to view this in light of those other issues. So I've got some language in here about creative compatible and beneficial use of lands other than ag to supplement the income of farm families. We changed that to the income of farms. I know you said there might be too much emphasis of family farms even though they are important and so we can modify some language.

I added this one here about the county should allow and encourage home based businesses as an accessory use in ag and rural resident areas through administrative uses or conditional uses. I think the intent here is to depending on the proposed views to make it relatively easy to engage in home-based businesses.

Alan Thomson – That goes along with the code. Most home based businesses, unless you can't hear, see, or smell it, require an administrative use or a CUP. That one sounds okay.

Matt Covert – The last one, we tried to fast walk the renewable energy issue and land use, because they are related. This is another tension point with the viewshed issue that I wanted to raise. *“The county should encourage the development of renewable energy facilities where appropriate and in accordance with viewshed policies and regulations.”* The italicized text is not in the draft but it is a good point to talk about that because in relation to residential use because windmills are a tension around viewsheds. What is appropriate with the viewshed? This is another good discussion point.

Alan Thomson – The word, “viewshed” is confusing to me and also to the code. We use the word, “view shed,” and we give it a definition for residential uses. The viewshed is 1500 feet away. Houses should be 1500 feet apart. That is confusing and I know some people are going to latch on to that one word and say you can’t have a wind farm up there because it is in my viewshed. It should be 1500 feet from my house. So, I really think that word needs to be changed. It is too confusing. You need to describe it some other way.

Matt Covert – I know there are regulations around the development of windmills in terms of distance from things. So we certainly don’t need to call it the viewshed.

Alan Thomson – In our development regulations we have regulations for developing wind farms. We do have setbacks and we call it setbacks. The setback currently in code is 4 times the height of the tower. That is the setback so we do address what we call it viewsheds in the active development regulations.

Matt Covert – Is that the case for any tower?

Alan Thomson – That is just for the wind towers. So, you get anemometers up there and they measure the wind speed. There is no restriction on that. Then there are cell towers.

Dave Gibney – Let me ask about renewable energy. Let’s say somebody wants to build a converted, let’s convert straw into biofuel, or let’s buy a bunch of solar panels. Those are renewable energies, not wind and how do we address encouraging them and still provide the protection?

Matt Covert – I left the language here deliberately vague because there are multiple types of renewable energies. A bio energy facility a commercial scale solar farm, wind farms as we discussed, so I think this is a case where because technology changes and we don’t know exactly what the particular renewable energy uses or what facility types are going to be, that listing them out in the comp plan might not be necessary. But this is towing that line of too specific or not specific enough.

Tom Handy – Why not just change the word, “viewshed,” to “setback?”

Matt Covert – I think is all types of renewable energy facilities. If there is a case where if something new is proposed, that is not explicitly considered in the development regulations you would have to go through a process and update the development regulations to account for that. The general idea is to support renewable energy facilities where they are appropriate and where they are in accordance with setback regulations.

Tom Handy – I agree. We don’t want to have machines as a communications device in our comp plans.

Alan Thomson – Dave, let me address what you just said. The comp plan talks about renewable energy facilities and we have to have that in here in order to have a compatible development regulation. Under Chapter 19.10, the Agricultural District, the first thing under conditional use permits says, “*Public or private substations renewable energy generating facilities.*”

So that encompasses what we think about as renewable energy. So it has to go through a conditional use permit. But I think it is compatible having it mentioned in the comp plan which it is right now and then the development regulation is in partnership with that.

Dave Gibney – So, I agree the viewsheds is where it has to be. If it was already there, why did you have to write a new section to do wind power?

Alan Thomson – Renewable energy is more than just wind farms.

Dave Gibney – What you just read would have allowed wind farms.

Alan Thomson – Yes, renewable energy generating facility.

Dave Gibney – And yet, the County for many reasons decided that it needed to write a whole extra section of the code to accommodate wind farms.

Alan Thomson – That was absolutely necessary because, I don’t know if you remember that whole process of permitting Palouse Wind. If we did not have that development regulation I think EFSEC, the State, would have stepped in and we wanted to avoid that like the plague. That is why we created that energy code, the renewable energy code for wind mills. There were so many parts to that, how you develop a wind farm is pretty complicated and we needed the code.

Dave Gibney – And a solar farm isn’t?

Alan Thomson – We need a solar farm code as well, if we are going to go down that road, yes.

Matt Covert – That is going to be the next phase of this, once we move into revising the draft and doing a code on it. That would be a good example of what we want to say. Okay, with our policies and goal statement we are encouraging future renewable development where are some areas where the regulations can use some changes in the future? That is a good example.

Alan Thomson – My two cents here on Policy LU 2.3, that first sentence should end “where appropriate.” The rest should be taken out.

Matt Covert – Right. We will do that.

**Goal LU-3 Provide limited, low density living opportunities in unincorporated areas on non-agricultural lands for individual households whose needs are not addressed by land use opportunities within incorporated areas.**

***Policy LU-3.1*** – *The county should continue supporting Rural Community zoning in unincorporated communities and evaluate whether the existing areas with these zoning designations are sufficient to meet demand.*

***Goal LU-4*** – ***Discourage urban and suburban development outside incorporated areas in Whitman County, except within designated unincorporated communities and those areas designated by the Plan as suitable for cluster Residential zoning districts.***

***Policy LU 4.1*** – *The county should prohibit urban and suburban development outside incorporated areas (except within designated rural communities and areas zoned for cluster residential) through prohibiting plat (subdivisions) and short plats of more than two lots (inclusive of the original parcel) for residential land use within the agriculture district.*

Matt Covert – So, a couple of these goals here, there is only one or two policies associated with them but these are ones that originated in the old plan that seemed to have some residences still. These are related to low density living opportunities, unincorporated areas, discouraging urban and suburban development meaning how it is defined in the code, which is like cluster subdivision and long plats. The policies just describe that a little more in detail.

I don't know with our emphasis on not being super prohibitive I'm not sure this needs change as well, or if they are appropriately narrow, is a question for the group.

Tom Handy – It seems quite similar to LU-1 because we talked about most of that stuff already.

Alan Thomson – My suggestion to that is LU-3, take out the “non-agricultural lands,” because that is limiting right there. Landowners, if they want to take farm land out to build a house for a family member or whatever, that has been the policy so far. We have been allowing that.

Dave Gibney – Fold these concepts with the changes up in LU-1.

Matt Covert – I think that makes a lot of sense. I think these were ones you can see this when you look back at the old plan. These were the ones that led to the development of some of the development regulations that exist now, in terms of the cluster, rural residential areas in the unincorporated communities. Those have been done and so this is basically just saying continue doing that. It doesn't necessarily have to be its own section because they are basically reinforcing things that already exist.

Alan Thomson – Just one more point here. Goal LU-4 and Policy LU 4.1. I see a little bit of, a problem with LU-4 it says “Discourage urban and suburban development...” Then LU4.1 “The county should prohibit it...”

Tom Handy – It is the same thing over again. There are three goals that address the exact thing. You just reinforce it.

Dave Gibney – When you look at the time of the plan we are revising, there was a definite desire to encourage anything except the agriculture use and discourage the influx of population and all of that sort of thing was the concepts at the time. I think we are past that.

Alan Thomson – Then in LU 4.1 the last sentence there, “...prohibiting plats subdivisions and short plats of more than two lots...” Right now, in the code you can subdivide residential lots. You can create four parcels. That is what the code says but that is not going to happen because you can’t put four houses right next to each other unless it is a cluster. You still can subdivide for commercial/industrial. You can put four lots right next to each other for commercial and industrial purposes. So, I think that one needs to change a little bit. It really should be four lots but the development could limit the residential part but you can still have a subdivision of commercial lots right next to each other. That is allowed by our code.

Matt Covert – So I need to get a little more specific in here and include the commercial portions.

Tom Handy – Is this is another one along with LU-3 can be combined with LU-1? They are all kind of similar to me.

Matt Covert – Possibly. I think this one as Alan just mentioned, the issue of subdivision for commercial purposes is a little bit different from the residential stuff. I don’t know if that one needs to stay separate. Just to make sure there is that distinction that you could do a four lot short plat for commercial land, even though the two lot residential construction is still there. That might be something where the nuance is important. For sure LU-3 and possibly LU-4 could possibly be combined into one.

Alan Thomson – Two lots should be four lots.

Matt Covert – In general for short plats because of the commercial?

Alan Thomson – Yes.

Dave Gibney – For a specific number.

Alan Thomson – We have a specific number in the code, now, Dave.

Dave Gibney – That’s fine in the code but should it be in the plan?

Alan Thomson – Well, that is a good point.

Matt Covert – What is the chance that in 15 years the County adopts up to the maximum of nine plots per short plat. Then this would be out of compliance. So, possibly not.

Alan Thomson – You just brought up another point here, Matt.

Todd Hall – It could be something generalized. Going back to LU-1 the subdivision of lots, so you just keep it a broader and you’re not getting so granular. Maybe that is a thought.

Alan Thomson – I like that one, Todd, because that just reminded me with a grouping, which is current code right now, we allow up to nine lots to be created. So there is a subdivision up to nine lots under this grouping thing. I like the idea of getting away from numbers here in the comp plan.

Tom Handy – Makes sense to me.

Matt Covert – There are sections of the land use element that have to do with commercial and industrial but I didn't put those in there because for the sake of time I thought that the additional residential law and those kind of discussions would take up a lot of time. But in general, I think there is still a lot of value to the old plan from supporting development within the Pullman-Moscow Corridor. So, that is not in there because there wasn't a lot of change other than I combined and collapsed some stuff related to north and south but now that those regulations have been adopted didn't necessarily need to stay in the plan for the next 20 years.

I don't know Alan if you have thoughts on that before we go into environmental protection and climate change. If you have any thoughts about the north versus south clarification of the Pullman-Moscow Corridor, if that is something we need to keep in the plan or if that can be handled through the development regulations. We also talked about the Pullman-Moscow Corridor a lot in the economic development element which we already talked about. So, that is the reason why I didn't include it here. Just a pre-thought before we move on.

Alan Thomson – The North and South Pullman-Moscow Corridor District is essentially the same codes. So I don't know that it is necessary to have some sort of clarification there.

Matt Covert – Okay, I looked at the code pretty thoroughly trying to figure out the differences and in the old plan the elements were pretty much exactly the same. So I thought these could probably be combined in most cases. Anyway, that is definitely something if folks are interested in the industrial or commercial elements of that, again there is some overlap of economic development but that is in the draft that is available on line. Unless anybody has any questions we can move into environmental protection. Any additional comments?

Tom Handy – Some of the stuff in LU-6 seems to me like it is handled in code already. We have sufficient area for parking and police protection and that kind of thing and it seems silly to have that in the plan when it is obvious that it is already in code.

Matt Covert – That is right. I think a lot of that language was adopted in the original plan before the code was created. So now its relevance is less important because the code handles that. Actually there was a lot of criteria for approval of things that I cut out of there. I left a few of them because I thought they would make good discussion points.

But I agree with a lot of the existing plan. This is one of the reasons to update the plan. It has a lot of detailed descriptions of criteria for different things but are better handled through the development regulations, and they are. So that is another good example. If those are of the same mind we can take it out.

Alan Thomson – I'm fine with that.

Matt Covert – Okay, we will do that. The next is environmental protection and climate change and this is the last element that we will be talking about tonight.

### **Environmental Protection and Climate Change**

*With its steep hills and valleys and winding streams, Whitman County's environmental resources provide essential services and habitat.*

*Critical areas include:*

- *Wetlands*
- *Aquifer recharge areas*
- *Fish & Wildlife habitat conservation areas*
- *Frequently flooded areas*
- *Geologically hazardous areas*

*The County updated its critical areas regulations in 2019 to reflect the best available science and comply with requirements from state agencies. This gave a strong head start, so the Plan's critical areas policies are updated to reflect this.*

*Additionally, with its reliance on dryland agriculture and low to moderate rainfall, Whitman County is vulnerable to the effects of climate change and can take important policy steps to support actions to mitigate climate change.*

**FRAMEWORK GOAL – PROTECT ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND RESPOND TO CLIMATE CHANGE**

*Anticipate and respond to impacts related to climate change by exploring and adopting land use strategies that foster the protection of clean air and water, fish and wildlife habitats, and healthy and productive ecosystems.*

**FRAMEWORK GOAL – PRESERVE AND PROTECT EXISTING NATURAL RESOURCES**

*In cooperation with farmers, businesses, landowners and State and Federal partners, preserve and protect natural resources, which will reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and reduce flooding and other natural disasters.*

Matt Covert – The important things to note here, the County has already basically done the requirements in the growth management act by designating the five types of critical areas in developing regulations to protect them. As part of the comprehensive plan update we have to reflect that in the comp plan but in many ways this is done in reverse where the development regulations are up to date using the best available science as of 2019 and we have to make sure the plan generally describes those and designates them in the development regulations. It is a bit in reverse to this section of the element the portion of the environmental protection critical areas is in many ways already done. We just had to list out what the designations are to meet the Commerce requirements and of course we will be submitting this to Commerce for review and hopefully everything is on the up and up as far as the critical areas updates are needed there.

The climate change, I added some language into the plan. The introduction to this element where I talk about Whitman County's reliance on dry land agriculture as we are currently experiencing. You have had a pretty severe heat and dryness so far this year as I'm sure you are all aware, so WC is vulnerable to the effects of the change in climate and what are some policy steps and potential development regulations the County could do to support that. Or programs the County could participate in. So this one is the creation out of both. Some existing policies in the plan that dealt with renewable energy and some other things that I thought that could be useful points of discussion. Situating this within the framework goals and I'll pause here so we talk about these if we need to.



We only have two that came to mind. One is protecting environmental quality and respond to climate change and the other preserve and protect existing natural resources. We did a cross talk here with a natural resources question because in my mind natural resources as we have written them in the framework goal has a lot to do with soil erosion, water supply, water quality, but from the perspective of the Department of Commerce natural resources is something that you designate to protect Ag, forestry, and mining. So there is little different of a definition before we move on I wanted to talk about these. I think there might be some revisions needed.

Dave Gibney – I remember that when we were revising the Critical Areas Ordinance and specifically a lot of this stuff, we went to rather great lengths to say that Ag was exempt from the regulations of the Critical Areas Ordinance. That we are depending on the Voluntary Stewardship Program to do the vast majority of our protection of agricultural ownership.

Alan Thomson – There is a nuance to that, Dave. In any area you’ve got these drainages that go through ag fields. As that was designated as a farmed wetland or prior converted crop land by NRCS then yes, they are exempt except for flood plains. FEMA map flood plains are not exempt.

Dave Gibney – The point being here is that if you go into your comp plan now, and say a critical area in your county is prime ag land, are you opening the doors to what we were trying to avoid?

Alan Thomson – No, there is a distinction between the five critical areas and natural resource areas. Those two are slightly different.

Dave Gibney – I’m not seeing any difference with that level we are talking about. When they say we are required to do this stuff these consultants are proposing of lumping primary cultural as part of the critical areas.

Matt Covert – No that’s not quite what we are trying to do here. That is kind of why this slide is confusing and I want to talk about it. In my mind, the way we wrote these general framework goals, it looks like we are roping in Ag with critical areas, but in fact they are two different things. So, designation of Ag land is the designation of a natural resource land that they are trying to protect Ag land. And the way you protect Ag land is the way we discussed before. Like limiting certain types of developments and having them be protected from legal liability or noise, odor, offering support for family farms to add on businesses and residences to support their families, etc.

That is all the protection of the natural resource lands is to protect Ag lands. Protection of critical areas is designation of those five things that are on this slide that WC already did and have already passed muster with Commerce as far as regulations are concerned. That explicitly does not include Ag. Ag has an impact on the land but in terms of regulating this is their separate thing.

Dave Gibney – I’ll accept that I’ve been mixing the terms and using muddling the term.

Matt Covert – That is understandable. That is why I thought this slide, because of the way we wrote that framework goal we could re-visit that language. That maybe it wouldn’t belong on this page. Because this is not about natural resources, which under the Department of Commerce’s framework is Ag, forestry, mining, etc., not to do with critical areas. I understand the confusion. Todd and Eileen, maybe we can

talk about re-writing that framework goal and re-wording it so that this wouldn't apply. I think that added a source of confusion.

Tom Handy – Is there anywhere in here that protects the quarries and mining that the County needs to do in order to support its road systems and that?

Matt Covert – There is a section within the land use. That is where we designated the Ag resources. We also have the section within the land use element that designates the mining in this case, the quarries as a non-metallic mining as a natural resource of the County. I think we had goals and policies on that. I guess that didn't make it into the slides. I know I had at least one to do that.

Basically, the question was about a bit of a technical question although maybe this is the right venue to discuss, was about the requirements to notify. I know, the code is there if you don't have waivers from properties. You have to go through a CUP and there is how you measure the distance from a resource to a home and whether you are measuring because the existing regulations say from the resource or zone.

When I read that I was wondering if that could be interpreted to say that if the zone that the quarry is in is within 1500 feet of the zone that the residence is in then you have to notify or you can't do the quarry there. I was wondering if we should specify that the boundaries of the map resource that is intended to be quarried if that was a better approach. That was the only thing what we had in the goals and policies related to quarries.

Alan Thomson – What you are talking about there is the buffer or the setback. So, if somebody wants to open up a quarry and there is a house within 1,000 feet of the area, then you have to get a waiver from that landowner. If you can't get a waiver, you can't be within the 1,000 feet of that residence.

Tom Handy – I bought a property and whether or not there were waivers in place at the time that the quarry was put in, I bought it afterwards and I'm well within 1,000 feet of the blasting when the thing was active. It was private well water and all kinds of different things and it startled me when they set up their charges. But I never complained about it recognizing the fact that we need that rock access available as it is important to preserve.

Alan Thomson – That is important to have in there and then looking at that slide, *"Preserve and protect existing natural resources."* One of my concerns, and I don't know if it is addressed elsewhere, is existing quarries. That covers existing quarries but we want new quarries from time to time and so that is not an existing nature resource because it is farmland at the time. So, it is existing as Ag land and natural resource but that Ag land could become a quarry. So, the quarry doesn't exist at the time. Do we take that into account anywhere else in the comp plan?

Matt Covert – I do, at least in one place possibly in the section where I did the designation write up in the land use element. That is where we designated it as Ag and the mining. Those are the two natural resource areas that we were designating. In the designation I did discuss like potential future deposits as something that we have to consider as a natural resource.

Alan Thomson – I would agree, I would really like to see some language in the comp plan somewhere that prevents someone from, not prevent but addresses the conflict there. Because if there is a bunch of landowners that are nearby where we are going to produce another quarry, they come up in arms against

us. It's like, we can't have that happening right next door to me. It is not addressed in the current comp plan. It is addressed in the development regulations, you have to have a conditional use permit and there are restrictions and limitations that you have to work with that. But it is not in the comp plan and the attorneys argue that if it is not in the comp plan you can't do it.

Tom Handy – There is a cluster development out there by Sunshine Road where there is an active mine. It is getting fairly close to the property line. The Pullman-Moscow Corridor is natural great place for mining because the basalt is so close to the surface.

Todd Hall – Here is potential wording, so Matt is right and starting on page 19 of the land use breaks down the uses that you mentioned. Designation of mineral resource lands, goes on to talk about its importance. Then on page 20 there is an interesting sentence in there that may be useful for putting in the framework. *“It is important to preserve and encourage mineral resource activity as viable operations protect them from the encroachment of incompatible uses.”* Then it goes on that these are important resources for the long term commercial significance of the County, etc. I think that might be a potential re-work there, Matt and Alan for that framework. That is page 19 and 20. At the top there is preserve and encourage. So, maybe that might be something we could fool with there.

Alan Thomson – Yes that might work. Thanks Todd.

Todd Hall – Under land use, natural resources there is the break outs of critical industrial designation of mineral resource of land, the second paragraph down. That is where the language is. That talks about *“lands are approved as conditional uses or Admin uses where there have been waivers have been obtained of any residents within 1,000 feet of boundaries or properties zone, etc. etc.”* The section there talks to the importance of them but reformatting the framework goal that is up there, maybe if there is other policies or goals that could be changed.

Matt Covert – No, not directly related to the mining resources. That is where I was saying just based on how we could update that framework goal. That would pull that framework goal out of this particular element. Which is probably good because it avoids that confusion that we just had.

Tom Handy – I see it on page 21 on the copy that I have.

Matt Covert – Thanks for the feedback on that. So, I'll just go through the goals and policy statements for the environmental protection and climate change.

### **Environmental Protection & Climate Change**

***Goal EP-3 Use best available science to guide and regularly update development regulations.***

***Policy EP-3.1 – The county should coordinate with and monitor guidance produced by state and federal agencies that could affect how up-to-date the county's development regulations are.***

***Policy EP-3.2 – The county should consider refining the use of SEPA by raising the threshold exemptions for when SEPA is required to account for the development of detailed and effective critical areas regulations. The State Environmental Policy Act of 1973 placed a requirement on both local government and private developers to conduct environmental reviews of all significant***

*actions. In the last Comprehensive Plan Revision, it was determined that overall County policies should be developed for guiding use of SEPA as a tool for local decision –making. Consequently, it was determined that actions having a significant impact on water resources, critical environmental areas, or agriculture should all be given closer evaluation at the local level through the SEPA process. However, the creation of critical areas regulations and other elements of the development regulations make SEPA less useful for small projects or developments with limited beyond what is already mitigated through the development regulations.*

Matt Covert – We don't necessarily have to have this in here EP-1 and EP 1.1 are boiler plate, seems like it should be in here but doesn't really serve any useful purpose that I can find. If you want to strike it that is fine. I don't know if it needs to be in here but that was just something that seemed like a good thing to have and then EP-2 this should say critical areas instead of natural resources because that gets to the issue of those framework goals. Just the language confusion.

Then we get into the goal to use best available science to guide and regularly update development regulations. This is the EP-3.2 I will highlight here. This is a long one and there was a lot of emphasis in the original plan on SEPA and the use of SEPA to accomplish protecting critical areas and while SEPA still has its uses and I think the County has such good critical areas development regulations now that you could consider raising the special exemptions for when SEPA is required. I don't know if that is a hot button issue or not.

I thought that since the 1978 plan was written when SEPA was new and was the primary method of which environment resources were protected, now that the County has the critical areas ordinances whether raising the threshold would be appropriate. A lot of this language is explanatory and can probably go but I thought it was important for a draft as a discussion point. So I am interested in what your thoughts are on that.

Alan Thomson – Yes, so I was confused about what you were getting to here. Are you talking about back when they started eliminating the categorical exemptions? Is that what you are referring to here?

Matt Covert – Yes, the (inaudible) thresholds.

Alan Thomson – Right, and you are relating it to critical areas?

Matt Covert – I am relating it to using SEPA for when it is most needed and not relying on it as the basis for protecting environmental resources from where the code already does a perfectly good job was my thought behind this.

Alan Thomson – The exemptions in here, the standard exemptions in the County code are for single family residential multifamily, barn, roofing shed, office, schools, commercial, recreational service, storage building, parking. I mean filler excavation. We just have the standards exemptions right now. We have not increased them. That would have to go through the BOCC and have not really seen a necessity to increase any of those at all. That has never been a problem.

Todd Hall – That is typically the case for counties. A lot of it is more urban threshold or increase. What Matt is getting at is do you feel comfortable with your existing critical regulations which are brand new,

only 2019. So those are strong enough and you are comfortable with the existing SEPA regulations that nothing additional would have to be added to it.

Alan Thomson – Right, but I'm not comfortable with the existing SEPA regulations. I am butting heads with the State on that one. There are so many instances where SEPA is used by the public to prevent places getting developed and we've got these critical area ordinances. We have all the development codes that came in after the SEPA regulations were initiated and the State is not willing to budge on that.

Matt Covert – That may be something where I'm trying to raise special exemptions but that may not be where the problem is. The problem is just with the overly broad use, the ability to overly broadly use the SEPA in general, which is not something the County can do anything about. Although we are actually moving on a totally separate note, we are trying to get some work with the State to streamline some of those things. There may be things coming in the future. But that is not the issue right now.

Alan Thomson – I hope you are right there, Matt. Again, getting back to EP3.2, is it necessary?

Matt Covert – Probably not. It sounds like no. I think it would be doing something that wouldn't solve the SEPA problem.

Todd Hall – That is an old one too anyway. Right?

Matt Covert – The old plan has a whole (inaudible) on SEPA and how SEPA is used to protect the environment.

Todd Hall – So this is old, kind of antiquated at this point.

Alan Thomson – I would be in favor of getting rid of it because thinking about when the old code, the comp plan it was a different time frame and we didn't have critical areas ordinance at that time.

Matt Covert - The SEPA has been around for ten years, less than ten years. I'm fine with what the exemptions are now and the issue is broader and can't be dealt with at this level, then I think I am comfortable striking that.

I still have a couple on climate change goals and policies. The first one is about renewable energy generation. Again, this is an area we had to change the viewshed thing. It should have said setback, if it should be there at all. The intent is to not use the regulations as a, to not have any reason within this plan that people could point to, to use regulations as a reason to keep out any additional wind development where it makes sense.

That is part of what protecting the rights of individual property owners to engage in renewable energy generation if it is appropriate and if they can go through the regulations. I'm not sure if it is necessary but I'm just trying to close the loop on preserving the ability to do future projects without seeing anything in this plan as an excuse to stop them.

Alan Thomson – Policy CC 1.1 is necessary that we have a code and again, that word viewshed is going to throw everybody for a loop.

Matt Covert – Might as well get rid of it. Policy CC 1.2 is one that I came up with, this is related to a couple additional elements of renewable energy, in particular energy storage. So it talks about battery storage and aquifer storage and recovery. I don't know if that has been proposed in WC but I know that storage and energy is a big part of renewable energy development and I didn't see anything in the regulations that addressed those issues. There's some things about facilities and utilities and transformers, substations and the like.

Dave Gibney – How do you store energy in an aquifer?

Matt Covert – This is aquifer storage and recovery and is, I'm not sure if the terminology is precisely appropriate for WC. This is something that came up more in the Columbia Basin but the idea is that when wind is blowing and there is excess power that some of that power could be converted to move water uphill.

Dave Gibney – But an aquifer is underground water. They're not pumping it into the aquifer, they are pumping it into reservoirs higher up.

Matt Covert – I think that there might be a terminology confusion on my part but the idea is what you described. Pumping the water up to the reservoirs at the top of hills and letting it down when the wind is not blowing, has a way of evening out power demands. The terminology may have to change. As I was writing, it was the terminology that came to mind from previous projects that I have.

Dave Gibney – That really must not be the right word because what you are describing, when I see aquifer storage recovery, I see people wanting to pump gray water down into the aquifer so they can pull it back up later.

Tom Handy – There has been talk by this and some others in the PBAC meetings about aquifer recharge.

Dave Gibney – But aquifer recharge isn't energy.

Matt Covert – I just used the wrong term when I was writing this. I just pulled a term from something else that was not related. What you are describing is, whatever I am referring to is energy storage and I'm not sure if this has come up along the Snake or anything like that, but I put this in here as examples of things that the County could look to development regulations on to encourage things like that where it is appropriate to support renewable energy as part of the renewable energy infrastructure.

Alan Thomson – We do have wording in Chapter 19.10 conditional uses about energy storage. It allows for renewable energy generating facilities, energy storage facilities, and energy facilities on natural gas. Energy storage, battery storage is in here.

Dave Gibney - Avista asked us to put this back in when they wanted to put batteries and some natural gas next to the substation up there by the (inaudible). I don't think they ever did that.

Alan Thomson – That battery type energy storage technology is starting to gain some speed and is going to happen. So, we should have it in the comp plan, we've got it in the development regulations as well.

**Environmental Protection & Climate Change**

**Goal CC-1** *Encourage the development of long-term, sustainable and renewable energy generation within Whitman County.*

**Policy CC1.1** – *The county should ensure that view shed regulations do not unnecessarily hamper the development of future commercial wind energy projects.*

**Policy CC 1.2** – *The county should ensure that development regulations related to facilities and utilities allow for and encourage upgrades to the electric grid, including batter storage and aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) where appropriate, that re key to developing sustainable renewable energy generation in Whitman County.*

Matt Covert – Excellent. So, I just had a couple more things in here that were related to climate change that I felt were potentially from the County’s purview, one of them is the encouraging the rapid build out of electric vehicle infrastructure.

**Environmental Protection & Climate Change**

**Goal CC-2** – *Encourage rapid build-out of electric vehicle infrastructure*

**Policy CC 2.1** – *The county should work with cities, the Port of Whitman, Washington State University, and other private partners to coordinate build-out of electric vehicle charging stations at institutional property county-wide.*

**Policy CC 2.2** – *The county should consider replacing aging vehicles with electric vehicles when appropriate and cost effective.*

**GOAL CC-3** – *Encourage multimodal transportation.*

**Policy CC 3.1** – *The county should work with jurisdictions and community partners to appropriately site trails and paths where appropriate to encourage travel by ways other than private automobile.*

Matt Covert – These were some ideas that I came up with while I was writing this. Please don’t feel afraid to say that it is stupid, get rid of it. But I thought they were things that were within the County’s purview that could be things that could be potential for the County could focus on to help build out some additional elements of things that will help address fossil fuel emissions.

Tom Handy – It is good to have it. It is probably more of if we are thinking of thirty year comp plan. It is probably more of a short term goal. In thirty years we’ll probably look at it and we didn’t have that then? Or something like that but I think it is good to have it addressed. I wondered in CC-3 if we wanted to restate what was in the transportation plan a little bit with the rail banking effort as well.

Matt Covert – We could just replicate that policy from transportation that generally supports rail banking. I also have that in my land use as well, just in the small section in the land use element about facilities and

utilities or maybe institutional land where I replicated that language on rail banking. This might be an appropriate place to reiterate that and encourage cross element ideas.

Tom Handy – I would be up for that.

Matt Covert – That is pretty much where we are at with those two elements. As I said there is additional things in the land use element that were a couple different reasons that didn't make it into this presentation because I wanted to not go on until midnight. I've been in comp plan meetings that where goes on until midnight. If anyone has any questions, or curious about some of the things that were in the industrial or commercial section of land use chapter or that little bit on rail banking, please feel free to reach out to Alan, and we can discuss it.

This is the last of three virtual public meetings. The next three months are going to be about updating, revising the draft and incorporating a lot of feedback that we have heard. Then also going through the code and identifying some potential future changes that may be needed to try and anticipate some of those issues that may arise. The final draft and the SEPA checklist will be completed in the fall and the entire late fall to early winter will be the public hearing adoption process. That will be the next major effort for getting people involved in this.

If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to Alan and Mark and they can put you in touch with us. We are all here. There are a number who have reached out to me and said they wanted to talk about this. We are incorporating all that feedback into the draft as we go.

Tom Handy – I was looking at the changes made in Chapter 7 that we went over last time. One of the things that came to mind under county buildings, it talked about the different types of things that the County is involved in. We just bought the E-911 center in Pullman and I'm wondering, there is nothing that talks about E-911 emergency operation centers or emergency communication towers or those types of facilities in the County Building. I'm wondering if that shouldn't be there or maybe not.

Matt Covert – So, Todd since you were the writer on that one, is that something that we can,

Todd Hall – Yes, but something that the County operates, absolutely we can include that.

Tom Handy – The County is ultimately responsible for 911 dispatch so, we have so many other agencies that is one of the County's functions.

Alan Thomson – Seems like that would go in. I've got it on page 74, Chapter 7, Facilities and Utilities, others under county builders. So that would be another.

Todd Hall – Do you have any specific language of that and we can just put that in there like the actual operational information?

Alan Thomson – Tom, you seem to have a handle on that one.

Tom Handy –Emergency operations are E-911 and emergency operations. It could be as simple as that. That would be encompassing a bunch of different things, like the tower sites and all that. Police and fire.



Alan Thomson – Todd and Matt, while I have you on here, just one minor correction, Page 75, parks, trails and open spaces, you’ve got an additional “s” under open spaces.

Todd Hall – Oh, good catch.

Dave Gibney – We are little short on public tonight and according to what I know, we are supposed to be opened up like today. Is there any intent to try and have an actual human attended one of these public meetings in the month of July?

Alan Thomson – We can certainly open up that door and talk about it so I’ll have a conversation with the BOCC about this since we seem to be opening up now. I think that is a possibility. We can look into that.

Tom Handy – Bobbie, is that something that you think would be valuable to the public?

Bobbie Ryder – I guess it would be. Sure, I’m getting a lot listening to the dialog that is going on. I appreciate being able to listen in. It never hurts to have enough public input. This process is going along really nicely. I am really impressed with what you guys have been doing. It sounds really good.

Alan Thomson – Thanks. Dave I have a suggestion. We are going to have a regular meeting for the planning commission next week. I don’t think that can be in person. That is too soon but in the future, we typically don’t meet in August because that is harvest and people are not available. But as soon as everyone is available maybe in the fall or September we can start to have some public input and workshops with the planning commission. Hopefully in person.

Dave Gibney – I know there are people out there who are frustrated with zoom.

Alan Thomson – I agree.

Bobbie Ryder – It has also been extremely convenient, quite honestly. I don’t think you would have gotten so many meetings if they hadn’t been over zoom.

Dave Gibney – I do zoom just fine.

Bobbie Ryder – I think people complain but really if they want to participate it is not that hard to do. It is a whole lot easier than bundling yourself up and going. I ate my dinner while I was listening to your guys. It was great.

Tom Handy – All I know that more than one individual has expressed that I can’t hear anybody, whatever.

Alan Thomson – I will have a conversation with the BOCC and make sure that it is okay, and we will try and arrange something.

Dave Gibney – You do have some public hearings in the fall so maybe a workshop before the hearing.

Alan Thomson – I think it is necessary that we have a couple of at least two or three workshops before we make a decision on this whether the SEPA goes out or not. In person, that was the idea anyway. I think that is what we will shoot for.

Tom Handy – Could you put up that timeline, again, Matt?

Matt Covert – Yes.

Todd Hall – Alan, Mark and I have talked about having in person meetings during this time frame because it was right before all the farmers were out and we were getting interrupted in July and August so we thought this was the best time to do it. My intention was to be over there last week but we all knew the governor didn't release us until today and there are too many unknowns. We just kept the three meetings for now and see if there is any possibility of something before the actual hearing later.

Bobby Ryder – I think that you need to be sensitive to the whole harvest thing. That is a big deal.

Alan Thomson - It usually is. How about later on in July?

Bobbie Ryder – That is when they are in harvest, isn't it?

Alan Thomson – It typically is the end of July, beginning of August. It might be sooner this year.

Bobbie Ryder – I think September might be better.

Alan Thomson –Bobbie, we are having a regular meeting on July 7<sup>th</sup> so you are welcome to join us. This will be the first opportunity for the planning commission to have a discussion for what we have so far.

Bobbie Ryder – Will this be with the consultants?

Alan Thomson – The consultants don't need to be there, no. This is a regular planning commission meeting and we will be using all the information we got and have a conversation about it.

Tom Handy – Will there be another draft with changes by then?

Alan Thomson – Yes, hopefully, Todd, and Matt? Right?

Matt Covert – Yes.

Todd Hall – Matt mentioned this is a work in progress so we are taking these meetings as feedback from the public/BOCC and further massaging it and then we are refining it and yes, we will get it updated versions to Alan. Can you see the timeline okay?

Bobbie Ryder – Can I ask Dave Gibney, when is your next planning commission in Pullman where you are discussing that comp plan?

Dave Gibney – The fourteenth and then another one on twenty-one of July.

Bobbie Ryder – Okay, thank you.

Todd Hall – As Matt mentioned we were counting on June and July so that is why we put the arrow there. We are doing that code cross over and we will coordinate with Alan on this one since he is the master of the code and making sure that what we put in the comp plan update matches up correctly. It is not a full code rewrite but making sure that the constancy flows.

Then the draft will be further refined during that same time line and then that where it says, “Task 7, final draft,” that is our target date and probably around that September time frame is when we would like to have that cleaned up draft ready for the County to post and through SEPA. There is no reason if the County feels comfortable to start the process a little bit early. This is our estimate when we put this together. So, it really depends on how we feel together with the County Staff to move forward to the process. This is our expectation or guide book.

Dave Gibney – It wouldn’t hurt for us to be workshop like stuff while the SEPA packet.

Todd Hall – Absolutely.

Alan Thomson – Todd, since you talked about it tonight, maybe some suggestions about a solar code. It might be something we want to put in place. Not necessarily to write it all but just to pull some examples or codes from others in the State and that will give us a leg up on something to put together.

Todd Hall – We will take all that we received especially tonight since there were quite a few on those and then we will probably do some kind of matrix thing. Where we are looking at your new policies and making sure there is adequate language, coordinate with you and Mark. If there are potential code chapters to potentially amend we can find some examples that Staff would be able to easily modify the language to fit WC and it wouldn’t take a lot of effort on the Staff’s part and that way you would have that put in code.

Alan Thomson – Okay, thanks.

Todd Hall – Anything else before we wrap up?

Tom Handy – On the public hearings, how does that process go? Probably a lot of rewrite feedback at that point?

Alan Thomson – It all goes through the Planning Commission. We will have the final draft of the comp plan and so we advertise that. That goes through the planning commission and that is a public hearing and if all goes well, and they don’t have to change very much, then it is up to the BOCC.

Dave Gibney – I don’t run WC planning commission by any means. But what we are doing in Pullman over a series of six or more meetings is basically a line by line review of the draft prior to the public hearing. We are getting a fair amount of feedback. Our consultant is doing a really good job of walking us through and taking notes on the draft plan. I’m just saying that is what we are doing.

Alan Thomson – Possibly there will be more than one session with the Planning Commission.

Tom Handy – I see that public coverage continues until July so maybe we can try and push these later drafts out a little bit to a broader range of people. If we can’t pull together an in-person meeting where

we have a presentation with the completed thing. By that time we would have gone through the entire plan. Does that sound feasible or not? I know that how harvest is going at the moment it could be difficult. Alan Thomson – That will probably happen later on in the year. Once we get into September, and harvest is over we will get better attendance I think we should still go ahead and the end of September have maybe a series of planning commission workshops to go over the plan. Maybe two a month. We usually only meet the first Wednesday of the month, but this might be an occasion where we might meet more than once a month through September, October and air it out to the public.

Tom Handy – That sounds good.

Todd Hall – We have been in full zoom mode for basically a year and a half so it has become the norm and it is not the norm in most of our eyes, we always like to be in person. That is human nature. We are all relatively affected and in your case it is different because of the Ag nature of your county. It is challenging. But the survey has been phenomenal, almost 400, so that has been fantastic. There has been a lot of input on that. We understand people are busy, always a challenge.

Tom Handy – Luckily we have Bobbie and she has a pretty good network of constituents.

Bobbie Ryder – We push it out there.

Todd Hall - Thank you all for tonight. I know it is a big deal. I know Matt appreciates the feedback on stuff he has done.

Matt Covert – Yes, thank you so much.

Alan Thomson – Thanks guys. We'll be in touch.

**Adjourned 8:04 p.m.**