

**MINUTES**  
**WHITLEY COUNTY PLAN COMMISSION**  
**REGULAR MEETING**

**July 19, 2023**

**7:00 p.m.**

**Whitley County Government Center**  
**Lower Level, Meeting Room A/B**

<b>MEMBERS</b>	<b>PRESENT</b>	<b>ABSENT</b>	<b>STAFF</b>
Travis Baker	X		Nathan Bilger
Dane Drew	X		Brent Bockelman
Brent Emerick	X		
Jack Green	X		<b>LEGAL COUNSEL</b>
Thor Hodges	X		Elizabeth Deckard
Mark Johnson	X		
Rob Schuman	A		<b>NONVOTING ADVISOR</b>
Kim Kurtz-Seslar	A		John Woodmansee
Joe Wolf	X		

**AUDIENCE MEMBERS**

The list of in-person and electronic guests is attached below.

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

Mr. Johnson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.  
Mr. Bockelman read the roll call with members present and absent listed above.

**CONSIDERATION OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES**

The minutes for the June 21, 2023 regular meeting were presented for consideration.  
Mr. Johnson called for any comments or a motion. Mr. Hodges made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Seconded by Mr. Baker. Motion passed, 6-0-1 by roll call vote with Mr. Wolf abstaining due to him being absent from the meeting.

**ADMINISTRATION OF OATH**

Mr. Bilger stated that no oath needed administered due to there being no public hearings on the agenda.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**22-W-REZ-6(Petition Tabled, will be re-notified)**

Columbia City Plan Commission requests a zone map amendment to expand and adjust the Columbia City Plan Commission's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ).

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Traffic Safety Plan Discussion**

Brad Allen, Whitley County Engineer, addressed the Commission to discuss traffic safety in the county and participation in the traffic safety plan. He explained that Whitley County has received a \$60,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation to develop a safety action plan. The plan would be a guiding document aimed at eliminating roadway fatalities in Whitley County. He provided historical information regarding collisions and fatalities. The action plan was discussed and included data gathering, identifying areas of need, public feedback, and coordination with local partners to come up with clear strategies and specific actions to implement into an action plan to reduce fatal accidents. He explained that members of the Plan Commission, Highway Department, Sheriff's Department, Emergency Management, and Planning Department would be part of the implementation group. He also explained the process of adoption of the plan.

Mr. Drew asked if any specific areas were targeted, and if Highway 30 would be included. Mr. Allen explained that Highway 30 would not be a focus with the upcoming changes to that highway. Other state highway intersections would be included along with county roads and intersections. Mr. Hodges questioned spending the \$75,000 on a study and leaving Highway 30 out of the study. Additional discussion was made regarding the number of fatalities county wide and the number that occurred on Highway 30. The importance of including state highways was discussed.

Mr. Bilger explained the involvement of Plan Commission members in the process and plan. With the approval ultimately being with the County Commissioners, the process would formally go through the Plan Commission with a recommendation given to the Commissioners. Due to the process, it would make sense for members of the Plan Commission to be a part of the implementation group. Mr. Allen stated that he would like to have one or two Plan Commission members in the group. Discussion was made about the members to be involved. It was decided to have Mr. Wolfe and Ms. Kurtz-Selser represent the Plan Commission in the implementation group.

### **Extra Territorial Jurisdiction Discussion**

Mr. Bilger gave a brief overview and discussed the proposal from the workshop session the previous month. He stated that the goal of this discussion would be to provide feedback to the Columbia City Plan Commission for their proposal. This would allow them to adjust and make changes to the proposal before presenting it back to the County Plan Commission for public hearing and recommendation.

Mr. Johnson asked for an explanation as to how the expansion of the ETJ would benefit the county and the city. Mr. Bilger stated that he could only speak on the land use aspect and not the political aspect of benefits. He explained that in the County Comprehensive Plan, one of the goals is to guide development towards the municipalities. Expanding the ETJ allows the city to have more planning control and the city zoning code is better suited to allow for development. In the City Comprehensive Plan, it is recommended that the ETJ be expanded, and it has not been expanded in fifty years. He discussed that development would still be determined by the landowners. Mr. Johnson agreed with keeping the growth near the municipal areas. He just questioned the amount of area included in the expansion.

Mr. Drew asked if there was a financial reason for the expansion to allow for grants or funding for the city. It was explained that there were not. It was also explained that the ETJ only affects the planning and zoning of the area.

Mr. Emerick asked for clarification that, if the ETJ were expanded, the property owners included would not have a vote in the final decisions regarding their property and the decision would be made by the City Plan Commission and the Mayor. Mr. Bilger explained that there are two members mandated to be on the municipal plan commissions from the ETJ. These members are appointed by the Commissioners. He went on to explain the entire membership of the city plan commission and BZA. He also discussed the number of cases heard regarding properties inside the ETJ.

Discussion was made about the total area included in the proposal. Mr. Bilger stated that the original proposal included approximately 6100 acres and the amended proposal included approximately 4400 acres. Mr. Green asked if the changes were made, would they be locked in for a certain amount of time or could changes be proposed at any time. Mr. Bilger explained that there would not be any definite timeframe. It had been brought up that smaller sections would be included in the expansion and additional expansions be made as needed. More frequently than the fifty years that had passed since the last expansion of the ETJ.

Discussion was made about expanding to the south and to the east at this time. Then looking at further expansion in the future. The suggestion was that the city could come back to the County Plan Commission on an “as needed” basis and not specify a time frame of two years, five years, or ten years.

Discussion was made on ways to determine a boundary line that would limit the splitting of parcels.

Discussion was made on where the industrial growth was currently happening. Possible residential growth to the south, near the school, was also discussed.

Mr. Bilger discussed a summary of the areas that had been identified as areas of the ETJ to be amended for the next proposal. Mr. Bilger stated that he would work with the Columbia City Plan Commission to construct a new proposal to be brought back for a public hearing at a future meeting.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Rules of Procedure**

Mr. Bilger discussed additional miscellaneous amendments to the Zoning Code that could be made at the same time as the amendments to the Rules of Procedure. He discussed single-family residential as a special exception in the VC district to match with the GC district, clarifying setback averaging as applied in LR and adding RR, MP, and AG.

Discussion was made regarding reducing the minimum residential floor area from 950 sq ft to 720 sq ft. This was due to smaller houses regaining popularity and projects such as barndominiums with smaller living spaces. The question was asked as to why the square footage of living space matters in the zoning. Mr. Bilger stated overall density. Particularly in subdivision situations. Health department regulations were also mentioned. Mr. Hodges discussed that with rules in place by the Health Department, lot size standards, and setback

standards, and the restriction of number of dwellings on a property, why should square footage of a home matter. Mr. Bilger stated that he would do further research on the matter.

Discussion was then made about adding EMC regulations to the sign code, and the number of platted lots in a subdivision before rezoning was required. Mr. Bilger then asked the Commission members to let him know of any other changes they would like to see in the code.

Mr. Emerick discussed sign requirements. He stated that with businesses not being required to have signage, there are issues with deliveries, traffic, and people trying to find a business in his area. However, on AGP zoned ground, multiple signs are required to be placed on large farm acreage. Mr. Bilger stated that there is no requirement for a business to have a sign. However, there is an address posting requirement for public safety and delivery. The Plan Commission does have direct authority over addressing and could increase the addressing requirements. He stated that the signage for the AGP district would be a separate issue and may need to be addressed as an additional change.

Additional discussion was made regarding the address signage requirements for properties and location in relationship to the road as well as design requirements.

Mr. Bilger discussed the upcoming training session on July 31<sup>st</sup>. The topic is site and development plan review with a visit to the new jail site following the meeting.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Having no further business, Mr. Johnson adjourned the regular meeting at 8:07 p.m.

## **GUEST LIST**

1. Larry Weiss .....1609 W. Westgate
2. Ginny Rowland .....3606 S. Meridian
3. Mike Rowland.....3606 S. Meridian
4. Brent Simmons.....1308 E. Louise Drive
5. Sarah Simmons .....1308 E. Louise Drive
6. Brad Allen .....665 N. Long Ridge Rd.
7. Brad Allen.....Gig Harbor, Washington
8. Sharon Simmons .....2065 S. Raber Road
9. Danny Wilkinson .....5637 W. 250 South