

**REGULAR MEETING
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Public Hospital District No. 1-A of Whitman County, Washington
d/b/a Pullman Regional Hospital
Wednesday, March 4, 2026, at 6:00 PM In-Person or Virtually by Zoom**

Board of Commissioners

P-Cheryl Oliver, President
P-PJ Sanchez, Vice President
P-Anna Nofsinger, Secretary
P-Joe Pitzer, Commissioner
P-Tricia Grantham, Commissioner
P-Michael Cady, Commissioner
P-Shane McFarland, Commissioner

Guests:

Lennis Boyer (zoom)
Katie Van Wyngarden (zoom)
Deedra Zabokrtsky
Tawny Szulmas
Wayne Druffel

Hospital Personnel

P-Matt Forge, CEO
P-Craig Carstens, CFO
P-Tammy Needham, CNO
P-Bernadette Berney, CHRO
P-Carrie Coen, CRO
P-Rob Rembert, Legal Counsel
P-Benjamin Rhoades, DO, Medical Staff President
P-Karly Port, CPSO
P-Peter Mikkelsen, MD, CMO
P-Linda Infranco, Executive Director
P-Alison Weigley, Strat Planning & Business Dev Director
P-Anna Helman, Executive Assistant

I. CALL TO ORDER

President Oliver called the meeting to order at 6:00p. Roll call was taken with the following Commissioners answering present: Oliver, Sanchez, Nofsinger, Pitzer, Grantham, Cady, and McFarland.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Commissioner Grantham moved to approve the minutes for the regular meeting of January 7, 2026. Commissioner Sanchez seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

III. MODIFICATION TO AGENDA

- Section 8 Adjustment: County Nutrition Program Update Presentation moved up in agenda to A. (Expansion pushed to B and Marketing to C.)

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Grantham moved to approve the consent agenda. Commissioner Cady seconded the motion. The following committee reports were approved unanimously.

- Medical Executive Committee
- Finance Committee
- Quality Management System
- Governance Committee
- Strategic Planning Committee
- Foundation Board of Directors
- Approval of Warrants

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

Tawny Szulmas read aloud a letter she had previously submitted. She shared that her son has severe allergies requiring weekly allergy injections, which are essential to his health. She noted that the family has been able to receive care locally from an allergist, which has been very helpful. However, if allergy services at Palouse ENT are no longer provided, they would be required to travel, resulting in missed

work and school. She emphasized the importance of maintaining access to specialty care in rural communities.

President Oliver then closed the floor for public comment.

VI. ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Strategic Planning Committee Report (Matt Forge)

Matt Forge introduced the presenters. Greg Farguhar from Bouten will provide an expansion project update, Bryce Heuett will present the Marketing Update on behalf of Alison Weigley, and Elizabeth Leraudeau will provide an update on the County Nutrition Program.

a. County Nutrition Program Update (Elizabeth Leraudeau)

Elizabeth provided an update on the newly acquired County Nutrition Program, which will serve all of Whitman County. A proposal and budget have been submitted to ALTCEW.

Current partnerships include PCCoA (Pullman Community Council on Aging) and Whitman Hospital. We are also working with Pullman Senior Center, Palouse Community Center, and Uniontown Community Center. PCCoA will support home-delivered meals in Pullman, and Whitman Hospital will support home-delivered meals in Colfax. The location for the Colfax congregate meal site has not yet been identified.

Elizabeth reported that approximately 60 meals are served at the Pullman Congregate Meal site twice a week. Volunteers are managed by PCCoA and are currently meeting program needs.

Commissioner Grantham expressed appreciation for the organization taking on the program and noted the importance of maintaining face-to-face contact with seniors. The program was also recognized as supporting the organization's broader population health strategy.

b. Expansion Update – Contingency Update (Matt Forge)

Matt Forge introduced Carrie Coen to provide an update on the expansion project.

Carrie reported the project is progressing well and is approximately 15% complete. Construction began in October, and collaboration with Bouten has been positive. Infection control (ICRA) barriers are in place, and current work is occurring near the imaging area, which will become the new blood draw station.

Greg Farquhar from Bouten shared that demolition, saw cutting, and work in the central sterile area are currently underway.

Matt addressed community questions regarding potential project delays or cost overruns. The project team meets weekly to monitor progress and address issues. Carrie confirmed the project remains on schedule for completion in December 2027, despite minor phase adjustments related to regulatory requirements.

President Oliver thanked Greg and the project team for their work and attention to detail.

c. Marketing Update – Connections (Bryce Heuett)

Bryce presented an update on marketing performance and recent campaigns, including surgery and cancer screening outreach efforts.

Key digital metrics included:

- 282,208 website sessions (25% increase from 2024)
- 448,141 page views (18% increase from 2024)
- 58,177 call-to-action clicks (95% increase due to improved tracking)
- 30,571 blog views (51% increase)
- Social media campaigns on Facebook and Instagram reached approximately 897,000 people and generated 23,158 link clicks at an average cost of \$0.46 per click.
- YouTube performance included 147,189 total views, a 101% increase from 2024, and 292 new subscribers.

Bryce noted that marketing strategy for 2025 focuses on data-driven decision making, consistent messaging, and A/B testing to improve engagement.

President Oliver asked about tracking operational outcomes such as increased screenings or reduced front desk calls. Bryce noted that connecting marketing metrics to operational outcomes is a priority moving forward.

B. Governance Committee Report

a. AI Governance Policy (Dr. Pete Mikkelsen)

The AI Governance Policy was presented as an action item and had previously been reviewed by the Governance Committee. Dr. Mikkelsen explained that the organization initially restricted AI use due to safety concerns. A formal review and approval process has now been established for staff requesting AI tools.

Examples of potential AI use include clinical documentation support and clinical research tools. AI-assisted imaging and diagnostic tools were also discussed. The organization is exploring the addition of a patient consent element related to AI use.

Commissioner Sanchez asked whether the policy should be reviewed more frequently due to rapid AI development. This will be considered.

The Governance Committee recommended approval of the policy. Commissioner McFarland moved to approve the AI Governance Policy. Commissioner Nofsinger seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

b. CEO Evaluation (Bernadette Berney)

Matt Forge reported that the Governance Committee is working to move the CEO evaluation up earlier in the year. A proposed timeline and survey structure will be reviewed at the March 17 Governance Committee meeting, with the goal of bringing a finalized process to the Board in April or May.

Bernadette Berney explained that three surveys will be used to gather feedback from different groups, including board members and physicians. Surveys will include sections for strengths, opportunities for improvement, and comments.

C. Finance Committee Report

Commissioner Sanchez reported on the Finance Committee's February meeting and introduced Craig Carstens for the financial update.

The recently completed audit covering 2023 and 2024 showed strong results. One minor issue involved a phishing incident that resulted in a \$2,200 loss in 2024. It was noted the organization

responded to the event quickly and is working to strengthen controls to prevent future incidents. The audit results are publicly available through the State of Washington.

Carrie Coen noted that additional auditing tools within Office 365 may be explored to strengthen monitoring and compliance efforts.

- a. Foundation 4th Quarter Report (Linda Infranco/Wayne Druffel)
Linda presented the Foundation's 4th Quarter Report and reviewed 2025 fundraising results.

Total funds committed in 2025 were \$1,335,827. Funds received totaled \$1,427,181, exceeding the prior year. The Foundation is currently operating under budget.

Some Key performance indicators included:

- Total donors: 93% of goal
- New donors: 118% of goal
- First-year retention: 18% (47% of goal)
- Donor retention: 93%
- Action reports: 96%

Linda also reviewed upcoming fundraising efforts, including opportunities for donors to name new spaces that are being developed within the expansion project. Future priorities include strengthening donor relations and engagement with the Foundation's volunteer board.

The recent Foundation Gala was also briefly reviewed through a video recap.

- b. Financial Update – 2025 Closing (Craig Carstens)
Craig provided an overview of the 2025 financial closing. He emphasized improving internal processes related to capital expenditures and financial reporting. Some receivable and payable figures are still pending.

Craig reviewed financial performance and noted that negative margins are common among critical access hospitals. He emphasized the importance of cash flow margin as an indicator of whether the organization is generating cash.

Operational metrics, service line performance, and patient volume trends were also reviewed. Craig noted that many critical access hospitals rely on 340B revenue and swing bed services. The hospital currently has capacity for swing beds but has not been utilizing them, representing a potential revenue opportunity.

- c. Financial Update – January 2026 (Craig Carstens)
Craig also presented the January financial update. The organization reported a negative financial position for the month, which Craig noted is typical early in the fiscal year. Quarterly data will provide a clearer picture of performance.

Craig also reviewed capital expenditures, noting that the expansion project remains the largest investment. He highlighted opportunities to improve revenue allocation and operational performance.

Commissioners discussed the potential reintroduction of swing bed services. Matt Forge explained that the program declined due to factors including growth in

outpatient services, COVID-related pressures, and competition from skilled nursing facilities.

Leadership is currently working to re-establish swing bed services, with support from clinical leadership. Tammy Dahl explained that swing beds provide hospital-based skilled nursing care for patients who still require services such as therapy but no longer need acute inpatient care. This allows patients to complete recovery in the hospital rather than transferring to another facility.

The Board briefly discussed program requirements and patient eligibility.

VII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Match Day, March 20, 2026 - Etsi Bravo

VIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 8:30 President Oliver announced that the meeting would go into Executive Session for 20 minutes to discuss the granting, denial, revocation, restrictions, or other considerations of the status of the clinical or staff privileges of a physician or other healthcare provider, consider personnel issues, and consult with legal counsel.

At 8:50p, President Oliver announced that executive session would continue for another 5 minutes.

The meeting resumed Open Session at 8:55p.

IX. OPEN SESSION

A. Credentials Report (Dr Rhoades)

Commissioner Sanchez moved to approve the credentials report. Commissioner McFarland second the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:00p.

Respectfully submitted by:



Anna Helman
Executive Assistant
Pullman Regional Hospital



Anna Nofsinger
Secretary
Board of Commissioners, Pullman Regional Hospital