

Brandon Chapman's responses to Palouse ProActive 20 Questions.

1. What, in your opinion, is the most pressing issue facing Pullman? What do you plan to do about it if you are elected?

I know the word apathy can sound a little harsh, so perhaps disengagement is the right word. That's why I am running on a "platform" of increased engagement. Yes, we have plenty of issues, big and small. For example: water use and the aquifer, downtown revitalization, the public transportation network, etc. But I don't want any single one of these being the focus of my campaign. Instead, I believe a more engaged group of residents can help turn every issue into an opportunity.

We have so many smart people in Pullman. Truly, the intellectual capital is huge. There's no problem we can't solve if we figure out a better way to get more folks involved in the ways that work for each of them. Some have great ideas but don't really know who to talk to about things. Others are the kinds of folks who roll up their sleeves.

I want to be a city councilor who can combine the two. I would love to bridge the gap by being accessible to those with ideas as well as know the people who are willing to be actively involved.

I believe in our people, and my ability to connect the right ones at the right times.

2. What can be done to attract new businesses to the City and to encourage existing businesses to expand?

This is a good question because attracting new business is something that we often call "economic development." Many counties have an economic development director. Whitman County does not. So we're fighting a slightly uphill battle. That's not to say we can't still do some things to improve.

Businesses will come to town when they see that: 1) There's a need for their type of business; 2) There's a customer base that will support them; 3) They will have an adequate amount of the kinds of employees they want, and; 4) They personally like the location and can see living in their place of business.

I've written more at www.pullmanward3.org/business.

3. Please explain your plan, if any, to revitalize Pullman's downtown.

The plan I have starts with Pullman actually having a downtown plan, which it currently doesn't. And it needs to be comprehensive.

An organization I have supported for the last few years, *Smart Growth America*, published a revitalization guidebook in December 2015 that went over all the

components that are required for a successful downtown revitalization. We can sit around a table and talk all day about things that can help our downtown. But we really don't need to. We *know* what will work, because it's been done over and over again and *Smart Growth America* freely shares this. We just have to figure out the best ways to adopt the successful components.

I will be writing more about this soon on my website.

4. Describe your vision, if any, for bringing environmental and sustainable initiatives to Pullman.

There are already many groups on the Palouse who are experts and thought leaders in various fields. I believe we need to utilize these groups as a resource, rather than try to be the experts in something that is not in our field of expertise. In situations where we don't have experts or thought leaders, the city should work to bring these people in to host seminars and workshops with civic and environmental leaders who can then carry out some of the potential tasks.

5. Should city taxes be raised, lowered, or remain the same?

Simple question. Not a simple answer. Nobody *wants* to pay more. Who wants taxes? But a well-known quote attributed to Supreme Court associate justice Oliver Wendell Holmes is: "Taxes are the price we pay for a civilized society." I believe that. What are our core values? Education? If so, we must pay for it. Safety? If so, we must pay for it. Recreation? If so, we must pay for it.

No matter what, decisions must be made as to what we deem most important and *has* to be paid for. Then, from there, we prioritize what we *want* and if it's worth paying for.

Regardless, people are much more willing to pay taxes when they feel the public servants managing those taxes are being good stewards of the money.

6. Do you feel the city is sufficiently transparent in its operations? Why or why not?

The city is not sufficiently transparent in its operations. Unfortunately, that is often equated with issues of fraud and misuse. I'm not suggesting that. I'm *not* saying the city is actively *hiding* things. For example, if you were to make a public records request, you could get much of the information you're looking for. And, to the city's credit, once a records request has been made, another resident can also obtain those records very easily through the request portal. However, it's a shame a lot of information has to be obtained that way. Transparency can improve simply through changes in processes.

There should never be a quasi-judicial board, such as the Planning Commission, or Board of Adjustment, where the board members get the hearing information in the mail the same afternoon that they have to hold the hearing.

But, let me give you an example... I'm not going to profess that Spokane Valley does everything right, but when they receive an application for a new development, and the city deems that the application is complete, the city immediately posts all the information online, even before they have a hearing date. It's easy for residents to find the information, do their own research, formulate their opinions, plan for the hearing date, etc.

What we do in Pullman, however, is wait until the staff recommendation report is complete from the planning department and/or public works, and then post that information online. This leaves very little time for residents to review. Some issues are quite important and need more than we're getting. When the new elementary school hearing went before the Board of Adjustment, it was very late in the process that residents found out about police and fire having safety concerns. That meant concerned residents had only enough time to come to the hearing. Imagine if the information was out a lot sooner, residents knew about it a lot sooner, and their concerns were voiced a lot sooner. As a result, that would have been far fairer to the school because they could have solved or mitigated some issues instead of having to hear about all of it at the hearing.

Seems like a much more respectful – and transparent – way to do public business.

7. List what you believe are the three most important duties of the City Council.

Budget according to current city goals, objectives and strategies. Be a fair *judge* during quasi-judicial hearings, and not be afraid to ask questions and follow-up questions. And consistently *engage* with residents, which will build a more informed group and will in turn help inform our issues and opportunities, as well as the budget priorities.

8. What do you see as your Ward's three biggest challenges?

1. **Lack of engagement.** I will be absolutely bold in saying that as I go door-to-door during the campaign, I am disheartened to hear from *almost everyone (that is NOT an exaggeration)* that they either don't know our current city councilors *at all*, or the last they heard from them was the last election cycle. This is not acceptable, or appropriate. It signals a total lack of engagement. How can you represent the people if you only come at it from your own lens? You *must* understand the heart and soul of your residents, and if your finger isn't on their pulse, that's not possible.

Not everyone wants to be engaged. That's fine. That's their right. But many times, people simply want to feel like they have a connection to city leaders, in case they have questions or concerns. I'm not even a city councilor, but during this run, I often get questions from people about who to talk to about issues. Sometimes I'm just the air-traffic controller, routing them to the right people. But they feel good about having someone help them.

One factor in my decision to one was an issue that came up in regards to the school zone around my family's home. We didn't reach out to all city councilors about this, but we did reach out to our Ward 3 councilors, as well as our at-large councilor. Of the three, we unfortunately only had one councilor that did anything about the safety concern, which was a concern shared by the school district and police department. One councilor didn't respond at all, and when I spoke to him in person, and advised him to look out for an email, we *still* never heard back from him. Is there any wonder why I'm running on a platform of engagement?

2. **Public transportation and transportation network.** Pullman Transit is almost non-existent now on Pioneer Hill, outside of Bishop Blvd. and Grand Ave. There are insufficient bike lanes in Ward 3. Sidewalk infill budget has been wildly insufficient meaning older areas have large gaps in the sidewalks.

9. In what ways, if any, could the Pullman police do a better job?

I believe Gary Jenkins is doing a good job leading the department. It does a good job with community policing (partnerships and problem-solving) rather than use-of-force. It would be nice to see additional personnel diversity. Also, there is *some* additional enforcement that is needed in neighborhood vehicle speed, and code enforcement (parking, especially at Reaney Park and by City Playfields, as well as trash, in particular in *and around* Greek Row).

10. What enforcement steps should be taken for violations of Pullman's Nuisance Ordinance prohibiting buildings that are "dilapidated, abandoned or partially destroyed"?

We're past education phase. We need to enforce our existing rules. What are we afraid of? Offending people who either don't live here or don't care enough about the city to do anything about their buildings? There is that one not-to-be-named building downtown, for example. We all know the one I'm talking about. The owner has said they don't just have money lying around to do anything about it. Yet, they just built a brand new space ship diner in Moscow. No money?

11. What improvements do you think could be made in the relationship between the city and WSU?

The process has started, in large part because of the Schulzes caring about the relationship, talking frequently about town-gown relationship. They know they're part of the community, as well as the importance of a vibrant city from a recruiting standpoint. I give them kudos for their involvement. Rather than me enumerate everything, I think it would be prudent to let these things come to forward and be solved through the town-gown collaboration.

12. Are there any city boards that you believe should be eliminated? Why or why not?

I don't think there is anything inherently wrong in having a variety of boards. Sometimes they are there in place due to statute or rule. They are usually there to give sound advice to city leaders, and aid city staff in certain things.

This is such an interesting – and seemingly leading question – it makes me wonder why it is asked. If there are boards or commissions that aren't fully functioning, that would be a different conversation. I guess I'd want to know the *why* behind this question to better think about it, research it, etc.

I can tell you one board or commission I'd *add*, and that would be a transportation commission. Of all the boards and commissions we have now, I'm surprised we don't have that. But a high-functioning transportation commission can study and give recommendations on traffic, traffic flow, public parking, bicycle transportation, bus transportation, taxi/uber/lyft, and walkability issues. Essentially, everything in the public transportation network. I write more here:

<https://www.pullmanward3.org/issue/publictransportationnetwork/>

13. What should the city do to deal with the issues created by population growth (i.e., congested streets, limited parking)?

We need to rethink *how* we grow. There is such a thing as smart growth. And we need not reinvent the wheel. Others have done this successfully.

Right now, developers are putting in developments without good green space, and without finishing the sidewalks in a timely fashion. There are other punch list items in their developments that are overdue or long overdue, yet they come before the council time and time again and get approved for yet more new development. This is lunacy. If I give a cash allowance to my 10 year old in exchange for cleaning his room, he doesn't actually clean it, and then comes to me again and asks for the money a second time to clean the living room, will I just give it to him without making him finish the first job? No way!

It's asinine to do this as a city. I'm not talking about the developers who are community conscious. I'm talking about the repeat offenders, and we do have some of them.

As a city councilor, I would have to agree with what Al Sorensen is doing in this aspect. *All* our councilors are expressing similar concerns as he is, but he's the only one voting the way he's speaking.

We need development. Thus, we need the developers. But look, these developments are a cash cow for them. For example, Steve Mader is making \$60,000 per lot in Paradise Hills. So, honestly, they need or want Pullman, as well. Why is Al Sorensen the only one holding developers to their initial promises and pushing them to do what is

right for the city? Al straight up asked Mr. Mader in a city council meeting what he would do if the council forced him to put in some sidewalks that are years overdue. You know what Mr. Mader said? *He said he would put in the sidewalks!*

I feel like in a pro-growth time, because there is money to be made for developers, the city holds all the cards. We can require our code be followed to a T. The developers still get a lot of money, and the residents have a more walkable, livable place to live. It's a win-win.

This is just one example of growing smart. We must 1) Be strategic; 2) Ask the right questions, and right follow-up questions. 3) Not be afraid to hold people accountable for past actions and current city code/standards. 4) Vote our conscience.

14. Are there enough city-funded programs for youth in Pullman? If not, what more is needed?

It depends on what age we're talking about. For many youth, there are quite a few things they can be involved in, either by the city, or by reputable organizations, such as Pullman Youth Baseball Association which *doesn't cut anybody from participation*. For teenagers, things can be pretty tough, though. After-school youth programs and weekend youth programs could provide a safe, fun environment for many folks and potentially cut down on drug use and other issues that occur among high school students. Some cities have been successful in their public-private partnerships. This is an avenue worth exploring for things like a new sports complex, an ice rink, an expanded outdoor pool or park with built-in pool features (e.g., splash pad).

15. What should the city do regarding emergency planning?

The city already has some emergency management in place, but it should be readily available on an enhanced website, along with a plan-of-action for each resident depending on the scenarios.

16. Do you think the city offers adequate social services?

All social services I was aware of came from the country, state, or county. I'm not aware of any social services in Pullman.

17. What should the city's role be in promoting and/or implementing new technologies?

The city is vastly underutilizing technology. It seems to me that our new city manager Adam Lincoln knows this.

I wrote about this at length at <https://www.pullmanward3.org/issue/tech/>.

18. What should the city do to promote the use of transportation other than single rider autos?

People are smart enough to know the difference between promoting something valid and promoting fluff. If we're going to promote the different transportation, we have to build the infrastructure.

Let's start with the good: The city already made some gains by modifying some policies to open up Uber and Lyft.

That being said, we need a lot more in terms of multiple modes of transportation. Here are a few major options.

Cycling: We can promote cycling. We recently did the Peddling The Palouse awareness campaign. We can – and should – continue to do this. But we also need to improve our cycling infrastructure. I like to ride my bike for exercise. But it's not a great mode of transportation because we lack bike paths in the right places, such as downtown. I don't feel safe riding my bike on Main, Grand, Bishop, or Stadium.

Bus: I feel like we already promote the bus system quite a bit. But it seems to me that it is used less and less. Why? I've read a lot about the choice for public transportation use. *Governing* magazine recently reported that people will use public transportation more often as it gets closer to the time it would take to use private vehicle. So, if a commute to work took someone 35 minutes to drive to their destination and find parking, and it took them 40 minutes to wait for a bus and then ride the bus to their destination, they might choose the bus. But, in Pullman, it takes me five minutes to drive to work... about eight minutes to drive there, park, and walk inside. Or, I could walk to work in 23-and-a-half minutes. Yet, it takes me more than an hour to take the bus. And it gets worse every year. When I was a student, living on Dexter Street, I used to catch the J route which ran every half hour, and it was worth it to not have to pay for parking, which, as a student, I couldn't afford anyway.

Many cities have utilized technology to decrease fleet costs. They run an expected route, as always, but rather than decrease cost by decreasing the runs, they decrease the size of the vehicle to something more economical when it is a lower ridership time. For example, instead of a big bus, they may use a mini-van during low ridership periods. It means technology needs to be utilized, however.

Additionally, technology would help with precise transfers, which people used to complain about and which prompted a change. That could help bring that back and decrease the time it would take to ride the bus in Pullman.

19. Should the city expand its system of parks? Why or why not?

Yes, even if they're smaller and neighborhood based, rather than one giant park. Parks serve a variety of purposes, from health and wellness, to social interaction. Having neighborhood-based parks encourages walking to the parks, as well, and fosters more outside play for kids.

20. If the city had to take a 20% budget cut, how would you suggest allocating the cut?

I'm against across-the-board cuts because what that actually does is de-incentivize prudence during plush times. If you know times could get tough later, you build layers of fat, so that when across-the-board cuts happen, you're not hurt. On the flip side of that, those who are fiscally responsible, and don't overspend, don't have all the fat, and they get hammered.

This is where engagement comes in. I don't suggest the city survey residents on budget cuts. But as an ongoing research process, it would be wise to discover what most residents feel is a nicety or extra. If the city had to take a 20 percent cut, we would still have fund vital services, but then we could zero in on the extras that perhaps residents weren't as concerned about.