

Palouse ProActive Questionnaire – Response from candidate Garren Shannon.

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

There are many pressing issues but few critical ones. My top 3 issues are Traffic downtown, Re-invigorating downtown business and the visual appeal of our city. As co-chair of the Pullman 2040 committee, these topics (and a few more) were brought to light by the over 620 respondents to our questionnaire sent out at the start of this year. Since I have never waited on a “position” to take action, I will discuss what I am already doing; 1. Adding to public art in town by volunteering labor to clean mural walls like in the Hill Street Plaza. 2. In discussing traffic issues with the City, one barrier is the northern or southern bypass. We need to choose one or the other and I am currently gathering feedback on which one. Hint – the Southern bypass seems far more likely to happen before the northern is viable. 3. Again, as part of the Pullman 2040 visioning process, we are now prioritizing projects and reaching out to in private and public partners. If elected, this will only give me more direct influence on the future of Pullman but ultimately, it is the general word of community that I will use to impact change.

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

There are several issues that limit new businesses and/or encourage growth; 1. Pullman has a limited workforce and with limited affordable housing, building a workforce will be a challenge. So promoting affordable housing will be my target. 2. Between now and the time we can build a large enough work force to supply needs, technology can provide many opportunities for employees to be based out of the home. Such a workforce needs high speed access at affordable prices. We have moderately high speed access but it is limited and expensive. We need to work with the Port of Whitman to expand and increase digital access capacity to select business types at more than reasonable prices. 3. The Evolve on Main project (currently under construction) will do wonders to increase a vibrant downtown. However, the City needs to either offer incentives or penalties to property owners whose buildings detract from the positive look and feel of the city. One incentive would be establishing an Entertainment District for downtown that would generate a tax base/break to stimulate increasing that type of business. A “dark store” ordinance, while not popular, would be the way to go for fining negative-impact property owners. It is not the best way to go but seriously, we have put up with seemingly abandoned property for long enough and some action must be taken.

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

As I noted in question 2, Public Art, Establish an Entertainment District and Entice or Penalize property owners whose property fails to add to a positive public look and feel.

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

Years ago, while chairing the Pullman Planning Commission, I started a discussion to review adoption of green energy technology in Pullman. Just after the deployment of the “Smart Grid” in Pullman, it seemed to make sense to build code that would allow homeowners to leverage the smart grid with equipment such as Solar Panels and/or wind-turbine generators. Of course, wind generators can be a noise issue but there are many other things the city CAN do to improve the environment for our people. Green busses, expanded and improved walk/run/bike paths and trails (to encourage our community to reduce the amount of CO2 we produce) and increased greenway and riparian areas. I recently facilitated the Pullman 2040 Environmental and Recreation taskforce activities to answer exactly these issues. Many great ideas came out of these meetings and we are just wrapping up the final list of projects. I will carry these ideas with me to City Council if elected.

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

As I noted before, I apply the “Penzon Theory” when it comes to taxes... it depends on what the tax is for. If I have a fire at my house, I hope the fire department will come and put it out. However, taxes are not the only answer to a problem. Fiscal responsibility and accountability also play a critical part in solving problems. Currently, I am not aware of any tax that is egregious so if pressed for an answer, I would say taxes should remain the same. If an opportunity arises to reduce taxes without stress or burden to the City coffers, then such a tax should be retired.

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

I believe the city is sufficiently transparent however, I believe the community is generally not looking in the right place for information. We have grown so used to having information PUSHED to us via electronic means that when it isn't where we want it (Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, email, city newsletter, community events publication, video of council meetings, published transcripts of planning commission meetings, etc.) we believe it does not exist or the city has not taken the effort to publish it. I believe the information is there. However, I believe much can be done to improve it and I understand Adam Lincoln (City Manager) is working to that end already.

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

1. Act as liaison for the ward to hear, vet and enact legislation proposed by the people.
2. Raise and/or listen to public grievances against the city or between community members as it pertains to code/legislation and provide remedies where possible.
3. Provide strategic vision for the future of Pullman.
4. Provide public oversight and scrutiny of government operations and expenditures.

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

Ward 2 is very diverse. Nestled against WSU brings Ward 2 many opportunities to succeed. One – Pressures brought on by the need for close-proximity, high density student housing vs. the owner-occupied desire to maintain a community friendly environment and Managing mixed density housing growth (R1 vs R3 or R4). Two – Absorbing parking burdens as WSU continues to

reduce on-campus parking while increasing student enrollment. Three – Traffic congestion as the north and northeast side of Pullman continues to grow both in population and in commerce. For example, SEL is now the largest (or very soon to be) employer ahead of WSU. Easy access to work is important to all of us.

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

I believe Pullman PD do an excellent job here. Recently, they hired yet another female officer and I applaud that. Are there things that could be improved on? Absolutely but I can say that of any public agency. For example, several years ago, I had a conversation with one of the code enforcement officers. She noted at the time that she is sometimes requested to provide backup support but I noted she did not have a bullet-proof vest issues. She was expected (at the time) to provide her own and I think that is unreasonable. I would change that... but with the resources they have at their disposal, I believe they do well.

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

One troubling aspect of Pullman is that some ordinances are strictly enforced while others are more casually enforced or ignored. Since I don’t provide the enforcement, I can’t divine why some are while others are not. But as I researched the law, it is both extensive and complete. Such properties, once identified are a class two infraction and a \$250 fine. Second offence is a class one infraction and a \$350 fine. In my opinion, this is nothing to a property owner such as downtown. I would prefer the law be changed to charge \$350 on a monthly basis until the problem is rectified. The only other avenue to the City currently has is to “Abate” the problem but that is only in the case of true public health risk situations. Most of the buildings, like the old Mimosa building, don’t approach that level of concern so a single \$350 fine is all they would receive. Even yearly, that is nothing. But try a \$4200 bill annually and that may incentivize the property owner to take more positive action.

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

WSU and the City have already been working together through the “Town and Gown” committee. My wife is a core member of that group as are several of the Pullman2040 committee members. I have been closely involved in the discussions and have heard some great ideas coming forward. These collaboration efforts must continue and I would support any efforts the City can make to grow alongside WSU.

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

Pullman has a lot of committees and commissions but only 4 boards. The Airport Board is important, especially with the construction underway. I am a strong supporter of Libraries and the board is active. I am unaware of what service the “Volunteer Firefighters Relief & Pension board” or the “LEOFF Disability board” provides. Both have posted little activity and seem to be more officious than necessary. I would review these two for elimination.

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

One of the challenges of living in the top 100 best places to raise kids is people want to move here. But rapid growth is as dangerous as rapid decline if not planned for properly. I think our city planning department has a good bead on things as they relate to growth. The real problem is that the downtown can't remain a major arterial if we are to grow. We need to push the bypass through to provide alternate routes for trucks to move around town.

We also need to increase our support for indigent families by expanding our social services and to build a shelter for such families.

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

The data from the Pullman2040 committee clearly identified one area that is not yet being addressed by the City... a Youth Center. We provide many spring/summer/fall activities for kids but winter is lacking and a Youth Center would provide a resource for kids to recreate during the winter. As we all know, the City has forwarded a bond to purchase property that has a full gym basketball court. I have walked that property (Pullman Public Schools was also looking at that property) and I think it would provide fantastic growth opportunities for the city – not just for kids but for many other groups as well.

15. What should the city do regarding emergency planning?

Last year, I attended Emergency Management System training up at WSU. City, County and State agencies were present. Back in 1984 I was trained by the Air Force for Civil Disaster Preparation and at that time, I thought that all civilians needed to have such training. Move forward 30+ years with the new State EMS program and I recognize that things have changed. Community members need to understand what each family should do in the event of an emergency but, for the most part, personal observation has demonstrated to me that the city has a solid EMS plan in place. The one thing I would suggest is to develop a "Quick Card" that can be pinned to the kitchen corkboard that outlines key numbers, actions and routes. The one thing we do know about disasters... we can't rely on the Internet or cell phones. Having a Quick Card will ensure all homes have the "what's and where's" for help.

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

As I noted above, I do not believe the city offers enough in the way of social services. We need to supply temporary housing for indigent families. Should the people of Pullman agree to the proposed bond initiative, this would easily provide a resource for such social services?

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

I am a technologist and have been on the leading edge of tech for decades. We should implement technologies that increase transparency, ease access to resources and improve the general health of our community. On-line submission of city documents like registration for Parks and Rec events or Planning Dept. inspections. The ability to pay fees or fines through credit cards over a secure website would be great. I would like to see the video broadcasting system upgraded to include Closed Captioning for ADA compliance. I would like to see VERY

public meeting video-cast. I would also like to see the city cast a wider Free WiFi net around city facilities. Of course, ALL of these things must come with a fully implemented security solution that provides solid protection from nefarious actors.

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

First, the City of Pullman does an Excellent job in transportation considering the ridership noted from the Transportation Department. The agreements struck with WSU have been beneficial for both students and long-term residence. As a facilitator for the Pullman2040 taskforce on Environment and Recreation, several things were identified that could help promote less CO2 in our environment. Expanding our already excellent walk/run/bike trails. Improve signage to include maps with distances similar to our national parks. Addition of bike garages in key locations to promote bike safety/security. And the creation of a bike trails app for Pullman.

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

If you mean should we expand today without city growth then no, I believe the city parks system is excellent and they do a great job of keeping it beautiful. But as our city grows, additional parks, tied with walk/run/bike paths and trails, will be an expected event.

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

First, a 20% cut is A LOT... 1/5th of your total budget?!? Well I have personally worked through 5, 10 and 12% budget cuts but never 20%. Something would be seriously wrong with our economy if that were the case. However, regardless of the target number, my approach would be to look to each city department to provide a plan to 10% reduce their operational budget along with a hiring freeze on any new positions. From there, each department would be required to propose program suspensions from least to most impactful. From the details, a selection process to approach the remaining 10%. The final review would be a RIF (Reduction In Force) process starting with office personnel and moving upwards through each department with cuts to public safety (Police & Fire) being last. Ultimately, my approach would be to avoid staff terminations as these can be the most impactful to families and our community. But in a situation of 20% reduction, I doubt we would be able to avoid a RIF.