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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CITY OF COLLEGE PLACE APPEAL OF THE UPDATED WALLA WALLA COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

On Thursday October 2nd the City of College Place filed an appeal of the updated Walla Walla County Comprehensive Plan with the Washington State Growth Management Hearings Board. The City asserts that the Board of County Commissioners violated the provisions of the County Comprehensive Plan, the Countywide Planning Policies, and the Washington State Growth Management Act when it denied a request of the City to include 48 acres of land along the SR 125 corridor in the College Place Urban Growth Area.

This area has been identified by the City as being highly suitable for commercial and business park development. A new city water main was recently installed to serve this area and the City has just finished constructing a new well in this area to replace a contaminated private well serving the Christ Community Fellowship Church. This well will be operational in May of 2020 and there is adequate capacity to serve additional properties in the vicinity. Future connections to the city sewer system have also been installed and the area in question has access to SR 125 from two city arterials. On the other side of the highway is College Place High School and a regional shopping center anchored by the Walmart Supercenter. To the north of this area is the College Place City limits and several commercial uses that are taking advantage of the high visibility from and easy access to the state highway. The City notes in its appeal that urban services already exist or can reasonably be provided to serve this area and the failure to include this in the College Place Urban Growth Area is a violation of numerous County policies. In addition, the City notes that there is very little land currently within the College Place Urban Growth Area suitable for commercial and business park development, and as result, without the requested addition, it will be unable serve or sustain the growth that has been projected for the City.

“The County’s denial of the City’s request and the self-imposed policy of not accepting proposed amendments to urban growth area boundaries for another 5 years creates an insurmountable economic hardship for the City” said Mayor Norma Hernandez, adding that “The County Commissioners gave us no choice but to appeal. If we are to remain an economically viable community, while at the same time protecting our farmlands of long-term commercial significance, we must follow established policies and plan for commercial development in areas such as this. The City has made a substantial investment in this area. City services are in place. It is located on a state highway across the street from a Walmart and adjacent to commercial development in the city limits. There is simply no reason not to allow property owners the opportunity to annex into the City and access city services when they are ready to develop their property”. City Administrator Mike Rizzitiello who has been spearheading the City’s economic development efforts added “We have received a lot of interest in this area from developers, particularly

the property at the southeast corner of the intersection of SR 125 and S College Avenue. It really is the gateway to College Place, and we have been advised that commercial and business park development in this area will be a catalyst for additional development along College Avenue. We are deeply disappointed that the County Commissioners did not choose to work cooperatively with the City on this matter of mutual interest, but we remain optimistic.”

The City has requested in its appeal that the Growth Management Hearings Board remand the County Comprehensive Plan to the Board of County Commissioners with directions to include the 48-acres in question in the College Place Urban Growth Area. City Community Development Director Jon Rickard explained that the inclusion of property in an urban growth area enables a property owner to request annexation into the City when they are ready to develop their property. “If a property owner is not ready to develop their property, they may continue their current use under the jurisdiction of the County. But when they are ready to develop their property, they may request to be annexed into the City and connect to City water and sewer services at more favorable rates and develop their property at urban levels in accordance with City standards” said Rickard. “The designation of urban growth areas enables property owners to make informed choices about their future and City governments to spend tax dollars wisely” and he added “We should be thinking twenty years into the future when we set urban growth area boundaries, and there is no area in the vicinity better suited for commercial development”.

For more information about the City of College Place’s appeal, please visit the City website at <http://www.cpwa.us/departments/attorney/index.php> or contact the City Attorney Rea Culver at 509-301-1068. For more information about economic development opportunities in and near the city of College Place please contact the City Administrator Mike Rizzitiello at 509-394-8506.