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MINUTES

January 15, 2026

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82239894144>

Present

Kevin Klein, District VII-Barley / Chair
Ty Jessup, Position 2-Wheat Industry Rep / Vice Chair
Brit Ausman, District III-Wheat / Treasurer
Ben Barstow, District II-Wheat
Ben Adams, District IV-Wheat
Nicole Berg, District V-Wheat
Art Schultheis, District VI-Barley
Tony Benfiet, Position 1-Wheat Industry Rep
Scott Steinbacher, WA ST Dept. of Agriculture Rep

Absent

Barley Industry Rep - *Vacant*
Mike Carstensen, District I-Wheat

Staff:

Casey Chumrau, Chief Executive Officer
Sarah Marquez, Communications Manager

Visitors:

Industry, general public and media

Call to Order – Chair Kevin Klein called the regular meeting of the Washington Grain Commission (WGC) to order at 9:00 a.m. on January 15, 2026 at the Courtyard by Marriott in Pullman. The meeting was briefly adjourned and the meeting was moved across the parking lot to the Residence Inn, where the meeting was resumed at 10:00 a.m. on January 15, 2026.

Administrative

1. Additions to Agenda

- a. Tri-State Meeting Discussion under Market Development
- b. Strike: Collaboration Opportunity – WSU under Communications; postpone until March

Motion was moved, seconded, and passed to approve the agenda as amended.

2. Introductions and Roll

3. **Open Forum** – Assessment payer Tom Kammerzell advised the commission that people are suing state agencies for not being able to contact those agencies via normal methods of communication and to ensure the WGC general email is working correctly.

4. **Approval of Minutes** – November 20, 2025. The minutes of the regular meeting were circulated to the members of the WGC prior to this meeting and included in the meeting packet.

Motion was moved, seconded, and passed to approve the minutes of the regular November 20, 2025 meeting as recorded.

- Approval of Financials** – Chair Kevin Klien reviewed the WGC financial statements for the months of November 2025 with the board as follows:

BALANCE SHEET FOR THE GENERAL FUND
November 30, 2025

Assets			
Checking USB	275,401.73		
Petty Cash	155.84		
W - USB Savings	1,227,056.08		
B - USB Savings	61,165.43		
W - Robert W Baird MMKT	52,501.16		
W - Robert W Baird Investments	17,531,431.59		
B - Robert W Baird MMKT	91,995.28		
B - Robert W Baird Investments	104,926.08		
Assessments Receivable	310,597.68		
Total Assets:			19,655,230.87
Liabilities			
Accounts Payable	41,509.66		
ID Withholding Payable	358.00		
WA Cares Fund	1,530.57		
LT Disability Prem Payable	0.40		
PFML	914.32		
L&I Premium Payable	599.37		
Unearned Assessments Revenue	310,597.68		
Total Liabilities:			355,510.00
Equity			
Retained Earnings-Current Year	1,277,764.70		
Fund Balance (Unassigned)	8,801,612.17		
Reserved Fund Balance (Committed)	6,400,000.00		
Marketing Reserved Fund Balance (Committed)	1,500,000.00		
WSU-WRF Reserved Fund Balance (Committed)	1,320,344.00		
Total Equity:			19,299,720.87
Total Liabilities & Equity:			19,655,230.87

CC
12/12/25

Transfers and disbursements were reported to the board for the period of November 2025 and recommended that all disbursements be approved and authorized for payment. There were no voided Checks.

Motion was moved, seconded, and passed to approve the November 2025 financials as presented.

Motion was moved, seconded, and passed to approve ACH Transfers 572-585, and checks #33400 - #33413 representing November 2025 expenditures.

- Assessment Collections / Investments** – CEO Casey Chumrau referred to the Analysis of Assessment Collection report which showed that as of December 31, 2025, the following amounts were received: barley assessments \$48,633; and wheat assessments \$3,307,257. Current investment details of certificates of deposit and federal notes for barley and wheat, which are tracked separately per RCW 15.115.280, were communicated to the board. Combined CD and FN investments for barley totaled \$106,000.43; and wheat investments totaled \$18,882,934. Interest rates for new investments options with Robert W. Baird & Co. (RWB) are falling and some securities are being called due. Continued efforts to reinvest any residual funds at the highest interest rates possible.
- Election of Officers** - Commissioner and WSDA Representative Scott Steinbacher called for nominations. The slate of Kevin Klein for chairman, Ty Jessup for vice-chairman, and Brit Ausman

for treasurer was put forth. Commissioner Steinbacher called for nominations three more times and no additional nominations were made. There was no additional discussion.

Motion was moved, seconded, and passed to elect Kevin Klein as Chairman, Ty Jessup as Vice-chairman, and Brit Ausman and Treasurer for 2026.

8. **Office Operations** – Chair Kevin Klein and CEO Casey Chumrau addressed the following:
- a. Wheat Industry Rep Position 1 – After a successful search process, the board recommend Tony Benefiet of United Grain Corporation in November to Director Derek Sandison for the open Industry Representative position. Director Sandison accepted the recommendation and Commissioner Benefiet was introduced at the meeting.
 - b. Accountability Audit - The Washington State Auditor’s office completed its regular accountability audit of the Commission, covering the period of July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2024. The audit reviews evidence about the Commission’s use of public resources, compliance with state laws and regulations and its own policies and procedures, and internal controls over such matters. The audit results stated that in the selected areas, Commission operations complied, in all material respects, with applicable state laws, regulations, and its own policies, and provided adequate controls over the safeguarding of public resources. The WGC officers attended an exit interview and audit results report via zoom prior to the board meeting. The full report can be found at:
<https://portal.sao.wa.gov/ReportSearch/Home/ViewReportFile?arn=1038741&isFinding=false&sp=false>
 - c. FY2025 Financial Audit Submission – Board authorization is required before submitted the 3rd party financial audit to the State Auditor’s office.

Motion was moved, seconded, and passed to authorize submission of the FY2025 financial audit to SAO upon completion by Clark Accounting.

- d. Job Description Updates

Motion was moved, seconded, and passed to adopt the staffing plan presented by the CEO.

District Reports

- Ben Barstow (District 2: Whitman) – Wheat looks good, but it is still too early to tell.
- Brit Ausman (District 3: Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, Walla Walla) – Everyone is spraying to control army cutworm. They don’t seem to like big wheat. Great moisture, wheat looks good but needs more winter weather to slow things down. Mood of growers has improved. Disaster payments are helping.
- Ben Adams (District 4: Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Grant, Okanogan) – Waiting for winter to arrive. Some snow in upper elevations but primarily gone.
- Nicole Berg (District 5: Benton, Franklin, Kittitas, Klickitat, Yakima) – Lots of talk about open winter, seeing rust in areas like Franklin and Benton. Klickitat is planning spring wheat. Have had 70-degree weather with rain. Very mild. Nervous there could be an arctic blast.

- Art Schultheis (District 1 Barley: Asotin, Benton, Columbia, Franklin, Garfield, Klickitat, Walla Walla, Whitman, Yakima) – Colton got 4' rain in December, twice normal, used it all, no water in ditches. Wheat looks beautiful. Volunteers are everywhere.
- Kevin Klein (District 7 Barley: Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Ferry, Grant, Kittitas, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens) – Winter wheat that was seeded late looks good thanks to mild winter.

Industry and WSDA Reports

- Ty Jessup (Position 2-Wheat Industry Rep) – Markets are flat. Prices are on low end of range this year. Export demand is slow. Grower selling has slowed. Were busy Oct/nov/dec when farmers needed cashflow. Down to 20-25% of crop left to buy. February government payment to growers could impact grower selling strategy. USDA report surprised industry by increasing corn and bean supplies, there was a correction to all prices in less than a minute. Massive crops in Arg (record), Australia (top 3), Russia (getting bigger). New crop values are very low.
- Tony Benefiet (Position 1-Wheat Industry Rep) – Prices are defensive going into new crop. World is awash of wheat. Argentina is putting pressure on. Australia is \$7/mt cheaper than US in Southeast Asia right now. We want Australia to sell a lot now, so we aren't competing with them in August. Big question is China – covered through May with Canadian and Australian wheat, likely to buy more Australian, which could take Australia out of Southeast Asia. Don't expect a lot of Korea feed demand – will go to Australia or corn.
- Scott Steinbacher (Eastern Washington manager of the Warehouse Audit/Grain Inspection Programs, Washington State Department of Agriculture) – WSDA is working on Ag Viability Study. WSDA will be coordinating with other agencies on food assistance program legislation. Following bills that are working through the legislature on unionization of ag employees.

Policy

1. WAWG Update – Ryan Poe, Washington Association of Wheat Growers treasurer, reminded everyone that Olympia Days are January 18-20 and encouraged participation from the WGC. The state legislative update calls will be Tuesdays at 8:00am. Talking points on the new Dietary guidelines were presented in the packet. He reported that the NAWG strategic plan process is going well and there seems to be more stable staffing at NAWG. Discussions regarding bridge payments are ongoing. Michelle Hennings reported there will be a river stakeholder fly-in on February 9. She provided an update on the court filings regarding the LSRD.
2. State Legislative Update – Mark Streuli, Streuli Public Relations, and Diana Carlen, Gordon Thomas Honeywell Governmental Affairs, provided updates the beginning of Legislative Session in Olympia. There were 600 pre-filed bills for the 63-day session. The state budget is the main topic as there is a \$2.3 billion shortfall. Will be following the millionaire tax, the payroll tax, and environmental crimes bills.
3. Industry Relations – Mike Miller, Washington Genetics, reported he has spent significant time on the USAID working group. The UN manages World Food Programs. The State Department sent portion of the Food for Progress program to USDA to be administered this budget cycle. USDA is looking at 4-5 main markets for the PL480 program. Ocean shipping is much riskier now due to geopolitical challenges. Discussions ongoing on what percentage of total spending must be on in-kind food donations.

Market Development

1. **USW** –The next USW Meeting is January 26-30. Joe Bippert was promoted to a regional position and Tyllor Ledford is going to Manila as Country Director.

- a. National Wheat Improvement Committee – WGC NWIC representative Jim Moyer attended a December planning meeting in Denver. The Fusarium Head Blight working group receives about \$15 million a year, and the FHB research has run its course, so the group is working to redefine the priorities. The PNW needs to discuss the regional priorities.
- b. Tri-State meeting– Commissioners want to be sure another Tri-State Commission meeting is scheduled soon to maintain momentum from the last meeting. Portland would be advantageous to also meet with USW.
2. **Barley Update** – Not a lot of barley will be planted in Whitman County. Some barley handlers won't buy any more barley from farmers this year – handled more triticale. Matt Horlacher will attend the USGBC annual meeting in Panama.
3. **Wheat Marketing Center** – Brit Ausman reported that WMC is working on a new financial dues structure. Randy Olstad is retiring and will therefore vacate the WMC board. Had a meeting with the Tri-State commissions on harvest reports and CQ reports but little progress was made on decisions.

Communications and Education

1. Collaboration Opportunity – WSU Athletics: Tabled until March

Research

1. **WSU Report** –Dr. Rich Koenig reported that the state budget proposal will impact WSU includes a 3.2% reduction in appropriated funds and increases the self-insurance premium by 500% or about \$7 million. All colleges were asked to prepare 3%, 5%, and 10% budget cut plans. There is confidence in President Cantwell as she has made good decisions so far. Construction of the ARS building will be done this month and has a June move-in date. Dr. Scot Hulbert reported that there isn't a lot of hiring happening across WSU except for endowed chairs and critical positions. The new Assistant Dean of Research starts in April. There are four endowed chair searches currently for cereals: 2 weed scientists, economics, and pathology. The WSU foundation provided an explanation of the fees charged to the endowments each year and what they are used for. There is a 5% fee to establish the endowment and a 1.5% annual fee. There is a 4% annual distribution.
2. **WSU/ARS Committee Reports** – No committees met since the last meeting.
3. **Research Advisory Subcommittee Update** – RAS Chair Jim Moyer provided a report on the first RAS meeting January 13-14. All committee members attended, it is a very talented and enthusiastic group, already seems cohesive. RAS will provide a report to WGC following the research review in February.

Other Topics

Calendar & Travel Authority

1. Approve Travel Authority:

Motion was moved, seconded, and passed to approve and authorize travel and virtual attendance as follows:

Future Travel

January 26-30	USW Board Meeting, Wash, D.C.	Mike Carstensen/Ben Barstow/Nicole Berg/Staff
February 2-5	NBGA Winter Meeting, Wash, D.C	Schultheis/Chumrau
February 3-5	Spokane Ag Show, Spokane	Commissioners/Staff
February 9-14	USGC Annual Meeting, Panama City	Horlacher
February 17	WAWG Board Meeting, Ritzville	Commissioners/Staff
February 19	WSU Research Review, Pullman	Commissioners / Staff
March 9-11	NBIC Fly-In, Washington, DC	Schultheis/Chumrau
March 10	WAWG Board Meeting, Ritzville	Commissioners/Staff
March 17-18	WGC Board Meeting, Spokane	Commissioners/Staff
April 15-22	USW Taiwan and Tokyo Anniversary	Mike C/Berg/Chumrau

EXECUTIVE SESSION

An Executive Session was called by Chair Kevin Klein at 12:20 p.m. for 1 hour to discuss personnel issues (RCW 42.30.110(1)(g)).

Motion was moved, seconded, and passed to adjourn the public meeting for lunch at 12:20 pm and go into Executive Session at 12:40 pm for 1 hour and 20 minutes.

Motion was moved, seconded, and passed to adjourn the Executive Session at 1:58 p.m. and to reconvene the public meeting at 2:00 p.m.

Motion was moved, seconded, and passed to accept the CEO’s recommendations for an updated staffing plan.

Date/Place Next Meeting

Chair Kevin Klein designated March 17-18, 2026, as the date of the next regular meeting of the commission to be held at the Washington Grain Commission office in Spokane.

Adjourn

There being no further business before the commission, this meeting was adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

Motion was moved, seconded, and passed to adjourn the public meeting at 2:40 p.m.

Minutes Approval Signature

Upon passage of minutes by board at subsequent meeting

[Redacted Signature]

03-17-2026

Kevin Klein, Chair

Date