
MINUTES

March 17-18, 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
Mike Carstensen, District I-Wheat
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*

Staff:

Casey Chumrau, Chief Executive Officer
Maddison Dayton, Communications and Content Manager
Stephanie Dinning, Director of Operations and Organizational Development
Jake Liening, Market Development Manager
Parker Dawson, Systems and Records Specialist
Shari McCarthy, Office and Program Support Specialist
Alyssa Bentz, Finance and Compliance 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 10:00 a.m. on March 17, 2026.

Administrative

1. **Additions to Agenda** – added a Wheat Marketing Center Update under Market Development
2. **Introductions and Roll**
3. **Open Forum** – Assessment payer Tom Kammerzell presented two issues that he asked be considered by the commission and entered into the minutes. His full comments are attached in Exhibit A.
4. **Approval of Minutes** – January 15, 2026. The minutes of the regular meeting were circulated to the members of the WGC prior to this meeting and included in the meeting packet. An edit to the 'call to order' section was made to indicate a change of venue.

Motion was moved, seconded, and passed to approve the minutes of the regular January 15, 2026 meeting as amended.

- Approval of Financials** – The board approved January and February financial statements while noting December financials would not be approved due to a correction needed. Chair Kevin Klien reviewed the WGC financial statements for the months of January/February 2026 financials with the board as follows:

BALANCE SHEET FOR THE GENERAL FUND
February 28, 2026

Balance Sheet
As of 2/28/2026

Washington Grain Commission (WGC)

Assets		Washington Grain Commission (WGC)
Checking USB	840,845.26	✓
Petty Cash	155.84	
W - USB Savings	227,145.93	✓
B - USB Savings	61,178.99	✓
W - Robert W Baird MMKT	513,778.39	✓
W - Robert W Baird Investments	17,254,697.03	✓
B - Robert W Baird MMKT	118,597.14	✓
B - Robert W Baird Investments	79,587.38	✓
Assessments Receivable	310,597.68	
Total Assets:	19,406,583.64	OC 3/4/26
Liabilities		
Accounts Payable	41,509.66	
Fed W/H Payable	3,150.27	
FICA Payable	21,444.83	
ID Withholding Payable	378.00	
Def Comp Payable	4,484.81	
Medical Ins Payable	14.00	
PERS Payable	3,751.25	
WA Cares Fund	2,326.32	
LT Disability Prem Payable	41.10	
PFML	2,112.48	
L&I Premium Payable	1,340.00	
Unearned Assessments Revenue	310,597.68	
Total Liabilities:	391,150.40	
Equity		
Retained Earnings-Current Year	993,477.07	
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:	19,015,433.24	
Total Liabilities & Equity:	19,406,583.64	

January 31, 2026

**Balance Sheet
As of 1/31/2026**

Washington Grain Commission (WGC)

Assets			
Checking USB		680,189.87 ✓	
Petty Cash		155.84	
W - USB Savings		227,130.25 ✓	
B - USB Savings		61,174.77 ✓	
W - Robert W Baird MMKT		73,835.80 ✓	
W - Robert W Baird Investments		17,596,253.61 ✓	
B - Robert W Baird MMKT		92,322.85 ✓	
B - Robert W Baird Investments		105,164.74 ✓	
Assessments Receivable		310,597.68 ✓	
	Total Assets:	19,146,825.41	19,146,825.41
Liabilities			
Accounts Payable		41,509.66	
Fed W/H Payable		-2,146.67	
FICA Payable		13,838.57	
ID Withholding Payable		188.00	
Def Comp Payable		3,254.80	
Medical Ins Payable		36.00	
PERS Payable		736.19	
WA Cares Fund		2,074.46	
LT Disability Prem Payable		24.90	
PFML		1,485.32	
L&I Premium Payable		698.72	
Unearned Assessments Revenue		310,597.68	
	Total Liabilities:	372,297.63	372,297.63
Equity			
Retained Earnings-Current Year		752,571.61	
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:	18,774,527.78	18,774,527.78
	Total Liabilities & Equity:	19,146,825.41	19,146,825.41

CC
2/20/26

Motion was moved, seconded, and passed to approve the January 2026 and February 2026 financials as presented.

Transfers and disbursements were reported to the board for the period of January and February 2026 and recommended that all disbursements be approved and authorized for payment. There were no voided Checks.

Motion was moved, seconded, and passed to ACH Transfers 586 – 605 and Checks #33439 – #33453 representing December expenditures; ACH Transfers 586 – 605 and Checks #33454 – #33477 representing January expenditures; and ACH Transfers 604 – 621 and Checks #33478 – #33509 representing February expenditures.

6. Assessment Collections / Investments –

CEO Casey Chumrau referred to the Analysis of Assessment Collection report which showed that as February 28, 2026, the following amounts were received: barley assessments \$54,255; and wheat assessments \$4,252,069. 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 \$79,587; and wheat investments totaled \$17,254,697. Continued efforts to reinvest funds at the highest interest rates possible.

7. **Commission Operations-**

- a. Financial Audit Report – Eric Clark of Clark Accounting presented the financial audit report for fiscal year 2024-2025, stating that the financial statements were presented fairly in all material respects, with no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies identified. The audit report will be reviewed by the state auditor's office before being published on their website.
- b. Staffing Update and Introductions – Three new WGC staff members were introduced. All positions have been filled.
- c. Authorize Bank Signer (action item)- Adding Director of Operations as an additional bank signer, making her the second bank signer on staff.

Motion to authorize Stephanie Dinning as an additional bank signer was moved, seconded, and passed.

- d. Staff Position Authorization (action item) – Considering the current Market Development Manager will be leaving for military training, a temporary program specialist position was requested to allow for sufficient overlap and training as the exact timing remains undetermined.

Motion to approve a program specialist or program manager position was moved, seconded, and passed.

District Reports-

- Mike Carstensen (District 1: Ferry, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens) - Received 5 inches of snow and cold weather. The early guys still have not been able to get into the field. Yesterday was one of the warmer days they have had in a while.
- Ben Barstow (District 2: Whitman) – Winter wheat looks pretty good for this time of year. They had a lot of snow in February as well. The wheat is pretty far along and looks healthy.
- Brit Ausman (District 3: Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, Walla Walla) — Received good moisture, in some places even too much moisture. Fieldwork has been going on in the Walla Walla and Touchet areas. The crop looks good, even with rust and weeds, and people in the low country are getting antsy. Warm weather is coming.
- Ben Adams (District 4: Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Grant, Okanogan) –In the southern part of the district, the wheat is big and there is disease pressure. Up north, a couple of inches of rain fell, with some areas receiving 8 to 10 inches along with warm nights. Tractors were in the field for a bit and then snow paused operations.
- Nicole Berg (District 5: Benton, Franklin, Kittitas, Klickitat, Yakima) – Wheat is big this year, and the crop looks good. It has been too windy to spray, but all in all it looks like a good crop. There is a lot of disease pressure, including rust.

- Art Schultheis (District 1 Barley: Asotin, Benton, Columbia, Franklin, Garfield, Klickitat, Walla Walla, Whitman, Yakima) – Lots of rain with minor flooding. Growers were able to stream fertilizer right before the rain hit. Wheat is almost completely canopied over.
- Kevin Klein (District 7 Barley: Adams, Chelan, Douglas, Ferry, Grant, Kittitas, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens) — Big spring wheat area. It has been dry enough to seed. Soil tests show the ground to be in a similar moisture state as last year. There has been lots of rain near Edwall. Winter wheat is greening up, with lots of cheatgrass between the furrows. It will be interesting to see how farmers deal with the cheatgrass: one application or two. Agronomists are prescribing fungicides for rust applications. How much are growers willing to throw at the problem?

Industry and WSDA Reports

- Ty Jessup (Wheat Industry Rep) – Gas prices have moved up, driven by geopolitics. The war zone is not a region where white wheat is delivered, so it fundamentally has not changed anything. The market does not have a lot of wheat to buy, with 7 to 10% of the old crop left to buy. It is generally ahead of pace compared to last year. Main concerns are fuel and fertilizer. Fuel is taking center stage in the news cycle, and futures markets in commodities are moving off the crude market. There have not been a lot of cash trades in the new crop yet, but there has been some hedge-to-arrive activity for the new crop.
- Tony Benediet (Wheat Industry Rep) – Expecting corn acres to remain unchanged, but fertilizer costs could affect that. Fuel is the big conversation right now. Fuel surcharges are being charged back. Highway diesel just went above \$5 per gallon. Vessel freight is a big issue with regard to bunker fuel. Exceptions are being made for West Coast bunker rates to get costs down. Charter rates are very expensive. Export demand has been very slow. A lot of Southeast Asia customers are covered through June. Attention is turning to July customers. June is pretty much covered for wheat. Corn will have record exports at the end of the marketing year. Buyers are comfortable sitting and waiting. They are waiting for vessel prices to come down. Soft white is looking to catch the wave of hard wheat vessels. The feed wheat trend seen last year is not expected to come to the Pacific Northwest this year due to price.
- Scott Steinbacher (Washington State Dept. of Agriculture) - Export inspections are extremely busy from inland locations to the coast.

Policy

1. Legislative Monitoring

Mark Strueli and Diana Carlin reported outcomes from the state legislative session, including the removal of lubricants from the Climate Commitment Act, while noting challenges with a proposed 9.9% income tax and failed agricultural amendments. They highlighted the repeal of the estate tax passed last year, and strong capital budget support for irrigation and climate-smart agriculture but expressed concern over studies funded in the operating budget regarding potential removal of the Lower Snake River dams. Additional updates included the defeat of environmental crimes bill by a broad coalition and ag-labor unionization bills,

2. WAWG Update

WAWG provided a report of their recent work. WAWG has engaged in DC on Farmbill and CRP, participated in NWIC (National Wheat Improvement Committee) fly-in, and had a productive February trip with 'river stakeholders' to Washington, D.C., which included meetings with NOAA and multiple congressional delegations following a judge's ruling on spilling more water over the Lower Snake River Dams. The group also announced plans for the Lower Grain Congressional

Staff Tour on August 18 and encouraged commissioner to attend. WAWG's preliminary budget request was presented, outlining increased funding for state legislation and transportation, along with a reduced public relations budget.

3. Industry relations

Mike Miller gave a report on his recent trip to DC as the CARAT representative. The ACLU group is working on the FY28 appropriations requests for research. He mentioned that the Research Facilities Act could provide an opportunity for the Othello research station. Additionally, the transition of the Food for Peace program from the State Department to USDA was discussed, with recognition given from Derek Sandison to Mike Miller for his leadership in making the transition possible. Funding for Food for Peace for the current and next fiscal years has already moved to USDA, and future appropriations will require congressional approval. Miller also explored provided marketing opportunities in Bangladesh and emphasized engaging baking schools to help boost wheat purchases.

Research:

1. WSU Report

Scot Hulbert and Rich Konig provided an update on the following topics:

- Confirmation and clarification that tech support for wheat research faculty is not being cut, despite budget constraints. Realizes there has been a 5-year loss. They are looking for federal money to compensate for state funding losses.
- New associate dean for research has been hired from Michigan State. Next month will be training with Scot, visiting farms and having meetings.
- Dr. Joao Antonangelo currently holds the rotating WGC endowed position. This August will be the 3-year mark, therefore the position needs to be reviewed, as it is generally a 3–5-year commitment.
- Have seen good candidates for the other endowed chairs positions that are open. The economics position is starting interviews, the application date deadline for the two weed science positions is March 15, and the pathology position is also in progress.
- New ARS Building at WSU- The ARS building is nearly complete with a move in date this summer. Furniture costs have exceeded initial estimates and will likely exceed the \$1 million allocation.
- Request of \$25,000 to purchase IT equipment for the conference room on the first floor, that can be split into two rooms. There will be a plaque to honor wheat commission and wheat growers.

Motion was moved, seconded and passed to approve \$25,000 for the ARS conference rooms from the current fiscal year budget.

2. WSU/ARS Committee Reports

Grain Royalty Advisory Committee-

GRAC met on March 9th, discussed how to spend royalty dollars. In addition to reducing the funding request to WGC by \$250,000, they are looking at the following uses:

- Establishing equipment update schedules
- Personnel- technical staff, research station support

- Invest in research farms
- Create a reserve (contingency) fund

It was suggested to write another article on GRAC and how royalties are used in order to tell farmers how the investment is working.

Cereal Variety Release Committee-

The committee met on March 12th to review three wheat lines for potential release, including a winter club wheat and two winter wheats from Dr. Arron Carter's program.

The meeting discussed changes in the relationship between Washington State Crop Improvement Association (WSCIA) and WSU, including WSCIA's transition to a fee-for-service model for foundation seed production. The university will issue a notice of opportunity to bid for new seed production services, with the goal of maintaining industry continuity during the transition.

Variety Testing Program

Drs. Mike Pumphrey and Kim Campbell updated the commission on changes to the VTP, including key personnel. They addressed the work plan and staffing plan for the coming year, indicating that the work will get done accurately and competently. They presented a revised budget proposal for VTP that combines winter wheat, spring wheat and barley, instead of three separate proposals. The proposal included a reduction of \$60,000 from the previous year's budget due to streamlining operations and balancing staffing levels, with some funds being carried forward from previous budgets.

There was discussion on the need for a tow vehicle and trailer upgrade for the variety testing program. WGC does not normally consider funding requests for on-road vehicles, but the commission recognizes exceptional circumstances are at play and will consider an exception. A strong request for a WSU match was expressed.

A motion was moved, seconded and passed, to allocate up to \$115,000 for a purchase of a tow vehicle and trailer.

3. Research Review Discussion, Preliminary Approvals

Jim Moyer presented updates on the Research Advisory Subcommittee's activities, including their January meeting and discussion following Research Review. The committee provided funding recommendations for new and renewing projects.

The board discussed research funding proposals, reaching a consensus to preliminarily approve all but two of the proposals and include the \$2.5 million in the draft budget for the coming year.

Communications and Education

1. Collaboration Opportunity with WSU Athletics

Drew Westford addressed the board and pitched a partnership between the WGC and WSU Athletics. The overall mission would be to strengthen connections, highlight shared values, and elevate WGC visibility. The partnership would give WGC access to the 922K Cougar fans across Washington, access to the WSU IP rights and the opportunity to participate in an NIL collaboration. Assets created would have shared ownership. There was a consensus to include the proposed funding in the draft budget for May.

2. Wheat Week Program Report and Funding Proposal-

- Kara Kaelber gave an update on Wheat Week. Megan Stewart is Kara’s Education Director and is leading the Wheat Week Program. The meeting reviewed the 19-year wheat education program, which now reaches over 1,000 teachers annually and has expanded into Clark, Kitsap, and Grays Harbor counties. Updates to Wheat Week included a partnership with the Washington Dairy Council and new educational videos featuring the Allred family. A four-year student efficacy study showed positive learning outcomes from Wheat Week education. Discussion also covered regional implementation challenges, educator recruitment success through social media, and program costs. The STEM Academy broadened its focus to include additional energy, agriculture, and trade careers.
- The presenter requested a budget increase from \$440,000 to \$460,000 for the upcoming year, which would maintain the current 5% annual increase pattern. The total program budget is approximately \$535,000
- The board discussed and preliminarily approved a budget proposal for Wheat Week, agreeing to a three-year plan with a \$460,000 allocation and a gradual \$20,000 increase. The budget proposal will be included in the draft budget in May.

Market Development

1. U.S. Wheat Associates

Mike Carstensen covered several key topics related to marketing and trade. The group discussed upcoming trade events, including the Latin American Buyers Conference in Santa Fe and anniversary events in Tokyo and Taiwan. They reviewed the first aquaculture trade team visit to the United States, focusing on potential new markets for soft white wheat in shrimp and salmon feed. The team also discussed ongoing research into wheat varieties for aquaculture use and the challenges of segregating specific wheat classes for export.

2. Barley Update

Matt Horlacher explained that U.S. barley is well-positioned due to current market imbalances, particularly with Australian barley being redirected to China and Mexico. Matt highlighted U.S. barley's strong sustainability performance, noting that when using actual farm data rather than national averages, the U.S. ranks second or third globally in greenhouse gas emissions per bushel of barley. The discussion concluded with concerns about maintaining financial support for barley research and variety testing, expressing strong support for Bob's role as a barley breeder at WSU

a. Future of Barley Funding discussion

The meeting focused on the current state of the barley industry in Washington State, particularly following Great Western's closure in Vancouver. The group noted challenges in barley production, including competition from canola and spring wheat, resulting in declining acreage from 70,000-80,000 to projected 40,000 acres in 2026. Assessment revenues are expected to be well below last year's funded budget level. The discussion highlighted that while barley production has been declining for 20 years, there are still several malt facilities operating in Washington, including Link Malt, Cascadia Malts, Coldstream Malt and Grain, and Mainstream Alt. The main challenge discussed was the funding of barley research at WSU, where Bob Bruegeman has been working on malt barley varieties for nearly 10 years. A previously allocated \$230,000 investment in a barley testing lab has not generated expected income due to WSU regulations preventing fee-for-service charges. And while Bob has developed promising malt varieties, the AMBA endorsement process has been complicated by Great Western's closure. The group discussed potential

solutions including using wheat commission funds to support barley research, though this would require rewriting RCWs. They also explored opportunities for collaboration with Idaho and other neighboring states. The conversation ended with consideration of reducing meeting-related expenses and potentially transferring national representation responsibilities to wheat grower groups.

3. Wheat Marketing Center

Brit Ausman reported on work being done to establish a WMC dues matrix, of how much members are paying and why. There is currently no structure or formula. WGC is paying 33% of the annual operating budget from the states that contribute. Members expressed a desire for a more structured funding formula, while expressing their ongoing support for WMC.

Executive Session

There was no executive session during this meeting.

Other Topics

1. **Public Comment Format** – According to RCW 42.30.240, a governing body of a public agency has the ability to put limitations on the time available for public comment and how public comment is accepted, to make orderly conduct of the meeting feasible. Going forward, WGC will continue to take oral public comments at each regular meeting. However, WGC will require written public comment (i.e., written testimony) testimony to be submitted at least 48 hours prior to the call to order on the first day of each regular meeting so that this written testimony may be distributed to voting members of WGC for their review prior to such meetings.
2. **Budget Review-** The budget review covered various line items including trade servicing, education programs, and research, with total budget standing at approximately 8% increase from the previous year. The meeting discussed budget allocations and partnerships for various wheat-related initiatives. The group reviewed proposed budgets for organizations like U.S. Wheat Associates, Wheat Marketing Center, and Wheat Foods Council, noting significant drops in some areas due to changes in support structures. They explored the possibility of contracting out variety testing to private companies, though current capacity limitations were noted. The discussion also touched on the Wheat Foods Council's rebranding efforts and its focus on nutrition messaging, with questions raised about the return on investment for members.

Calendar & Travel Authority

1. Approve Travel Authority:

Motion to approve and authorize future travel and virtual attendance as amended was moved, seconded, and approved.

Future Travel

March 30-31	WMC Spring Board Meeting	Brit
April 15-22	USW Taiwan and Tokyo Anniversary	Mike C/Berg/Chumrau
April 23	PNW Grain and Feed Meeting	Jake
April 30	Idaho Bankers Convention	Casey

May 13-14	WGC Annual Meeting	Commissioners / Staff
June 11	Lind Field Day	Commissioners / Staff
June 19-25	MS-ISAC Annual Meeting	Parker/NCS Staff

Date/Place Next Meeting

Chair Kevin Klein designated May 13-14, 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 11:58 a.m.

Motion was moved, seconded, and passed to adjourn the public meeting at 11:58 a.m.

Minutes Approval Signature

Upon passage of minutes by board at subsequent meeting

Kevin Klein, Chair

Date

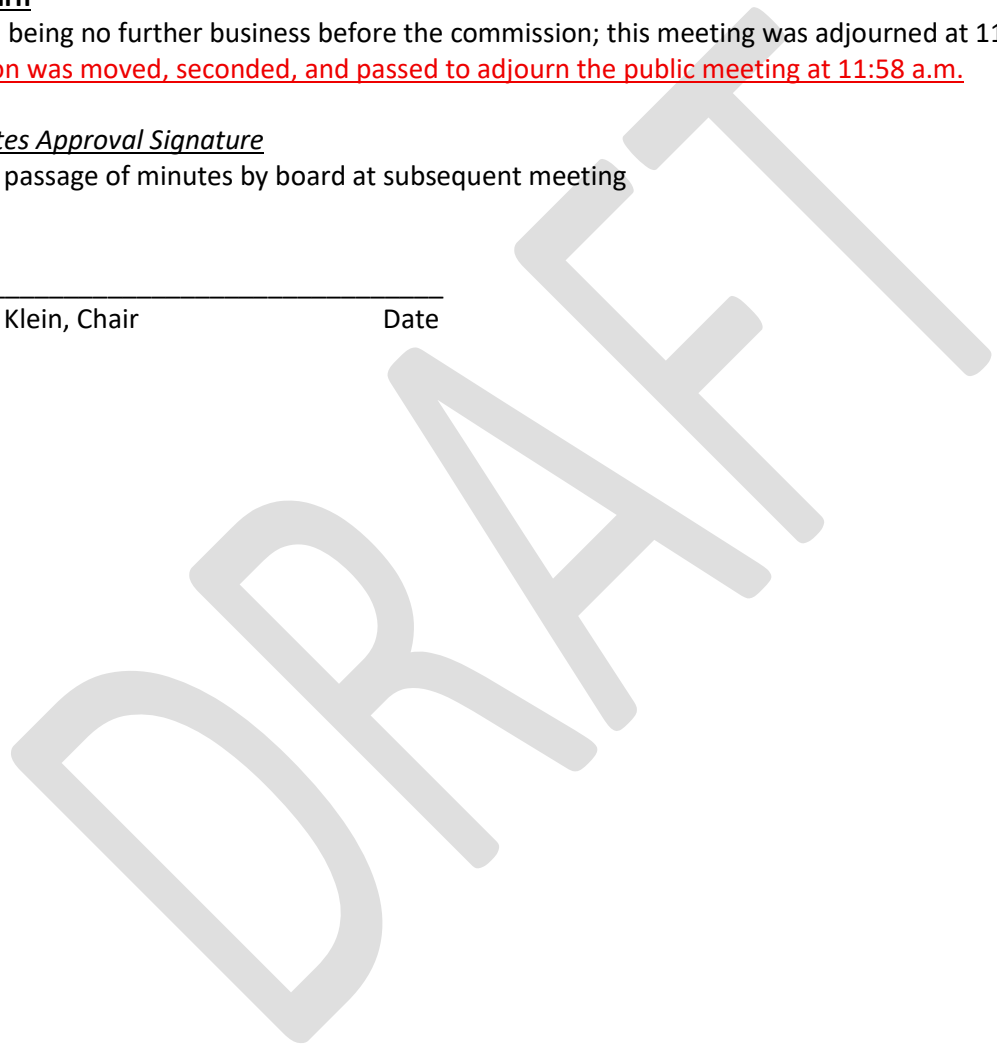


Exhibit A

March 17, 2026

Issue 1:

Minutes are supposed to be an accurate accounting of meetings. There is an omission in the draft of the Minutes of the January 15, 2026 meeting. They do not reflect the fact that the meeting was Called To Order at the Marriott Courtyard, then suspended, moved and restarted at the Marriott Renaissance in Pullman.

Issue 2:

It is no secret the farm economy at the present time is bad. Washington State ranks 50th in profitability at this time with exceptionally high fuel and input costs and low prices for wheat. RCW15.115.260 allows the

Commission by majority vote of the quorum to adopt a finding that its current revenue exceeds that needed to support the current needs of the Commission activities and order a temporary reduction in the annual assessment below the current rate. If voted on, the new rate would commence on July 1 following the Commission action and would expire on July 30 of the following year. I have polled wheat growers and all have supported the concept of a reduced assessment given the current economics of farming and the reserves of the Commission (Which are their assessment Dollars).

I am asking you to consider this action as you are elected to represent the assessment payers. Wheat Producers are in the middle of epic disaster and deserve relief. This is important, Please consider listening to the assessment payers.

Please add this document to the minutes of this meeting

Lon Kuzell
assessment payer