

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Tuesday, August «30th, 2022, 9 :00 a.m.

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Present:

Andy Hover (AH), BOCC District 2
Chris Branch (CB), BOCC District 1
Jim Detro (JD), BOCC District 3
Lanie Johns (LJ), County Clerk
Aaron Culp (AC), Under Sheriff
Larry Gilman (LG), Assessor
Roni Holder-Diefenbach (RH), Economic Alliance
Jo Ann Stansbury, Okanogan County Transportation and Nutrition
Josh Thomson (JT), County Engineer

Time stamps refer to the time on the wall clock. An AV Capture archive of the meeting on this date is available at:

https://okanogancounty.org/departments/boards/live_streaming_of_meetings.php

Summary of Important Discussions: *Possible conflict of interest in Fair contract concerning a donation; Undersheriff will go national in hiring search, staff reduced by a quarter, mostly in Corrections; resolution signed granting extraordinary expense funds to Superior Court; Assessor reports slight down-tick from "ridiculously priced" real estate values, market still dynamic, acute need for new appraiser after recent resignation, majority of staff approaching retirement age and long "learning curve" for recruits, scoring reductions for animal habitat; Economic Alliance facing conversation on distribution of ".09 tax rebate" funds in advance of bond term renewal, debate on housing crisis, city expansion and "chicken and the egg" – first providing infrastructure or waiting for building projects to emerge?; right of way conflict in Brewster, Moses Meadows bridge, impasse on reservation road work, Salmon Creek drainage project highlighted in Engineer's report; Fair food vendors asked to adapt menus to avoid duplication, JD says free enterprise achieves same end, AH yearns for good old days of the Fair and CB to distance himself from advisory committee. Meeting adjourned at 12:01.*

9:07 - Approval of previous week's proceedings. **JD** talks about Oregon taking out dams:

"That'll help their electric cars." **AH:** Elon Musk said (*the society*) would crumble if oil didn't continue for awhile.

9:14 - Fairground Contracts - *There is a question about possible conflict of interest with one contract.* **AH:** That happens throughout the fair. We should be aware of that. **CB:** Before approving the contract we should investigate the donation, not necessarily to challenge it but to know what's in there. (9:28) **LJ** asks if the Risk Manager has reviewed the contracts; she hasn't.

9:30 - Undersheriff Culp discusses his department's hiring search which has become more

intense since Employees Association's desire to bargain put their effort on hold in March. After the resignation of a recent hire they are down six out of a staff of 24, with one retirement coming up, making "pop up" (unscheduled) leaves of absence impossible half the time. AC: We plan to use the (hiring platform) Indeed; we'll try locally but go national. Like most, we'll use bonuses because Corrections is in crisis. Adams Co. lost three quarters of its staff. I'd like to propose using unspent wages. The budget requires us to (pay half the bonus) before hiring and half after completed probation, with a 24-month minimum engagement. The contract allows "no strings attached" but that's risky. I'd like to modify that to what we proposed in March with variable scale and variable rates. New hires would keep accumulated leave time. AH proposes to move forward with AC's proposal.

9:48 - *LJ mentions Superior court re- sending (email got lost) an amendment between the County and Administrative Office of the Courts providing extraordinary expense approval of up to \$400,000; gets BOCC's approval.*

10:00 - Assessor's update - LG: Real Estate Market slowing in volume only, still strong even after coming down \$25,000 to \$75,000 from previous ridiculously high prices. Houses taking a month to sell instead of one to three days. Had a catastrophic failure of the computer system (a pilot project)--Vendors were over extended. (But) we're almost there, good to have electronic data in the field. *The already-understaffed department is affected by departure for family reasons of an appraiser, contributing to a projected two-month delay in mailing of assessments.* LG: We're shooting for September 30th. New construction longest to appraise... Can't move forward til we finish levy rates. Haven't been in this position since 2002. Good hopes for Curt, going to appraisal school in September. *LG laments shortage of appraiser candidates, underscores the need:* When I was hired we had 17. Now we have 13, with 53,000 parcels (compared to) 45,000 then... and we didn't have annual inspections. Don't have to look at parcels but analyzing them takes time and resources. *The vehicle he ordered is out of stock, newer model won't be in until next year.* LG: I want to spend local tax money locally. CB: Get as low as you can as close as you can. LG:...I don't want to have to change (all the vehicles) at once. *They agree he should take the one at the local Chevrolet dealer. LG talks about scoring of "open space", a new system approved by BOCC that limits reductions to 50% compared to 90%. (For habitat of salmon, deer, etc.) LG reiterates need for appraiser saying nine of 13 employees are approaching retirement age and there's a five-year learning curve.*

10:35 - Economic Alliance report - RH: At our meeting Thursday we'll be doing an overview of the .09% tax rebate for rural counties (RCW allocating Sales and use tax for public facilities in rural counties, renewable after 25 years.) There was the conversation that once the bond was paid off we'd have (to talk about this) again. JD: That pays off in '28 or '29. RH: Of this Public Works trust fund we've always kept 40% for the county, 40% for the cities and 20% for emerging needs. I'm getting lots of questions. We need to ask "does that still work?... Planning the next four to five years... If we have an agreement in place we can know what to expect. That split always worked well... Omak made a commitment not to ask for ".09" dollars. *She says when application was made 20 years ago they said since it's county-wide they'd give \$20,000 for the East Side sewer project. We were able to make that payment. They talk about need for counties to prioritize, about big projects like the East (Osoyoos) Lake sewer project, and about county and city giving Stampede \$20,000 each.* CB: It would be good to have a timeline of that. It's contentious. RH: ...I have a list of all the projects since it was bonded. CB: I remember when the law passed... it also clarified what projects qualify, and allowed us to do economic development. RN: It added language to include Economic Development offices. CB: the County got in a tough position because of the method used to fund the lake project. AH: We should get something better (than the

40-40-20 split). What is the biggest thing that keeps us from developing? **RH**: Housing. **AH**: How to get infrastructure out... so cities can annex out to get concentrated development outside cities... We need to build housing for people to get there. **RH**: Housing is not eligible. **AH**: Infrastructure would allow housing. We'd be having jobs with the construction industry. **CB**: ...I don't do infrastructure. (*I wait for*) someone to ask for an extension. **AH**: The problem is putting money up front. The more I'm first to come in, the more I spend for that first foot. **RH**: I'm in the Housing Task Force. So far we have not got it approved to use these funds... There are barriers for people who went away and want to come home. **AH**: There are two bonds that came out. *He interrupts the report for a public hearing.*

11:00 - *Jo Ann Stansbury presents a 6-year transportation resolution. It covers bridge-building and road maintenance. BOCC read and sign it.*

11:04 - Roads update - *Chip sealing, having to haul water because of dry conditions ; right of way permit issued for a 20'X50' bridge at Moses Meadows to replace two culverts for passage of fish from Lost Creek. **JT** : The Carlsons, above Brewster, want to purchase a right of way. They had a law suit claiming their access through public (Fish and Wildlife/WDFW) land pre-existed, and contested having to re-negotiate easements every (*several*) years. We can't sell. The law suit considered it a public easement. **CB** : Is there another access ? **JT** : It's longer and more difficult. If they had the right prior to '74 or '76, WDFW doesn't have the right... The vacating process is how you (*deal with it*). **CB** : I'd like to learn more about it... We could communicate to WDFW that they should do something about it. *Also suggests talking to Okanogan Council of Governments or the Risk Pool. **JT** : The Salmon Creek drainage project will start October 3rd, with the road closed for a week. (Also) on Cameron Lake Road we're paving two miles. Been working with the tribes, not getting cooperation from them since this summer. They say we have to re-negotiate every 25-50 years. At Buffalo Lake there's a 999-year right of way. I don't know if they don't support the project or if it's something else. ...It's an allotted parcel with multiple owners, I think. **CB** : Maybe it's in a trust. **JT** : We tried to do this project twice before. Same owner still there. **AH** : Should we cancel the project ? **JT** : There may be a bigger issue. We'd have to refund \$75,000/\$85,000 in unspent grant money. *JD talks about thunderstorms eroding the road on North Siwash Creek, culverts needing to be replaced.***

11 :29 - **AH** : (*County Fair*) vendor contracts won't be ready until Tuesday. People had a lot of consternation. Menu restrictions were brought up by Fair Advisory members. **CB** : ...I have consternation about how the problem came up. Depends on what their objectives are. **AH** : ...Don't know about putting on restrictions this year, the 75th anniversary. **CB** : The objective is that vendors are successful... If everybody came with the same project, would they make money ? ...We could say « first come, first serve ». **JD** : It boils down to free enterprise. Someone who wants to duplicate won't be successful. *AH harkens to the days when Fair decisions were expedited in the interest of « let's get it done », wonders why the Fair should have to pay to use the fairgrounds instead of use coming out of the fairgrounds budget. **JD** : The Auditor has to pass it. **CB** : There always will be infighting... **AH** : They were limiting vendors, saying « what's your main menu item ? » Not each menu item. **CB** : ...You can't change the vendor process now, they've already submitted. **AH** : There were limitations on six vendors, what they could have on the menu... It was verbal ; the stipulation was not in the contract. People aren't complaining about the limitations but about the process. I can't explain it. **CB** : The advisory committee's function is more and more affected. ...I had a role on the committee. It's not in my interest to continue.*

11 :53 - *Approval of Elk Lodge's liquor license for October 20th Rotary Club Steak Night at the Fairgrounds.*

11 :57 - *Resolution approved tracking bond-derived interest. BOCC announces no Tuesday afternoon or Wednesday meeting.*

12 :01 - *Meeting adjourned*