

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Tuesday, January 31st, 2023, 1:30 p.m.

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Present:

Andy Hover (AH), BOCC District 2
Chris Branch (CB), BOCC District 1 (*via Zoom*)
Jon Neil (JN), BOCC District 3
Lanie Johns (LJ), County Clerk
Department Heads :
Naomi Peasley, Fairgrounds Manager
Pam Johnson (PJ), Treasurer
Pete Palmer (PP), Planning Department
Josh Thomsen (JT), Public Works
Susan Speiker (SS), Court Clerk
Albert Lin (AL), Prosecutor
Karen Beatty (KB), Central Services
Shelley Keitzman (SK), Risk Management, Human Resources
Larry Hudson (LH), Noxious Weeds
Paul Budrow (PB), Sheriff
Mike Worden (MW), Dispatch Coordinator
Beth Barker (BB), Chief Civil Deputy
Kayla Wells-Yoakum (KW), WSU Extension
Dan Higbee (DH), Maintenance

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:

- *Discussion on funding for the Oroville Senior Center, AH suggests letting Aging and Adult Care request part of county transportation and nutrition agency allocation for this rather than see if Center qualifies for emergency federal funds.*
- *Agreement to spend \$46,000 for Fairgrounds RV park bathroom partitions*
- *At Department Heads Quarterly Meeting: - Public Works looking forward to construction a new cell at the landfill and two new workshops across the river - Planning reports big zone code revision including cannabis operations, Shorelines review - Tax statements out by February 15th - Meeting to be held on Courthouse security - Sheriff implementing new policies to improve jail security, hints at an overhaul, patrol officer candidates in short supply, courthouse outfitted with security cameras, AH says funding for Dispatch must wait because Conconully needs it more - Noxious Weeds reaching out to users to attend town hall meetings - WSU extension reports Master Gardner Program success, need for 4H leaders - Architect of master plan retiring but will still supervise shop projects*
- *Discussion on possibility of hiring County Administrator to help manage projects, billing and legislative agenda, act as liaison between BOCC and departments and ensure continuity as board changes.*

1:33 - *CB asks if they will meet Wednesday. AH says he would like to see the Planning Commission and Public Health get together. Commissioners should discuss some goals and get some meetings scheduled. CB says make it in the evening, and that these should explore ways of facilitating the implementation of the adopted comprehensive plan.*

1:38 - Funding Oroville Senior Center - *AH wants to discuss use of ARPA (American Rescue Plan) funds.*

JN: I brought up, awhile ago, using some for Oroville Senior Center. They're supposed to give me an update. **AH:** How are Senior Centers funded? **JN:** They get \$280 a month for rental from OCTN (*Okanogan County Transportation and Nutrition*) which doesn't cover expenses, from what they tell me. **CB:** They get some from Aging and Adult Care (*a non-profit board made up of NCW County Commissioners.*) Some wanted to figure out what their needs are. There is an incidental needs form they could send you to help with a used stove, for example. I've been part of approving those (*requests*). **LJ:** The County gives \$7,500 to OCTN but we don't contribute to the actual Senior Centers.

AH: It's hard enough to figure out if you could fund the fire stations through ARPA... but if they're in need of something, it's important to look at it. Aging and Adult Care could pick up some of that slack. They could make a request for part of that \$7,500 for OCTN.

JN: Covid threw a monkey wrench in everybody's accounting and any money they got from the community. They don't even use the \$7,500. **LJ:** We have to remind them it's there. I sent an email. **JN:** I know Trango, through some of their grants, is a major funder of OCTN. **AH:** Yes, for the transportation piece of it. **LJ:** They were helping with gas and fuel for people delivering meals, helping to administrate. **JN:** I don't think our Senior Center has an issue with food expenses. It's the operating capital. **CB:** Another idea is to have someone from the Aging and Adult Care staff come and talk to us about senior health care and where their shortfalls may be. I can set that up in the near future.

1:45 - Budget supplemental, Fairgrounds RV Park Bathrooms - *\$46,000 (\$20,000 from the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee, \$26,000 from Current Expenses) will be spent on bathroom partitions. NP says it will not cover sinks. AH recalls that the bathrooms cost \$350,000 to build in 2017. CB remarks that a good facility is worth maintaining but that "If you were on a trip of RV Parks, (ours) would be at the bottom." The motion is approved, with the current expense funding coming from the Fairground budget and from Current Expenses Contingency Reserve.*

1:52 - *The Board approves the memorandum of understanding between the County and the Okanogan County Sheriff's Employee Association non-commissioned in regards to the staffing crisis in the Dispatch Center. AH: In discussions with non-commissioned officers and Chief (Mike) Worden we came to an agreement to keep two employees down there beyond the 120 days and if there are changes to be made, to just come back to the table.*

They discuss authorizing the vice chair, AH, to sign measures in the absence of CB, still recovering from surgery and staying in Chelan.

2:00 - Quarterly Department Heads Meeting:

Building Department head DH announces they are advertising for a new (*building inspector*) trainee.

NP at Fairgrounds says the Annex has new floors and that meetings can be held there for a charge of \$75. AH mentions repairs associated with the weather, and high costs overall. NP: You always say that. *Laughter.* **AH:** But it such a big community with a lot of people using it that we have to

keep up (*with it*). I'm crossing my fingers that all the deferred maintenance will be caught up... I probably won't be here!

Public Works - JT: Everybody's tired of the dirty snow. A few new projects, to build one new cell at the Landfill, and the two new shops, hopefully we'll begin construction in the next few months

AH: We had a public comment this morning on the good work Public Works were doing up in the Oroville area.

The Auditor CH reports special elections for a couple of school levies and a fire hall will be held February 14th. AH asks about Tonasket's levy vote— it's not until 2024.

Planning Director PP cites code revision for Cannabis growers which required meeting with all of them; she says it was very positive. **PP:** We implemented an annual fee, so we'll have to see them every year. They're starting to throwing money at us, and that's always good. AH interjects, "They're actually paying for all the work we have to do!" PP: So we're diving into zone code revision, a pretty big update. We've got the Shorelines Master Program periodic review going on. ...Looking with Esther (Milner, Prosecutor's office) at all the code that has to do with planning...

AH says he wants "all of us" (Planning, Sheriff's Office, Public Health) to get together and change some things to civil penalties instead of criminal penalties so instead giving a ticket that can lead to a jail sentence, to change that to a (fine). Public health issues, watering public roads... **PP:** There's already a draft ordinance soon to go before the board (*addressing this*).

Treasurer's office - PJ says Tax statements scheduled to go out by February 15th at the latest.

Court Clerk's office - SS: The partitions are up, we're all in our cubbies. IT (Central Services) has been great. We're fully staffed. Ran into some snags with camera issues. AH reminds everyone to get any computer related problem addressed sooner than later to avoid perturbing the entire administration.

Prosecutor's office - AL : On the criminal side we have a very good team set up. Have some trials. District Court is coming together. AH expresses his appreciation to the office's Esther Milner for her help with code revision.

Human Resources/Risk Management - SK: I have quite a bit going on. I've received information from the Risk Pool about courthouse security. There is an opportunity for funding if this legislation goes through for distressed jurisdictions such as ours. AH will write a letter of support and SK says there is a template available for others to do the same. She invites everybody to the Courthouse Security Committee meeting on February 15th. There are positions open on this committee. They will discuss trial court security and some minimums they are expected to achieve. There is a training available called Surviving the Active Legal Threat, two hours per session. Also she has scheduled a 90-minute module on harassment training available to the various departments. The Risk Pool is sending "quite a few trainings" which she will continue to get out to the departments.

AH: Someone, I don't know who, has a set of architectural plans for the entrance to the courthouse, the portico so there is a single-point entrance down there (the future court complex). Get a hold of it for your discussion on courthouse security, and later we'll all have discussion on county building projects.

Sheriff's office - PB: The first two weeks I spent trying to figure out how big this elephant is. Now The brain has finally kicked in to figure it out... I've gone back to what I know how to do and we're actually moving forward. The team has been phenomenal with suggestions. One of my specialties is threat assessment for county buildings... It's refreshing to know that (*it's going to happen*) but (*security*) is something that's really lacking. The jail—we had to get a lot of clarification on why we're doing certain things. We're sitting with attorneys and judges to get answers to those questions. Because of manpower we're going to do a "soft opening", slowly get everyone on board with how we run things down there. Getting policies in place. Going to keep that going... Dave's been up to speed, working really well on patrol.

Beth Barker, Chief Civil Deputy, says her office is finally fully staffed; she has sent around information regarding public records software. AH says, after reviewing wage scales with SK, he is convinced that the hiring of a Public Records Officer to centralize records searches is justified and that they are going in that direction.

Patrol officer (the Chief Patrol Officer is at a training): Patrol is far from being fully staffed. It's the same with the custodian. I'm down to seven on patrol, working on getting three hired. No applicants out there. *AH* wonders at that, as they have offered incentives. *SK? BB?* Says these have not worked so far.

- 2:18 - **Dispatch** - **MW**: We're at the tail end of adding courthouse security video cameras... Pete (*PP*) submitted the permit application for the equipment shelter. **PP**: The city is figuring out how to implement the Tribe's shoreline code. It should be hitting the papers for comments soon. *AA* announces that Michael, the architect who drew up the county's master building plan, is retiring. *LJ* reassures the building department head that Beeman is still planning to oversee the design of the two shops soon-to-be built in Okanogan on the other side of Oak Street Bridge. **MW**: We're looking to join the Department of Transportation's radio system. They now pay *Indeed* \$1,500 a month to find candidates for job vacancies in the department; he has four interviews on Friday. **MW**: I don't know if typing is a generational skill. We'll do that training with an on-line tutor. Brief discussion on lost arts like typing and long division. **AH**: We wrote a letter of support for \$3M (to benefit) Conconully. The county stuff is super important but if (a town) is short on a bond people voted for (I want to help). **MW**: I look forward to other ways we can adjust. **AH**: I understand that you don't agree. (Referring to an unfulfilled request for Dispatch funding?) He suggests that with the help of State Senator Short they can benefit from "pots of money that are there".
- 2:27 - **Noxious Weeds** - *LH* reports upcoming seasonal hires, pesticide certification classes at the Omak Theater, and "town hall meetings" with users to get feedback about policies. **Maintenance/Public Works** - **JT**: It's been a rough year for snow. Ice dams building up. Maintenance Coordinator received a promotion. We've put together desks and partitions. It's been a good year. He compliments his team: Tim, Roy, Adam and Kayla. **AH**: We've budgeted for a new kitchen in the jail. Is that something we need to get an outside person to design or can maintenance do something? **JP**: We'd have to see the layout. Behind the dishpan, a nightmare in there. **AH**: I'd love to see some stuff improved in the jail. *JP, Maintenance Supervisor, talks about problems with the showers there, and wanting to check the pipes out when nobody's there.*
- 2:32 - **IT (Central Services)** *KB* says they're starting to use the meeting software Teams, and another app, One Drive. Departments should set up meetings for trainings on these. A new platform, Serve You, allows the sharing of large files and large quantities of documents. The Prosecutor's office is using it. She asks about developing electronic document signing, *AH* rejects the idea, would prefer a subscription to Adobe to be able to scan and create pdf format. **KB**: Central Services are getting busier and busier... We're needing to have prior notice if you need us for projects. **WSU Extension** - **KWY**: All our Master Gardeners re-enrolled, and we have six new members we'll meet with weekly to discuss what they're learning. In 4H we have seven leaders for 31 youth. We need adults to volunteer, so if you know anyone... About education for new employees, I can connect you with WSU which is applying for a grant to build ten sites for remote classrooms. If a building has spare room... **AH**: Tell 'em we need typing classes! She explains that she is regional coordinator of Broadband for Okanogan, Lincoln, Chelan, Kittitas and Yakima Counties and can talk to potential users, says they're ahead of other regions in feasibility studies.
- 2:47 - **County Administrator position** - *AH* would like people to start thinking of the pros and cons of having an administrator to act as a liaison between the commissioners and those involved in building projects, so the commissioners are not assuming the role of project manager, and be able to conduct contract negotiations, as *AH* does now. Having a non-elected administrator would assure more continuity from one election cycle to another, and free up the board for other duties. He asks those who were there in the past when they had an administrator to voice their opinions. *PJ* said the last one was having to do a lot of different things. She would like the scope and direction of their job better defined. *MW* sees their role as "checking all the boxes" when

department heads are too busy and lack institutional knowledge. MW: The flip side is, are they a facilitator or a gate-keeper? AW recalls their search for a utilities expert for the new courthouse complex, how if they hadn't had the architect's input they would have been hard put to make a job description, something a project manager could do. SK: It's better if you come up with what you three want the administrator to do, and we could respond to that. KB wonders if this person would handle the quarterly meetings, AH says they won't give up what they're already doing. He doesn't want the engineer to have to billing, the commissioner's clerk to be a project manager, or the HR director to deal with a leaky ceiling.

CB: The commissioners have set standards that can be facilitated by an administrator... There's diversity in our views and the administrator can combine them (and present them) ...so we're not micro-managing. We're looking for consistency, someone who can coordinate. We want to make sure we have a legislative agenda, know what each other is doing so one doesn't undo what the other is trying to do.

DH, Building Director, wonders about the master plan, not that the architect is gone. AH: The bond was for \$9.9M, with a \$550,000/year payment for 40 years. It's most of what you get in capital improvements for a year... Stevens County is building a new jail for \$90M. Okanogan is spending \$3.5M on two new workshops. Conconully's construction costs have gone up 100%. So it's baby steps. But everything is in place for the mapped-out projects.

3:12 - *Approval of contract with Romeo Group Entertainment for the 2023 County Fair.*

3:14 - *Meeting Adjourned until Monday morning.*