

**Board of Okanogan County Commissioners**  
**Wednesday November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 9:00 a.m.**

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**Present:**

Andy Hover (AH), BOCC District 2  
John Neil (JN), BOCC District 3  
Chris Branch (CB), BOCC District 1  
Laney Johns (LJ), Clerk of the Board  
Cari Hall (CH), Auditor  
Pam Johnson (PJ), Treasurer  
Lisa Shreckengost (LS), Finance Manager  
Chuck Ford (CF), new Fairgrounds Manager  
Darla Schreckengast (DS), District Court  
Charles Short (CS), District Court judge

*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](https://okanogancounty.org/departments/boards/live_streaming_of_meetings.php)*

**Summary of Important Discussions:**

In budget talks,

- New fairgrounds manager asks for \$25,000 increase, prioritizes repair over replacement of dilapidated buildings, starting with horse barn; aims at more "common involvement", fundraisers, advertising; new water system must be done in time for fair
- Treasurer and Auditor urge conservatism in estimating interest from general obligations bond
- District Court upgrading legal assistant post; annual replacement of evidence rulebook and courtroom rulebook for three courtrooms a necessity, price tag: \$12,000; probation officer salary puts budget in the red, broader analysis of duties could qualify post for opiate settlement money
- New flooring to replace worn carpets in courthouse
- Auditor's budget includes restoring historical documents and recording them online, replacement of election equipment in case of malfunction
- Treasurer discusses bond payment transfers, final Eastlake sewer bond payment next June
- ARPA fund recipients listed, Commissioner Hover says they need more projects, Commissioner Branch says equity issues part of the ARPA law and that they "didn't do that"
- Branch raises subject of vehicles for Court to be in user's name, contrary to other vehicles registered in name of county; Hover objects, Branch says keep an open mind

- Meeting adjourned at 4:02 p.m.

9:04 – Fairgrounds Budget Discussion - AH: There was so much (*in last year's fairgrounds capital improvements plan*)—it was expensive. I'd like to get a handle on repairs and maintenance and have it tracked pretty well.

CF: I plan to track, but I need more. I have 200 projects. I want to get a lot done, materially—get more done “in house”. Overall I'm just looking for a 7% increase to repair what we have.

CB: There were several extreme issues last year, I have to agree.

CF: I'm trying to keep it as small as possible. It's up \$25,000, focused on getting up to par on a safety standpoint, then get grants to put new buildings in. I've raised repairs and maintenance, equipment, and miscellaneous—we need a CDC driver on crew to get bigger rigs in and out, and (*I plan to attend*) the IFE (*International Franchiser Expo*) conference for professional development.

AH: I hate miscellaneous. *They reduce it from \$30,000 to \$10,000 with \$5,000 in a separate line for training, then put it back up to \$20,000 at the auditor's urging, to cover hefty B&O (business and occupation) taxes. CF talks about making sponsorship banners, and reducing the overtime budget. AH pushes for bi-weekly bathroom cleaning.*

CF: Horse barns are a priority.

AH: Some eaves stuff needs to be fixed; the southwest portion has a huge wave in the roof. We should do a call for quotes for the southwest corner.

CB: It's a safety issue.

CF: There are rotted beams but it's fixable.

AH: Partial demolition and rebuilding. Start by getting the guys who did the horse barns, or demolition of the bleachers.

9:55 – CF: I'm shooting for February or March... I'm going to be grant-focused this year, hopefully outside sources, get the preparing phase completed by the end of 2024.

CB: There's a building we want to move there (*from the new Justice Center site*).

CF: For the commercial building? There's an issue with closing. Maybe, or redo the old commercial building. There's no support in the beef barn. One of the larger priorities.

AH: There's been talk about a larger sale ring. It could be (*the renovated*) commercial building. *CF talks about “chasing cracks”, doing the arts and crafts section of the horticulture building where they're pulling the wall away. They can pump foam into the voids.*

CF: I was going to do that mid-year. The buildings need TLC. And the foundations— *They discuss redoing the foundation of the Quonset hut. AH says it's been requested “multiple times”. They have \$237,000 in grant revenue to work with; LJ says they can request the re-imbursments on a partial completion or monthly basis, mentions matching funds. AH approves of CF's offer to keep expenses down so the match will be lower. AH hopes the water system can be completed for less than \$237,000.*

10:14 - CB: The Dept. of Health may get a low-interest loan. *Their goal is to finish work before the fair. CB says to check in with the “compliance folks”. And avoid cross overs. CF says compliance deals with the materials used and on the number of users. CB mentions back flow; CF says that problem will go away if they switch the lines, which run from wells, to irrigation lines.*

AH: At some point you may connect with city water Don't know where the well is so let the person know a water line may be coming through to connect to. *CB recommends talking to Okanogan Public Works or the state engineer. They discuss revenue from rentals, donations. Boots and Saddles donated \$30,000 for the horse barn; AH says they should*

*write them a letter and put it in the paper. Last year rentals were \$75,000. CH asks if CF has any plans to change.*

*CF: Camping is a big market, especially with traveling nurses... I'm interested in getting more common involvement, a once-a-quarter fund raising event, getting the fairgrounds out there—advertisement and word of mouth are my ideas for increasing revenue.*

10:33 – *The commissioners discuss interest revenue from their G.O. (general obligation) bond. They've been underestimating it in the budget for three years. It totals \$1,836,434.*

*PJ: I was there in 2006-2007. No one can guarantee how long we can have good rates... I've seen a trend of interest decreasing in election years. They discuss LTAC (Lodging Tax Advisory Committee) funds.*

*CH: Spending goes down as prices go up. They talk more about interest rates. (The possibility of) 1.5% gives me heartburn.*

*AH: Keep spending to a normal or below normal level.*

11:05 – District Court Budget Discussion – *CS: We'd like to request an overtime budget of \$5,000.*

*AH: Any position changes?*

*DS: We have a resolution for one position: raising a legal process assistant (LPA) from grade two to grade three. The court will then have three LPA III, one LPA II and one LPA I. One LPA I remains unfilled. CS says that's fine for now. In January one will become bailiff—they should see about name and wage changes with Human Resources. They discuss law books. An evidence rule book and a courtroom rule book are regularly consulted in each of the three courtrooms. Other books are available by subscription but these physical books cost \$12,000 for all six and must be replaced every year. CB compares this with laws requiring the complete building code in every city hall. A grant covers travel and lodging: \$130,000 over two years, ending next June. CS says they'll have first priority for renewing the grant and if they don't get it, they will bill Therapeutic Court, in which case he says he can make some adjustment to their training budget. They discuss needing to adjust payroll costs in the county and court budgets since they share the \$50,000 Therapeutic Court Coordinator salary cost.*

*AH points to a budget deficit in the funding of the probation officer. A long discussion ensues; they will need more money next year for this position. AH cites the sheriff's request for more officer's and the jail's need for a staff nurse; he would like to see the probation officer paid for anywhere but current expenses.*

*CS: If you do away with probation officer you'll need more sheriff's officers up the road. The AOC (Administrative Office of the Courts) has done some funding. I asked if it could be funded by the Therapeutic Court but they said it was tied to hours... The position is currently funded 13.8% by Therapeutic Court. The commissioners try to imagine how to justify a larger proportion, perhaps as the number of cases increases. CS reports that in past years revenues went up with a hike in probation cost amounts and warrants, but between Covid and a tendency by the courts to waive fees for indigent clients, he expects the current downward trend to continue. They toss around ideas: talk to civil attorney Milner, ask the probation officer to evaluate his time commitment to Therapeutic Court, cut other costs.*

*CB: Any connection to opioids?*

*CS: In general.*

*AH: We need to know the percentage of time with opiates cases. We're getting just over \$148,000 over 15 years. Prevention should be the goal.*

*CS: That is the goal of probation.*

CH: ... RCW 8214 says (*the fund*) was created specifically for substance abuse prevention. Definitely something to review.

12:22 - CS: There's a statute that authorizes a judge to order those costs out of the general fund.

AH: We send money to OBHC (*Okanogan Behavioral Health*) which deals with mental health, dependency, Therapeutic Court. We have a very bad issue within the jail with chemical dependency and alcohol. They need to have an RN on staff so people aren't hurting themselves. We have probation officers that are helping all those people that can get help. All these are being funded by current expense but we have several funds where, if we run them correctly, then we can help offset those costs. They're the real reason why they were created. We're getting lawsuits over those issues.

CH: Do the probation officers only do DUI?

CS: They handle cases that involve mental health. He currently handles DUI court but is moving to mental health and dependency. *CH says she understands that the funds are for substance abuse but recognizes that the probation officer does a lot more than DUI and that their role is crucial.*

CS: No probation officer, no Therapeutic Court.

LS: Therapeutic Court can allot so much and bill the opiate fund.

CS: I'll talk to the probation officer, Therapeutic Court, and review the statutes....

12:35 - *The meeting is interrupted for a lunch break.*

1:30 – Miscellaneous Budget Items – CH: We get quite a few customers making comments about holes in the carpets.

LJ: We're currently awarded funds for the interior halls, refurbishing the floors back to historical type standards and aesthetics. It doesn't include the office interiors.

AH: Tim (*Meadows, Maintenance Director*) recommends glue-down vinyl, like at the Omak Safeway's produce section.

CH: Easier to keep clean. The carpets are shredding. *PJ is fine with that. AH says do them all the same. Also have Tim work on refurbishing the bathrooms. LJ says the current project includes painting and flooring, AH would like new fixtures... says to get a range of options from the architects, consult the employees and agree on a same surface using county funding for what the grant doesn't cover. LJ mentions matching funds.*

AH: Why are operating supplies going up?

CH: Election year, three-color envelopes, cost of paper going up. Next year we're awarded an \$80,000 security grant that will pay for extra tables, cameras. (*The county*) will need a total of \$30,000 for postage, if not more. The administration of elections I getting very very expensive: special ballots and special voter pamphlets. It hasn't always been a requirement that they be local voter pamphlets. That's in the last three years.

*CH explains that her office's professional services budget covers surcharges for different departments to restore historical documents. Since she became auditor they've upgraded the recording equipment to be able to have these online, in compliance with state code. The bulk of the \$430,000 allocation covers this equipment. Another allocation, covered by their security grant, would be used to replace election equipment—in one election a scanner went out and there wasn't money on hand to replace it quickly. (With the lowering price of scanners this budget is adjusted from \$50,000 to \$15,000. They will have to send back any unspent part of their \$126,000 security grant received in 2020; further grants will be cost reimbursement.)*

Treasurer's Office Budget— (*The remaining budget discussions refer almost exclusively to the spreadsheet which is not shared on Zoom during the afternoon portion of the meeting,*

making it difficult to understand the numbers.) The bond for the Eastlake sewer project will be paid off in June 2024. A pre-construction loan will also be paid off at that time. Talk of a Qualified Energy Conservation Bond. The Public Defender's budget is up 5%. Therapeutic Court was charged \$8,900 by the county for administration costs.

3:05 – ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Expenditures – Cash-on-hand is quoted at \$4,509,665. Recipients include Economic Development, Community Action, which used \$276,000 doing slope stabilization for the water tank in Nespelem, Okanogan County P.U.D. and the Electric Co-op, \$500,000 each for fiber infrastructure (must be appropriated by January 1<sup>st</sup> 2024), Public Health (\$1M), Coroner's capital Improvement (\$500,000) Mobile Command/Dispatch (\$367,705), Elmer City Fire Hall (\$150,000), Tunk Mt. (the remaining \$215,684), courthouse security cameras (\$52,000), and food crisis (\$66,000). AH mentions an ending fund balance of \$774,250.

AH: We need to do more projects.

CB: We did a lot of things like housing, and a list of support programs you might want to look at.

AH: We should meet mid-June 2024 to discuss ARPA allocations.

CB: Part of the ARPA law was that we should look at some equity issues. We didn't do that.

3:59 – (Someone talks about a speeding ticket.) CB: Awhile back we had the clerk direct the departments that all titles should be in the name of the county commissioners.

AH: Okanogan County. The chairman needs to sign.

CB: It may not apply to the court system. They (are separate) and need to have the title in their name.

AH: They didn't buy the car.

CB: If you want to make that argument, don't make it to me. I will bring them here and you can explain why.

AH: They are not going to do that.

CB: You can make that statement. Do you fully understand what they're saying?

JN: Separation of legislative and judicial.

AH: It's a thing that is owned...

CB: I don't have enough information to argue about it... (they argue some more). I happen to be in the chair that got contacted over the issue... I would ask you to go into it with a more open mind than that.

AH: Okay. (But) the money is not the court's money. We're the only ones that surplus things. To me those should make a moot point, unless they get credit for something that helps the county out. If they own the vehicle, I will talk it out.

4:02 – AH: I hereby adjourn.