

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, August 14, 2023 AM

JN—Jon Neal, BOCC, District 3
AH—Andy Hover, BOCC, Vice-Chair, District 1
CB—Chris Branch, BOCC, Chair, District 2
LJ—Lanie Johns, Clerk of the Board
CHa—Crystal Hawley, Deputy Clerk of the Board
MG—Maurice Goodall, Emergency Management
JP—Joe Poulin, Maintenance Supervisor
Kat—Kat Williams, Pano AI Wildfire Detection System
Tim—Tim Thompson, Thompson Consulting Group, lobbyist for Okanogan PUD (via zoom)
SK—Shelley Keitzman, Human Resources and Risk Management

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Summary of significant discussions:

- Maurice Goodall, Emergency Management, Joe Poulin, Maintenance Supervisor and Laney Johns, Clerk of the Board give brief updates to Commissioners Branch and Neal. Commissioner Hover goes to look at the Fairgrounds.
- Pano AI Wildfire Detection System makes a presentation to the commissioners about their services.
- Commissioners hold three short executive sessions, two concerning impending litigation and one concerning the performance of an employee.
- Meeting adjourns at 12:25.

00:30—Pledge of Allegiance

CB—We’re thinking about an executive session some time today. (To AH): Is it better before or after you visit the Fairgrounds?

AH—I can go now. The other thing: there have been some emails going around with the Fair Advisory Committee (FAC) about contracts. Each sub-committee takes care of its own stuff—food vendors, rodeo, etc. But some of those sub-committee members sometimes derive some money from their contracts. I think those contracts should be approved by the whole FAC. Mike (Egerton of the FAC?) is a food vendor. He thinks *all* the contracts should be voted on by the FAC.

Discussion of Fair contracts. Commissioners decide that all contracts will be available for review by FAC members, but the FAC doesn’t have to approve all the contracts. The BOCC is the entity that signs the contracts.

CB—Some contracts come in late. Maybe set a policy to deal with late contracts. Make sure people know why we’re doing this so they don’t just think we want to be in control. And the auditors come to us.

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AH leaves for the Fairgrounds.

14:25—No public comments.

JN will attend the Okanogan Council of Governments (OCOG) meeting this evening.

Discussion of the history of OCOG and the RTPO (Regional Transportation Planning Organization).

JN—The news doesn't say much about the Sourdough Fire (near Diablo Lake).

29:45—MG—I'm Maurice Goodall, Okanogan County Emergency Management.

Sourdough Fire—Hwy 20 is closed again. Backburning slopped over the road. The hope is that the road will be open on Tuesday. It's been windy. There's lots of timber and it's hard to get into the canyons. Some logging and hay trucks got over.

MG—They're still working on the Eagle Bluff fire. Cleaning things up. Public Works is working on the roads.

MG—The budget is due today, and I'll get that turned in. Our grants are decreasing so we won't get as much money to pay for Emergency Management Specialists.

CB—Any other grants?

MG—The people in Region 7 apply for the same grants I do. The federal government has changed the grants a little bit. It's on a state level. The big counties spend all their money on equipment, and we spend some on wages. But when all the counties come together, it's all OK.

MG leaves.

34:40—CB—Joe, you're just in time.

JP—I'm Joe Poulin, Maintenance Supervisor. Just a few things. The HVAC systems in the Admin and Grainger buildings, the quotes I gave you, what was the outcome?

CB—Didn't we approve them?

JP—We couldn't find any paperwork that the quotes were signed.

LJ—The HVAC money was budgeted already for the Admin Building. We need to consider HVAC replacement for this building (Grainger Building).

Discussion of the bids for the two buildings. The units won't be in this year's budget because they won't be installed this year. JP will get additional bids for the building where he had only one.

JP—The stair replacement was approved, and there's asphalt included. What's that for?

LJ—We need clarification whether the paving money is for the alleyway or not.

Discussion of paving situation—whether it's a city or county project. Also discussion of plowing in the alleyway.

JP—The jail roof is a concern. It needs to be redone, but I don't know how far out that is in our plans?

LJ—It needs to be done in the next couple of years at most.

JP—There are a couple of leaks. Many layers of roofing material so it's hard to know where the leaks come from.

CB—Any idea of the cost?

JP--\$75,000? We'd have to tear the roof off and replace it.

LJ—There may be money in the kitchen upgrades budget. There could be some money left over in that budget for the roof.

LJ—The engineers are working on the HVAC repairs. Working with the previous engineers.

CB—How's the jail going to be?

JP—It's going to get warm in there.

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50:50—JP—We'd like to get a new pick-up truck. Tim and I looked on-line this morning. Budget around \$25,000 to get a nice 1 or 1 ½ ton with a dump bed, sander box and plow plate. We've spent \$91,000 in the last 10 years on plowing. The contract doesn't cover the extras. Clean up after they've plowed, sanded lots. It'd be good to put it in this year's budget.

CHa—We're spending thousands/month on plowing.

CB—But we'd pay for the labor.

JP—We could move the hours around some, and still contract some plowing, but there's still stuff we need to do afterwards. If it gets slushy in the afternoon, we plow it so that it won't be icy in the morning.

CB—Bring us the numbers and we'll take a look.

JN—Can you find a truck for \$25,000?

JP—We looked this morning. The one we really liked had 68,000 miles and cost \$16,000 with 4 days left in the auction. We looked at the government auction. That's where we found it. With a dump bed, we could haul gravel and brush.

CB—Bring us the numbers.

LJ—There's the annex flat roof repairs. We've got a list of capital improvements in next year's budget. It's still less than we approved this year. (LJ lists the projects.)

Discussion of when these projects could be done.

LJ—Also we need to consider security and systems upgrades for the Courthouse. With the emergency there and we locked everything down, we noticed we can do things to help everybody know about how to deal with it. The Safety Committee can go over these things and bring a proposal to the BOCC—ADT security lock upgrades, upgraded courthouse fire and emergency strobe lights and audible intercom systems. Also additional AV Capture camera and security cameras. This is all just a preliminary warning. JP leaves.

1:05:40—LJ updates the commissioners about the Clerk's job.

LJ—Preliminary budgets are submitted to the Auditor's Office. The Fair budget isn't included. Should I just plop in the same numbers as last year or do we want to have a fuller conversation about that and submit it later?

JN—I think there needs to be some conversation.

CB—We need to talk about how we budget for the fairgrounds.

LJ—These are really preliminary budgets.

CB—Maybe talk about it tomorrow.

LJ—It's due today.

CB—Can you do it at 11:30?

LJ—OK.

LJ will order lunch for the BOCC tomorrow because they'll meet during lunch time. BOCC passes a motion to allow this.

CB—We should wait until AH returns to talk about the fairgrounds budget. Since it's preliminary, maybe you should just use the numbers from last year.

JN—I agree that you should submit what you've already got.

LJ—I'll do that.

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LJ—I invited Jim Courtner, the on-site Justice Building architect to a meeting on Tuesday, August 29 at 9:30, to go over the deliverables. He’s also invited tomorrow at noon to listen in to the MJ Neal Justice Building proposals and review. We’ve got 65% from Courtner that he’ll be going over on the 29th and we also have the invoices for those. We can look at them before we meet with him.

LJ—I have a request for the BOCC to consider a proposal to approve a step increase for our administrative secretary. LJ lists all the reasons to give Cameron this raise. He’s an administrative secretary with a current wage of \$17.45/hour. If we raise him to step 3, his wage would be \$19.24/hour. Annual wage increase of \$3,433 not included taxes.

CB—I agree with what LJ says but I’d like to wait until AH returns. It’s clear Cameron is doing a good job.

LJ—Oroville EMS agreement draft was provided to (?). It included the information from Esther (Milner, Chief Civil Deputy Prosecutor) on possibly incorporating the recommendations into the contract. So we’ll stand by until (?)

CB—Back to the last subject—making sure staff has enough opportunity to learn new things. It will keep the interest up and make them feel like they’re progressing.

LJ agrees. CB adds how different staff meetings could attend OCOG or Economic Alliance meetings.

LJ—One more thing. I’m getting invoices for the Mazama bridge project. There’s a contract between the county RCO and the Methow Conservancy. Should I process them? There’s an RCO grant we’ll get reimbursed for. I’ll read the agreement and see what it says.

LJ—Any questions? No.

1:29:15—Discussion of the Pano AI Wildfire Detection System. Attending the meeting are:

- Mike Worden, Okanogan County Dispatch Center,
- Maurice Goodall, Okanogan County Emergency Management,
- Eli Loftis and Dylan Streeter, Okanogan Conservation District,
- Tim Thompson and Kate Babbo of Thompson Consulting Group, lobbyist for Okanogan PUD,
- Kat Williams and Joe Coulter, Pano AI.

Kat—Are we scheduled until 11:30? I can fill the whole hour depending on the questions you ask.

Kat—Thanks for having us. I’m the director for government development for Pano, an early wildfire detection system. I’ll give you the 30,000 foot view of our system: how it works, where we deploy, how can it affect the county going forward?

Joe—I’m Joe Coulter. I work under Kat and focus on the county and city level. We’re looking to expand into a couple more states this year.

Kat—I grew up in Sandpoint, ID, and my background is in wildland fires. I know that early detection is really important but the situational awareness (knowing what the fire is doing, the rate of spread, ID the water resources, do people need to evacuate? What resources are needed and how can they get there? You need to know what you can glean in the very first moments before you get to the scene. We’re trying to keep fires small, keep communities safe and firefighters safer. That’s what we’ll show you today.

Kat—I encourage you to ask questions as I go along.

Kat shares her screen.

The age of fire seasons is gone. It’s now the fire year. Plus Washington has specific challenges: bark beetles, retention of firefighting staff and drier weather. We’ve partnered with the Washington DNR, with (Commissioner of Public Lands) Hilary Franz and (State Forester) George Geissler. We’re in the process of deploying 21 stations across the state. Fire doesn’t know about boundaries, so we’re working with Chelan PUD, Okanogan PUD, Puget Sound Energy, cities and counties.

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1:40:50—AH returns from the fairgrounds.

Kat—We're a combination of firefighters and technology people. We're in six western states in the US and three states in Australia. We work with power and water utilities, private land owners and resorts. We need to have a network affect.

Kat—We work on the three things we have control over: Detection, Confirmation and Dissemination. For detection, we use high definition cameras that rotate 360° in our stations. Also use satellite feeds, GOES 16 and 18 to help with thermal detection at night, pulse point, 911, wildcat, etc. All this information is coming into our Pano Intelligence Center where the analysts are receiving alerts and using the cameras to decide if it's a wildfire or a false positive. A lot of what fire agencies do is vet these 911 calls. Sometimes the best way to do that is send a team out. What we're trying to do is reduce the action on false positives. Use our resources to inform others if they need to send resources and what kind of resources to send.

Kat—That's where dissemination comes in. When we have an alert, sent via text or email. The way we've done it with the DNR, is duty officers in the dispatch center will get the alerts and forward them on to the appropriate resource. Chain of command is real important, so this is our standard operating procedure. From there, the fire authorities can send the right resources to the right location. Our information is all housed in our system, so when you do an after action review, you can look at it.

CB—This kind of fulfills the roll of lookout with a lot of added features.

Kat—Yes. And it's harder to fill lookout positions. This makes lookouts more sustainable and scalable. Great comment.

Kat—Our features can be broken out into a few different things. We start with cameras capturing the full panorama. We overlay our AI looking for texture and movement. Those alerts are looked at by our human staff. If the staff decides it's not a false positive, they push it out. It's meant to work with low bandwidth environment, with just one bar on the phone.

Kat—For a look underneath the hood of the AI—it latches on to texture and movement (video shows smoke rising out of a canyon). It's a positive that needs to be sent. It can latch onto clouds, etc. so that's why there are humans in the loop to confirm the AI alerts.

Kat—The stations deployed on a variety of towers. They find a way to get connectivity and power. They're ruggedized to withstand high and low temperatures. They're deployed where there's a good view-shed, and that's not always the easiest place to install a tower.

Kat—One of our new features—you have one rotating camera and use another camera to zoom up to 30X. Helpful to see what kind of incident action plan they need to start building.

Kat—From start to finish, Pano is very much a turnkey solution. What are areas with limited ingress and egress in your communities? We look at the towers in those areas. They could be lookout towers, cell towers, water towers. In Australia, we built a tower where there was nothing there. It's nice to go where there's electricity and cellular connectivity, but we can do solar and star-link. We have primary and backup for both power and connectivity.

Kat—We start with the view-shed analysis. With multiple towers, you can calculate latitude and longitude where the view-sheds overlap. Right now we're on Aeneas Mt., but there's no overlap with another station. What we're proposing is stations that tie into each other.

Kat—Pano takes care of all the site license agreements for the towers' owners. You know that's half the battle. Pano is on the hook for all the maintenance, too. It's a turnkey solution.

Kat—We know there's mutual aid in the area, with multiple fire authorities responding to a fire. We have staff that helps build relations with the fire authorities. When there's an incident, they know how to use it. We can see if it's working for the county or not.

Kat—We can deploy in really remote areas, and we can get creative to do maintenance on them.

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Kat—We're driven to continuous improvement. If you sit on your laurels with technology, you're not knocking yourself off. We've been recognized for our innovation.

Kat—Here are some proposed sites in Okanogan County. (Shows slide with proposed sites on Aeneas Mt., Pickers Mt., Tunk Mt., Omak Mt., Little Buck Mt., McClure Mt. Two of these already have towers on them.) With some many towers we can have overlap.

Kat—Any questions yet?

CB—This is all very interesting. It's been very straightforward, I think.

Kat—(Shows the screen that shows active and past fires.) Capture images every 60 seconds, and we can have two agencies to use the site at the same time. There's been a historical issue with cameras and two agencies don't want to see the same thing. You can monitor multiple different bearings at the same time.

Kat—If there's an incident, you get a text or email. Here's an example of a lightning strike fire. They were able to contain it within two acres.

Kat—Here's an example from Colorado. They had Pano, and they could see the smoke from two locations, so they knew exactly where it was. You can switch to a satellite layer and see the vegetation on the ground, see sources of water, see rate of spread, see what polygons need to be evacuated. And it's all very easily sharable. You can share with other agencies that aren't using Pano. You send them a link and there's no password, so they can move quickly.

Kat—I can talk about this for days, but that's the 30,000 ft. view. Any questions?

CB—One observation: the lookouts did the triangulating, but this is very enhanced situation that we've learned from lookout towers. I'm eager to hear what Emergency Management and Dispatch have to say.

MW—I'm worried about bandwidth to get the image back to somebody next to you.

Kat—It depends on what's available. What I was just showing was live 60 seconds ago. It's in the cloud. That's why we do the paper audit. We send teams to the site to test the connectivity. They test the power. These stations need to be able to run fast.

MW—The connectivity is cooked into the maintenance cost?

Kat—Everything is included.

MW—I don't know that early detection is the issue, but finding the location is more important. The location information is useful, but I want to get your data into the system we've already got. We use GIS Web mapping services, etc. Rapid SOS is something (*inaudible*), not that I'm promoting other vendors, but that's in the pipeline to review.

Kat—There are some really great tools out there. There's never going to be just one, and they have to work together. Pano is using open API so it can connect with other platforms. We're talking about this with the DNR. We're absolutely capable of integrating with other systems.

MW—That's good.

MG—When did you install on Aeneas?

Kat—Hmm. About a month ago.

MG—Do you know if it picked up the Eagle Bluff fire?

Kat—It picked it up later. It was 13 miles down over the ridge from the tower. Less than 10 miles is best. If we'd had another station, we hope we could have caught it.

MG—DNR has the contract with that tower. Authorization to get the feeds from you to them, how does that work?

Kat—It's all run through DNR management. They're feeding the alerts through the dispatch center.

MG—What about on a day with heavy smoke? Does it still work?

Kat—Yes. We feel confident within that 10 mile radius.

AH—Satellites feed thermal information into it. Where does it go?

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Kat—Cameras aren't infrared. We use GOES 16 and 18, the thermal detection from satellites. The satellite alerts go to our intelligence center. Then they use the cameras to (*inaudible*). Satellites are good for night, but not in the daytime.

AH—But with a real heavy smoke day, like soup. The thermal at night will be more helpful.

MG—Smoke vs. dust? How does it work? I can't tell sometimes.

Kat—That's a big part of the collaborative of the intelligence center and our partners. From a distance AI thinks it's smoke, but the intelligence center has a back-and-forth with the partners who know where work is being done, so they know it's dust or not. It's a learning collaborative process.

CB—What about in Canada?

Kat—We've been in deep discussions with BC and I believe we'll be partnering with them after this season.

MW—Prescribed burns get reported all the time. How do you mitigate that?

Kat—It depends. The intelligence center gets the list of prescribed burns in Colorado and uses that. If we get a hit, we'll note it in the system but not alert. Some partners use prescribed burns in the shoulder season, then use Pano to monitor for flare-ups. They can see if it's in the interior of the burn, or if it's on the edge.

MG—Can you show the map of Okanogan County? Do you think it'll work?

?—Who's paying for those?

Kat—The cost can be split between agencies.

AH—What's the cost?

Kat—I haven't shared it yet. We do the installation, the software, maintenance, AI, staffed human intelligence center, the outreach, and we try to keep it completely turnkey. It's \$50,000/station/year. And it can be split between multiple agencies.

MG—Is there a set-up fee?

Kat—No. We look at average cost. The one fee covers everything.

CB—So now you know where the stations ought to be.

Kat—No. I made this map because I know how to read a fire map, but we need local people who know where the evacuation routes are, which way the wind blows, etc. This is just a starting point, but we know we have to sit down and talk to local people. Maybe there're other areas you'd like covered.

Tim—This is Tim. One point I want to re-enforce—we're working with the two senators and Rep. Newhouse. There's an effort to get support from them. We're starting to set up out-reach with the tribes. We're also trying to partner with the other counties. We can emphasize to the Congressional delegation that the fires don't know where the boundary lines are.

MG—Is there any data about how long it took you to detect a fire vs others detecting a fire?

Kat—It's completely dependent on the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI). Time is also dependent on the view-shed. Maybe we'd need a much higher smoke rise to detect a fire in the canyon. Where there's overlap of the circles is where we feel confident we can do location.

Kat—Aeneas is deployed already and Little Buck will be soon.

Kat—Is this something you're interested in?

CB—These two guys (MW and MG) would be key to any decision.

MW—I'm willing to say I think we can make our sites available, but I don't know what the county can afford. Maurice's point about how much time is saved between AI and the 911 calls. I can't remember a fire that burned a day, a week before someone reported. The issue can be can we find them. Do we have the means to fight the fire? So, I'd be willing to partner, but not willing to pay.

MG—What are you seeing about grants?

Kat—There are grants that apply. The challenge I see is staffing the government agencies to apply for the grant.

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?—That can be a challenge.

Kat—We can help with the grant, but the agency has to apply for it.

MG—What's the length of the contract?

Kat—The Aeneas station is a 1 year pilot program. Then it goes to a 3 to 5 years.

CB—If DNR is doing this, there's probably opportunities for DNR money to help local government with this.

Kat—My hope is DNR does cost share with the counties. Tim knows more.

Tim—I think Hilary Franz is trying to help Okanogan County expand the program with DNR for a cost share agreement. Also, the federal government has to help, too. We're working with Patty Murray to get funds to share with DNR. The tribes get most of their money for this from Interior. We need to extend that program, as well.

Tim—In the next few weeks, Commissioner Franz, Pano and T-Mobile are going to be going to a site to announce its deployment. If any of you wanted to come, we'd love it. I think it's going to be in eastern Washington.

CB—Maybe the DOT would be another entity. Thought of them and Hwy 20's recent closure.

Tim—Fire and smoke both have a major impact on the roadways.

MG—Can you send me the map of proposed sites and I can use our overlays to see where structures are?

Kat—Sure. What's the best action to follow up?

CB—You want to engage with MG and MW because they're tied into the situation the most.

AH—It would be nice if we knew the DNR and USFS priorities as far as locations go? I see from your map most of the north Methow Valley is not included.

Kat—The Forest Service is moving very slowly, so I'd rather go with counties and DNR to make sure their areas of interest are covered.

CB—And the tribes.

AH—Our county is 83% public land. Our areas of interest are theirs', too. If you met with the local rangers, you could see what their priorities are.

Kat—Well, thanks for listening.

Kat and Joe leave.

2:33:40—AH—I've got the recommendation for the construction of the horse stalls. You can read it.

JN—Public Works got the foundations done?

AH—Yes.

CB—It lists who was asked for a quote, but we only got one. D. Hall, for \$34,234.20, includes stacks done by fair. And we can get this done before the fair?

AH—Yes.

AH—We do need an executive session for that (?), under (i). We need to call Esther (Milner, Chief Civil Deputy Prosecutor).

CB—Presumably, she keeps track of who she asked for bids.

JN moves to approve the bid from D. Hall. Motion passes 3-0

2:37:40—Also, LJ wants a step increase for Cameron. JN and I agreed to it.

AH—It's fine with me. Cameron is very good. If LJ gives us a resolution, we can act.

CHa—I can't get Esther. I'll check Albert (Lin, County Prosecutor. (After phone call—They can come.)

AH—re: the Fair: Can we make sure this packet is accessible to all three of us. That way, when they start construction of the horse stalls, we're able to review the documents?

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CB—Great idea. MG and I went there the other day to look at the well & electrical, that created some interest in others because of our questions.

AH—We're getting closer to the Fair, and I think two guys are doing great, but if we redirect Tim and Roy over to the Fairgrounds, that'll help. And if we authorize overtime for any county employee who wants to work at the Fairgrounds. With caveats, of course.

CB—We'd look into details as we go. As the details emerge, we can weigh in as the need arises. One department said they were ready to do what they can to make the Fair a success.

AH—And Naomie (Peasley, Fairgrounds Manager who recently resigned) will be there through Tuesday. She's got everything laid out very well. Everything is in its binders.

CB—To avoid scuttlebutt, we need to say it's not because the people over there weren't doing a good job. There's nobody going around saying people weren't doing a good job.

AH—I told Norm that. But there's a *lot* of stuff to do, and they're prepping for the Fair.

CB—There's a lot to do even if there wasn't a Fair. Getting the RV Park bathroom done, for example. If there's a big fire, the DNR pulled out of that facility because the bathrooms were so bad. My priority will always be the RV Park bathrooms, because people can compare them with other RV Parks. Last week, most of the RVs were self-contained.

2:45:50—AH—I move we go to executive session under RCW 42.30 110(1)(i) for potential litigation, inviting Albert Lin and Esther Milner, for 15 minutes. Off they go.

After the return—CB—I think we should at least have a conversation under (g)

2:48:20—AH—I move we go to executive session under RCW 42.30 110(1)(g)—evaluation of the performance of a public employee for 10 minutes. Off they go, just the three of them.

Upon their return, Esther Milner and Shelley Keitzman (Human Resources and Risk Management) are there. Esther requests another executive session under (i)

AH-- I move we go to executive session under RCW 42.30 110(1)(i) for potential litigation, inviting Esther Milner and Shelley Keitzman for 10 minutes. Off they go yet again.

Adjourn at 12:25 until Tuesday morning.