

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Tuesday November 28, 2023 PM

Present:

Chris Branch (CB) – BOCC Chair, District 1

Andy Hover (AH) – BOCC Vice Chair, District 2

Jon Neal (JN) – BOCC, District 3

Lanie Johns (LJ) – Clerk of the Board

These notes were taken by an Okanogan County Watch volunteer via Zoom. Every attempt is made to be accurate. Notes are verbatim when possible, and otherwise summarized or paraphrased. Note taker comments or clarifications are in italics. These notes are published at <https://countywatch.org> and are not the official record of the meeting. For officially approved minutes, which are normally published at a later time see:

https://okanogancounty.org/offices/commissioners/commissioners_proceedings.php.

Time stamps below are in real time. To locate specific topics, a click on the AV Capture video screen at <https://okanogancounty.org/avcapture.html> can assist in finding the correct spot on the video recording.

Summary of Significant Discussions or Actions:

- Budget work sessions for the Coroner’s Office, County Fair, and Veterans.
- WATV Club proposes opening some back roads to ATVs; Methow Forest Ranger in meeting to discuss with BOCC the possibility of connecting county roads and Forest Service roads in a more comprehensive trail system. Decision made to focus on 3 different trails and AH to meet with Methow Valley Trails Collaborative group at next meeting to begin discussion.
- Resolution approved adding Thanksgiving Eve to a list of office holiday closures.
- Adjourn 5:00. BOCC to meet on Wednesday at 9:00 AM.

1:00

Budget work session with Coroner Dave Rodriguez (DR) and assistant Gene, along with the Finance Committee; Auditor, Treasurer, and Finance Manager.

1:11

Uniform allowance and footwear included in Coroner’s budget.

1:28 – 2:30 Recess*****

2:00

Certification of election on the Agenda, but not in the hearing room.

2:30

Budget work session with Fair manager, Chuck Ford (CF)

3:08

Budget work session with Veterans Representative, Tom Even.

3:30

Discussion of WATV proposal (*to open more back roads and connect Conconully to Mazama*) to ATV use. Methow Forest Ranger, Chris Furr (CF) and Josh Thomson (JT), County Engineer in attendance,

along with ATV club members and Rosemary Seifried(RS) MV Trails Collaborative (on Zoom)
CF begins by stating that we (FS) could do a mixed-use analysis by an engineer and look at a smaller subset (*of trails*) CF-Our priorities are wildfire crisis and other things.

AH & CB – the County wants to talk about working together with FS on this possibility of opening trails to ATV's.

AH- discusses getting from Conconully to over here (*the Methow*) would need to be through Boulder Creek and Cub Creek. AH -Let's say we want to look at 4 different routes. What do you think about the process? (*to CF*) Public input is where this lies but it is hard to find middle ground when there are such divergent views. We would need to get input before doing a SEPA or NEPA. CF – we have some increased funding from wildfires that could be used for discussing this possibility.

AH asks CF if they have seen off road usage already? CF- Yes, there is some around. This level of use might not be indicative of more use when advertised. AH asks what is the difference between ATVs and other vehicles, such as jeeps?

CB asks CF what opposition do you anticipate from the NEPA process? CF -There's potential to find something that everyone can live with, but I might be a Pollyanna.

CB -If we take one route, and just do a meeting on that. CF – there are public land issues.

AH asks JT about what a SEPA entails? JT – one of the things we (the County) does is look at how wildlife is affected. AH wonders whether this is something that the newly hired Parks & Recreation person could facilitate a study. CB wants to know if the trail is already open to motorized vehicles?

CB and AH discuss the pros and cons

AH -There are many different user groups and I can see the attitudes already.

CF – We can talk about what we assume might be, but we need to go through the process and allow the public comments. AH – we are not asking Forest Service to do this, we (the BOCC) want to facilitate this. CB states the conversation is about complete connections.

JT notes that the Methow Valley roads are narrower and steeper than the Okanogan Valley.

AH asks CF if we were to come up with funding, would the Forest Service entertain a look at this. CF - Yes, we could do that with the Trails Collaborative.

RS (on Zoom) explained that their group meets bi-monthly on the 3rd Wednesday of the month. Contact person is Allen Jirick at allenj@trailscollaborative.org.

AH states that everything is open to controversy. He will try to make the next meeting.

CF is interested in being a part of also.

JT has a map of the area on the board and Zoom. Lots of speculation about the routes, and general consensus is that 3 routes would be a good pilot program. Possibly over Poorman Creek, Black Pine Lake. CF notes they (FS) have a process to follow through with and asks the County's process on roads. JT explains.

(I wasn't sure but I believe the County Assessor was in the audience and was part of the conversation.)

CF understands that there will be a follow-up conversation.

4:40

Board approves the Consent Agenda:

1. Appointment letter - Steve Kieffer -Ok County Noxious Weed Control Board -Area #3
2. Appointment letter – Stephen Clark -Solid Waste Advisory Committee -Pos #3

LJ brings up the business to take care of.

4:48

Moved, seconded, and carried to approve the contract for services with the Economic Alliance for \$150,000.

4:50

Moved, seconded, and carried to approve Resolution 176-2023 changing Senior Planner to Compliance Coordinator Planner.

Moved, seconded, and carried to approve Resolution 177-2023 to authorize 5% raise for working out of class compensation for Bonnie Little. This began October 21st.

Moved, seconded, and carried to approve Resolution 178-2023 to include Coroner and staff workwear with boot allowance reimbursement, in the budget.

Moved, seconded, and carried to approve Resolution 179-2023 adding Thanksgiving Eve to list of holiday office closures.

5:00

Meeting adjourned. Will meet tomorrow (Wednesday the 29th) at 9:00 AM