

**Board of Okanogan County Commissioners**  
**Tuesday January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024, 1:30 p.m.**

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**Present:**

John Neil (JN), BOCC District 3  
Chris Branch (CB), BOCC District 1  
Laney Johns (LJ), Clerk of the Board  
Andy Hover (AH), County Commissioner District 3  
Rena Shawver (RS), Okanogan County Community Action Council (OCCAC)  
Ashley Range (AR), Executive Director, Oroville Housing Authority  
Michelle Sandoval (MS), Executive Director, FYRE (Foundation for Youth Resiliency and Engagement)  
Scott Ackerson (SA), Consultant, West East Design Group  
Mike Worden (MW), Dispatch Center

Time stamps refer to Tuesday's AV Capture video. 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:**

- *Community Action describes current housing crisis, will subcontract with consulting company to apply for grant to identify barriers to affordable housing, and develop 5-year housing plan; zoning an issue; Commissioners to sign letter of support*
- *Dispatch Coordinator asks about demolition bid on site of future sheriff's equipment /coroner's building; tanks of "residual oil-related tar" could pose problem*
- *Fairground volunteers shouldn't have free rein with county equipment*
- *Discussion on distribution of funds for public safety, competition between Omak and county to recruit qualified officers*
- *Electric Co-op in Methow to receive American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds for broadband; wants to buy neighboring land for equipment but zoning change needed*
- *County got "dinged" in audit of ARPA funds for not documenting proof of non-disbarment for contractors and sub-recipients, Commissioner Hover objects*

3:33:03 - RS: I'm here to see if the county would like to engage in a co-application for a grant to look at barriers to affordable housing. The planning department was approached but didn't have time to take this on. West East, the firm hired by the county to do the five-year homeless housing plan said they would help with the application.

*The state Office of Financial Management says 2,063 housing units should be built here within the next 20 years. RS: We who are getting ready to build, and the housing authorities are wondering if we could use this grant opportunity to facilitate some of the conversations we're going to need to have to build the housing that's going to be needed by the county, and work with Planning on issues that some working with housing may have faced. I see it as a chance to open up dialogue on what we're going to need for the next 20 years. It's a time of crisis; she has 15 people in families (staying) in hotels and 30 on a waiting list for shelter. One reason the shelter here can't be open year-round is zoning. RS: We have other developers who are working in the area of low income housing that face some questions of infrastructure and zoning. I see this grant opportunity as a chance to get the people doing the five-year plan to have some of those planning discussions. She needs the county to partner with OCCAC and sub-contract with West East to do the work and discuss with Planning.*

SA: I've worked for 30 years as a social worker for child welfare and homeless and affordable housing. I'm now working with West East to help influence homeless housing issues.

*RS says the firm is willing to write the grant application and they are supported in this plan of action by the Housing Authority and by Planning. AH asks why Planning is involved. CB says it's a comprehensive plan issue. A Growth Management Act law passed last year requires larger municipalities to change their zoning to accommodate low income housing, and RS sees this grant providing help to have those conversations and do research concerning possible barriers, to be able to address their present and future needs. Planning needs the BOCC to approve the project first.*

CB: The Grant application says there has to be either cooperation between a county and one of its two biggest cities, between a city and a county or between one or the other and one or more non-profit providers... The commissioners will write a letter of support. The money would be awarded to the county which would allocate it to OCCAC and the subcontractor. AH reads that the funds are available to a county, a planning department or a homeless housing league, and may be devoted to regulatory changes to allow emergency or supportive housing. They discuss possible fees for administering the grant. Planning Director Palmer arrives.

*3:49:15 - SA remarks that affordable housing and planning go together and that people with less than 50% AMI (area mean income) qualify for homeless issues.*

*RS will provide a sample letter. Applications are due February 16th. LJ says the earlier a request is sent, the higher the priority it is given. The grant comes from the Dept. of Commerce.*

*3:53:22 - RS asks her coalition partners if they would like to share experiences they had with planning issues in order to build their facilities. Michelle Sandoval has a lot to say but it is inaudible on the AV Capture recording. A certain process took from April to November to be approved. She then asks Ashley Range what barriers to building she has encountered but Ashley is apparently muted, AH agrees housing needs must be considered in planning and is reminded of playing Sim City in his youth. AR comes on, mostly inaudible, says she agrees with RS, says Oroville's housing authority has a lot of property but- ? and that what tends to kill projects is loss of momentum. RS says these*

*non-profits are very small in terms of staff but together are bringing in multi-million dollar projects to the county, and should be helped. Agrees that delays lead to loss of funding ; often there is a combination of sources and a single delay can scrap the whole project.*

*4:02:18 - CB is composing a letter, based on the model, which he reads from : the grant requires coordination with a non-profit, and the OCCAC serves as the emergency housing league. The deadline for the work outlined in the grant is June 2025. RS says the scope of work is to aid our municipal and county planning departments in identifying barriers to low income housing projects in Okanogan County which will further help address the housing crisis. SA confirms the scope of work will be turned in with the budget and the letter which shows the county's blessing. CB wonders about language regarding updates to the comprehensive, asks his colleagues if they would like to say that they will incorporate a housing plan into their comprehensive plan.*

*AH : We should have that in there.*

*CB : « The results of this work will be considered a part of our five-year housing plan and included in our comprehensive plan as an element thereof. » Something like that ? It would be helpful to show that we were showing an intention to have a housing document in our comprehensive plan... We're not required to do that but if we were to extend that interest, *(it would be good)* for the grant. Says they haven't included it so far because of land use issues to accommodate a couple of « very serious entities that want us to get the comprehensive plan done. » While CB works with LJ's assistant Cameron, JN and AH discuss the problem of rescheduling Sunrise RV's show at the Agriplex which had been planned and publicized even though the date was available.*

*CB reads aloud the proposed letter of support including the elements above : Cooperation between the county and OCCAC as a non-profit housing entity, subcontracting the research, the scope of work being to identify barriers to low-income and homeless housing, and the resulting information will help develop a housing element for their comprehensive plan. SA approves the letter, asks jokingly if CB doesn't want to write the grant request as well. It's perfect, says RS. Of the 2,063 units recommended by the state, 2,000 are for people earning less \$52,000 a year and with the average home costing \$450,000 most people won't be able to afford a mortgage. It could be worse, says JN. In Seattle you must earn a minimum of \$220,000 to get into a house.*

*4:24:05 - CB asks for a copy of the scope of work, including the subcontracting to West East. AH makes some suggestions to streamline the letter. RS says the Housing Coalition will develop the scope of work with East West. AH doesn't want to sign the letter until he sees that. They agree that the following Monday they would have it and sign the letter. LJ will help complete the application and get it sent before the deadline on the 16th. RS leaves.*

*4:32:50 - AH has left. Motions made and carried for : the employment agreement between Okanogan County and Brooke Schreckengost for RN services ; Resolution 17-2024, amending Resolution 193-2023, Task Force Sergeant ; Resolution 2024 (number missing ?) authorizing a budget amendment regarding title 3 fund 137. MW arrives.*

MW : Reference the equipment shed and morgue construction project, ... (The first item concerns) the lumber in the existing old building, not currently being used. It looks like standard lumber. The architects didn't feel it to be of any special value when trying to recycle, and recommend demo like the other two structures. The other (item) : The architects brought up the question of doing one bid for the demolition and a separate bid for the construction. They felt that was an easier, better path. The board's feelings ?

CB : The difference between needing an excavator ? I don't have an issue with that. The other bit, if it's a separate company doing the demolition, I would leave the recycling question up to them. MW agrees. Says the demo bid would also include the three tanks on the site containing residual oil-related tar. CB worries if it is included in the scope of work it might complicate the bid. JN says something about hazardous material.

MW : Public Works guessed there was some residual in there, a couple hundred gallons potentially.

CB : When it was first looked at, didn't the architects do an assessment ?

MW : Relative to lighting ballasts, asbestos presence. It didn't include the tank contents. So I'm hearing no strong feelings about a separate or combined bid ? No. MW leaves.

CB : Those were bond funds, right ? JN assents. We're not using federal funds or we'd be having this required assessment of the site.

JN : I forwarded you a couple of emails from Chuck. ( ?)

LJ : One question Community Action wanted you to follow up on was the commissioner representing the county on that board.

CB : We're all officially on the Board of Directors.

LJ : They have a meeting this Wednesday. CB can't go but JN says he can possibly attend in person or on Zoom. CB says they're not certain to have a quorum. JN says let him know if he's needed for that reason.

JN : Chuck (Ford, fairgrounds manager) said the waiver didn't mesh. It's about private people using county equipment to work on rodeo grounds. Expresses doubt. CB has issues with this as well. JN says the waiver did not address possible damage to county property. CB would like some training to be involved, remembers someone careless who broke some equipment. JN : With a lot of people it's « if it's not yours, you don't care ».

CB : There's a lot of equipment out there that's really sensitive to abuse... With my own equipment, for example, nobody borrows my chainsaw ! There's also liability at the fairgrounds. JN agrees. CB says with a worker, the supervisor can see if someone is competent or not. Maybe Public Works could give some training. But he doesn't think much of the idea of volunteers using their equipment given past accidents that have occurred. CB talks about trashed tractors. Would like people to be certified. JN will have a chat with the fairgrounds director. He will also present some dates for the

*Sunrise RV event. CB remembers another « gentlemen's agreement » during kids' business week ; they had to change plans because the fairgrounds site was needed for the Health Dept. during Covid.*

4:53:05 - *AH is back. CB says they have no more business. JN says they've volunteered AH for fifteen different boards. Laughter. They get AH to commit to the OCCAC Board of Directors' meeting. Something about DocuSign and a conflict of interest and someone named Itzel. AH doesn't think there will be a conflict of interest.*

*AH : (After talking with someone at OCOG/Okanogan Council of Governments) That .3% for public safety, we should probably just bring it up. The cities actually get 40% of it. If we're going to promote that, we have to tell the cities what they're going to get and we have to say what we use the money for. ...The legislation says just a third of it has to be used for, it's not public safety, let's say, firefighting and police work. I propose we just use all of it. ...The cities can pass one tenth, the counties can pass three tenths. Since Okanogan didn't use it, they get 40% of ours per capita. Omak already passed their one tenth so we only get two tenths over there. I believe they get 40 % of our two tenths and we get 60% per capita and then we get 15% of their one tenth when they get 85% of their—*

*CB : They sure complicated it.*

*AH : I think it was that if that the cities passed them first, they get a majority of the one tenth. *CB seems to follow.* I think that's how the stacking would work, they would get 85% of the first one tenth and 40% of the second one.*

*CB : We could write into it that if it passes and we each get that share then (*inaudible*) everybody's law enforcement. *Right, says AH, sarcastically.* Then they give them raises*

*AH : I'm assuming that's how Omak is giving them raises.*

*CB : Someone made the comment, « Now we can steal deputies from the County. » But they probably didn't know that we just made a new union agreement.*

*AH : Even so, they are paying more than us. ...They have ten to our 30 (*agents*). It's easier. I heard \$135,000 for wildlife officer.*

*LJ : The completed ARPA (*American Rescue Plan*) (*document ?*) is ready to be signed. This is for the electric co-op. *CB asks if it's a non-profit. AH doesn't know what it's considered ; if they make a profit they give it back to the rate-payers. CB asks if he considers it a public utility. They both do.**

*CB : They have a proposal to purchase the neighboring properties for some of their equipment. In the zoning code, they're not allowed. I'm saying it's a conditional use permit for a public utility. *AH agrees the co-op is a public utility district. CB says he's going to follow up on this. CB explains it's a utility district they're considering making in the Methow. AH says it's the Okanogan County Electric Co-op. CB says it's up to the planning director to decide.**

*JN : That was brought up when the auditor was here. That it was considered a public*

utility.

CB : ...Pete (Palmer, Planning Director) was a little nervous. The applicants ended up hiring (*city planner*) Kurt Danison... In the Methow, everybody's participating like they would in a PUD.

AH : The only reason the PUD ever came up there was for the saw mill. They didn't provide power anywhere else. Then a cooperative came off of that. They buy (*the power*) from Bonneville (*Power Administration*)– CB mentions *Bureau of Reclamation, the Irrigation District, and some « wheeling thing » that deals with supplying supplemental electricity, and some tax associated with that that the PUD has to pay. JN talks about how in Loomis the PUD can't work on Bonneville Power's lines. It took eight hours for someone to come from Wenatchee after a lightning strike did some damage. Says maybe they have a contract or something. You have to track that stuff down, says CB, because there are provisions nobody knows about for years. CB talks about some annexation issue in Oroville.*

5:08:47 - AH : They just dinged us for something we shouldn't get dinged for. *Lanie looks over a document with him.*

JN : The Tribal Consistency Fund, that's federal dollars, right ? Yes. So if we are using interest off that...

AH : A gray area, because that's not really the money they gave us. Yes, but I don't think I even want to go there.

CB : You mean you want to apply the same rules.

JN : Technically you are not using the principal money that they gave you. *At the same time AH and LJ are talking about the Electrical Co-op ARPA contract. It concerns checking to see if someone isn't disbarred. AH goes on the phone to ask about findings they got from ARPA. Quotes from the reporting requirements that any contractor or subrecipient... on any state or federal listing of debarred or suspended persons or any person who has been, proposed for disbarment are declared ineligible and are voluntarily excluded from transactions with any state or federal agency. As he speaks, CB tells JN it's a question of documentation. AH hangs up.*

AH : I move to approve the inter-local agreement between Okanogan County and the and the Okanogan County Electric Co-op for ARPA funds for broadband connections. *Motion carried. AH talks some more about « getting dinged » by ARPA.*

LJ : That's why I thought it was a problem with what I was talking about, the date of the check that the agencies who were following these requirements had done. They had checked, and didn't find any who'd been debarred, but there was no date on that (verification).

AH : I heard that « you have to tell us if you're disbarred ». She said they don't need to give us the disbarred checks from them because all we're checking on in this audit is your contract with the recipient.

LJ : They asked me for those checks. For those screenshots.

CB : I would think that we are responsible for that because we can easily (*waive responsibility*), then, *down the line, somebody else does it and then we get out of it.*

AH : Double check, though.... We're getting a federal audit, obviously, for the \$750,000... She told us if they got enough federal money it would trigger an audit and they would have to get their disbarred stuff together.

CB : So why do we ask for receipts to follow up on anything anyone spends money on ? *They talk about in the beginning of ARPA funds not even the state auditors knowing the guidelines for the funds. AH directs LJ to write back and say « this is in our contract with our recipients. Does this count as checking for debarment ? If it does, we shouldn't have gotten a finding and if it doesn't we need to re-word our contract. »*

5:22:30 - Meeting adjourned.