

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, Oct 16, 2023 AM & PM

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
SK—Shelley Keitzman, Human Resources and Risk Management
PP—Pete Palmer, Director of Planning
MG—Maurice Goodall, Emergency Management
BW—Barbara Walters, Executive Director, North Central Washington Libraries
RHD—Roni Holder-Diefenbach, Executive Director, Economic Alliance
JM—John McDonald, Broadband Services, Okanogan PUD
RG—Director of Power Resource and Broadband Services, Okanogan PUD

These notes were taken by an Okanogan County Watch volunteer. Every attempt is made to be accurate. Notes are verbatim when possible, and otherwise summarized or paraphrased. Note takers comments or clarifications are in italics. These notes are published at <https://www.countywatch.org/> and are not the official county 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

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Summary of significant discussions:

- Maurice Goodall, Emergency Management explains why the Forest Service can do a prescribed burn during a time of burn restrictions when a private citizen can't burn his slash pile.
- Barbara Walters, Executive Director of the North Central Washington Libraries updates the Commissioners about what the library has done in the past year. Commissioner Neal is concerned about several libraries' wifi late at night attracting people you don't want around. BW will look into the situation.
- Commissioners pass a motion to use \$500,000 of the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) earmarked for broadband to help fund the Okanogan PUD's Conconully broadband project.
- Meeting adjourns at 2:54.

0:00:25—Recording begins at 9:14

AH—I move to sign the fee reduction request for the Seventh Day Adventist Church for the Worship Planning Meeting with the 15% reduction, and authorize the Chair to sign.

LJ—For January 6, 2024?

AH—It seems to me if they're doing free dental and free (*inaudible, clothing?*) that they serve the poor.

CB—I agree.

SK—I recommend the board to sign.

Motion passes.

SK—I received another phone call from the insurance company for the horse barn. Do we have any bids for the horse barn for repair from the snow damage last winter? I can send you the scope of work from

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the insurance company and an estimate of \$80,000 to \$90,000. Panels on the roof are broken and there will be more damage this winter if we don't get it fixed. Trying to get contractors to schedule is difficult.

0:05:00—No public comments.

SK—I sent the scope of the work needed on Sept. 11.

Discussion of how to get a quote for the needed repairs. AH wants to make sure that the specifications of the job are accurate so that the quotes will be valid.

SK—Switching gears, Kathleen Manseau in the MOUD (Medications for Opioid Use Disorder) in the jail program had a contract before us that I sent to the risk pool for review. They recommended higher coverage limits. Kathleen Manseau has defined the services that the contract covers, none of which are actual in-the-jail health services. The two it covers are Advanced Northwest, a peer support group to help people coming out of jail, and the other is Altra Borealis Consulting, which is Kathleen putting this program together. So I think it'll be OK to sign the contract. The risk pool thought it would include actual health care in the jail, but it doesn't.

PP—I don't have hardly anything today.

AH—Then we'll skip your update and do the executive session.

0:19:45—AH—I move to go to executive session to discuss union negotiation information, for ten minutes, inviting SK. Motion approved.

Off they go.

0:32:40—MG—Good morning. I'm Maurice Goodall, Emergency Management.

MG—We're out of the burn restriction as of last Sunday morning. No restrictions, no bans now.

AH—Someone is my neck of the woods reamed me out about why it's not the way it used to be and why the Forest Service can have a fire and we can't. Is that the case?

MG—It is.

AH—How come the Forest Service came off the burn restriction before we did?

MG—They're just talking about prescribed burns. DNR was doing the same. Private companies or private people weren't doing burns.

AH—So how come they were able to do prescribed burns when people weren't able to burn their slash piles?

MG—Well, the Forest Service has all their firefighting equipment. They've got their process. They're talking to us and each other. Plus sometimes governments can get away with doing something in a more controlled environment than allowing individuals to burn.

CB—We don't regulate the Forest Service.

AH—But I thought everybody was supposed to be in sync.

MG—The difference is they were doing it themselves instead of allowing others to do it. Like a campfire—they didn't allow campfires just like we and the DNR didn't allow them. We were synced with the DNR.

MG—So instead of looking at the date or looking at the weather. It was only about a week or so difference.

AH—I understand. I just want to make sure I can iterate the argument. What were the dates?

MG—The restriction was June 15 to October 15. The ban was different. Also, we can allow an orchard owner to burn if they've got fire blight.

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AH—The answer to my question was we'd decided to run the restriction to October 15 and the committee decided to stick with it.

MG—Most people were adhering to the dates. We talked to a few who weren't.

CB—Another thing: Old folks are used to burning. They might think burning is like it used to be, but it's dryer now. People who've come back to the county think they can build a fire anytime they want.

They're taking a risk that they never really considered. And guys started fires in the old days, too.

AH—We're going to the people who actually fight the fires for information about when we shouldn't be burning.

CB—We're working our way into something that's better than it was.

0:40:10—MG—Nothing more from Emergency Management. I talked to Tim from maintenance about the roof of the Agriplex with another person. He'd like to talk to you tomorrow about what he's learned. He took pictures of the Annex roof as well as the Agriplex roof.

AH—Is the damage to the Annex roof from the snow?

MG—Yes. From chipping the ice off. The Agriplex roof is from the tree. The limbs sitting on the roof all winter long may be causing the problem.

Commissioners decide they could hear from Tim on 2:30 this afternoon.

MG discusses the pump situation at the fairgrounds. When both were running, the little pump was cavitating.

AH—Please, please make sure all the toilets and sinks have no water in them or have RV antifreeze in them.

MG describes the procedure he'll use to do this—blow out all the pipes and then use the RV antifreeze.

MG—Any questions? None, so MG leaves.

00:48:05—JN—Did you see Rite-Aid filed for bankruptcy protection? I don't know how that will affect some of our opioid settlements.

CB—I heard a different company had. Maybe there are several.

JN—Who knows what it will mean?

0:50:40—CB—Are you aware of the complaint about the Pateros housing authority and how they responded? I got an explanation from Nancy Nash about it and the action she took. There's another question from the building about what we're going to do about it. Sounds to me she did the due diligence. Would we like to have Nancy come and explain to us? The county created the housing authority. There was a state agency, or maybe federal, that had some involvement but doesn't anymore. That was Helen from Rural Development. She said they're not the regulator for the Housing Authority. The city doesn't agree that what they did was appropriate. So maybe we should have Nancy come and talk to us about it.

CB and LJ discuss when to schedule Nash.

1:00:05—AH corrects minutes.

1:16:25—I'm Barbara Walters, Executive Director of the North Central Washington Libraries. We serve five counties in Washington, including Okanogan County. I appreciate coming to update you every year.

BW—We just released our 2022 Annual Report. We're coming back from the pandemic closures. Our summer programs were very successful with a surge in enrollees, especially children, but in our adult programs, too.

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BW—Our challenges and opportunities—We're a junior taxing district and most of our revenue comes from property tax and Initiative 747 limits revenue growth to 1% a year. Operational costs continues to surpass revenue. Over the last three years, our operating costs grew on an average of 9.3%, while revenue grew 2.9%. Inflation was a cause affecting labor, health care, fuel, liability insurance. The liability insurance went up 23% in 2023. We had libraries in Washington had their data frozen—hacked. BW—We're focusing on our fixed expenses for 2024 like staffing, insurance. Had to cut collections, IT, supplies and some of our services.

BW—We've had open positions in Okanogan County that we're trying to fill, but I think it's the same nationally.

BW—The good news—we have strong library services, free internet, programs for the children, craft projects. We know our doing well helps the entire county.

BW—We partner with the Okanogan County PUD. Also we got a grant for library renovations to provide ADA accessible bathrooms. We're also providing a private area for tele-health conferences. Tele-services in general is a goal.

AH—Are the computers going to be in the room?

BW—Yes. We're piloting two libraries now. One in Leavenworth and the other we hope will be Oroville. Our biggest partners in this are Okanogan Behavioral Health and Thriving Together.

BW—Winthrop recently received a grant for \$258,000 to install solar on the roof. It'll generate almost all the electricity for the library.

BW—We're beginning to update our Strategic Plan. We just released our [Annual Report](#) showing a two or three-fold increase in downloadable or audiobooks. Also the mail-order library services have increased.

BW—Any questions?

CB asks AH about the new Winthrop Library.

AH—It's beautiful. A lot of people thought it was too much but it provides a lot of area for meetings—the Watershed Council met there. The set-up is really nice for virtual meetings.

BW—The two meeting rooms there are a collaboration with the town. The college uses it as well for classes.

CB—Do you have speakers' programs now?

BW—It's still mostly virtual. Plus a big speaker coming in is expensive.

CB—The Jack Nesbitt talk was really good.

BW—The librarians are amazing and one of their jobs is to arrange the speakers, getting people the local people want to see. Also people in the central library in Wenatchee can provide STEM projects for the branches.

CB—Someone once complained about Covid limitations at the libraries, but I think I informed her about the situation.

BW—Covid was hard for us. But we got the wifi services expanded.

CB—You can see people in the parking lots.

JN—It's been brought up a couple of times—at least three libraries in the county would like the wifi limited at night because it attracts people you don't want around.

BW—We had to turn it off for a little while in Brewster, because they weren't observing the 6' spacing requirement. I appreciate the comment and I agree that the wifi can attract people we don't want to attract. We'll work with the community if we know there's a problem.

JN—Typically, the ones in the park between midnight and 4:00 AM are the ones we want to discourage. I understand it's a good service, but there maybe be hours it shouldn't be turned on.

BW—I'll take note of that. I'm meeting with Oroville on Wednesday so I can talk to them about that.

Thanks.

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CB—Bringing in the authors was the greatest thing and maybe I can send in some suggestions.

BW—Please do. BW leaves.

CB—Jack Nesbit wrote about David Thompson, an explorer who came through this region for the Hudson Bay Co. *Sources of the River* is one book he wrote.

1:46:30—I’m Roni Holder-Diefenbach. I’m the Executive Director of the Economic Alliance.

JM—I’m John McDonald, Broadband Services, Okanogan PUD.

RG—I’m Ron Gadeberg, Director of Power Resource and Broadband Services, Okanogan PUD.

RDH—We’re here to talk about the PUD and broadband. You’ve earmarked \$500,000 of ARPA money for broadband.

JM—In the pasts, we applied for lots of grants with a match, but we weren’t awarded any of them. The grant we did get doesn’t have a match, so we looked at what projects we might get done internally. One project that came to mind could be constructed fairly quickly—a fiber to the home project in Conconully, approximately 370 homes and the “middle mile” between Conconully and Okanogan. It’s a \$3,600,000 project. \$1,500,000 is for the middle mile and \$2,100,000 for the fiber to the home. We’re looking to refine the numbers. We may self-fund and look to you to help us offset the cost. We’re not looking for a match, but looking for a donation to help offset the cost to the PUD.

RG—The bummer about this is we really wanted to leverage our match money but we’re at 0-7 in the grant process. And we had really good projects. Now there’s no grant in front of us until possibly next spring. But that doesn’t help with the ARPA money.

AH—We’ve got to have the money allocated by the end of next year and spent by the end of 2026.

RG—So one of our PUD commissioners asked us if there was something we could self-fund. We want to make sure our numbers are firm.

RHD—This is a project we did submit a grant for, but didn’t get accepted. It’s been updates and part of our original strategic plan. As you know Conconully doesn’t have very good service—cell phone and limited wireless.

AH—How does that area rank as far as meeting service.

RHD—It’s one of our highest priorities.

JM—Conconully and the “middle mile” have been included in four of our grant proposals.

Roni—The PUD is willing to spend its own money.

AH—If we said yes, when would the PUD commissioners determine if it’s in their budget.

RG—We’re right in the middle of the budget season. And we aren’t supposed to use money from electricity to install broadband.

AH—Would you know by February, 2024?

RG—Oh yes! We’d know by then. We should have the solid numbers in just a few weeks. I’m optimistic they’ll allow us to move forward.

AH—Personally, I would be willing to support this. But this money was set aside for broadband. If they say they can’t afford it, they can’t come back with another project that’s not broadband. It’s kind of a push to go for the broadband project.

RHD—OCEC has said if the PUD can’t use it, we sure can.

CB—I’m happy that it’s Conconully. They’ve got a recognized need.

RG—We got awesome support from the town and community in Conconully. Really good support locally. Better than other places. And the “middle mile” line was rebuilt about 15 years ago so the poles are pretty young and we’ve got the clearance. So getting to Conconully is pretty affordable.

JM—We can reduce the amount of “make ready” work, we’ll have more to spend on actual public use.

AH—I move to use the \$500,000 in PUD ARPA funds for the Conconully broadband project. We need to know by February.

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RHD—Reimbursement based?

AH—Yes.

LJ—Generally, the commissioners approve a resolution and then I send out a contract for the agency to look at and sign.

AH—It's federal dollars so it has all those things federal dollars always have.

Motion passes.

RG—I'll bring this back to our board and then it's in their court. I'm hopeful they'll say yes.

RHD—I can come and talk to them, too.

RG—And we'll push the engineering numbers.

AH—With good internet, it will help in emergencies.

2:04:30—RHD—Here's my second presentation. There's an emerging opportunity in Brewster. They'd been notified they were getting additional funding with a 5% match, but then the state changed the match to 10%. They'd already begun construction but the extra 5% wasn't in the budget. The Infrastructure Committee approved it, as did the Executive Committee of the Economic Alliance. They're requesting \$62,062.39. Brewster will pay the same amount for the \$1,200,000 project. They'd secured the \$1,100,000, but there's still the \$62,000 gap.

Discussion of the .09 Infrastructure budget which gives \$300,000 to spend over three years for emerging opportunities. Also discussion of whether Brewster would need the money in 2023 (making a budget supplemental necessary) or in 2024.

AH—I move to approve the \$62,062.39 for this emerging opportunity in Brewster. Motion passes.

RHD—Thank you!

Adjourn for lunch at 11:36.

2:23:00—Budget work session for Central Services.

Discussion of Central Services budgets #026, 196 (equipment replacement) and 015 (non-departmental)

3:18:40—AH and Cari Hall, County Auditor, discuss the .09 Infrastructure budget mentioned in the PUD discussion.

3:26:00—Tim—I was up on the roof today with Abel. I have to get you the pictures that I took. We came up with recommendations, but there were mostly the same. That corner that leaks, probably 98% is caused by the tree. A lot of the edge metal that comes out over the gable. That's got a lot of stuff underneath it. If we use (*inaudible*) tape...

AH—So it's not wicking into the building...

Tim—Yes. And almost all of the screws holding the roof on have the rubber washers disintegrating. We should re-screw the roof next spring.

Tim—The Annex roof—two panels have holes in them. 25' 6" long.

AH—Can you go to the lumber yard or wherever and buy new ones?

Tim—The problem getting the same profile because the panels are seamed.

AH—There are only about five profiles. It shouldn't be hard to get the right one.

Tim—I took a panel to check to be able to get the right profile.

Tim—The roof vent is for plumbing. It should be replaced. It's sagged down and making a puddle.

AH—Cut the tree down, get a price for the panels. Tell us how much it'll cost.

Tim—Pulling screws is easy but you have to put them back right.

Tim—The roof is pretty flat. We need to look above the ceiling to see what's going on there.

AH—Before winter, get the tree cut down.

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Tim—Or at least getting it away from the building.

CB—You want the right tree in the right place.

Tim—We won't get the Annex roof done this year—because of time and weather—I can patch it for just the winter. It's got 22 panels. Some have only one or two holes. Some are almost gone.

Tim—He's supposed to be doing the other Annex roof and the courthouse elevator roof. When I get the rest of the info from him and you'll have all the pictures, we can talk more.

CB—Can we combine the quote with the horse barn roof?

For several reasons, AH doesn't want to combine the quotes.

After a little more discussion of roof repair strategy and techniques, Tim leaves.

3:42:45—Commissioners pass Resolution 141-2023 about the \$62,000 for Brewster.

Commissioners also re-sign Resolution 124-2023 which misstated ARPA funds for Nespelem. The correct amount is \$276,000.

LJ—There's also the extension of the contract Shelley talked about this morning with Altra Borealis LLC.

LJ—Finally, for some reason the BOCC never approved minutes from August 9. That was an executive session held on a Wednesday. Commissioners approve the minutes.

Adjourn at 2:54.