

**Okanogan Board of Health (BOH)**  
**Tuesday, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 1:30 PM**

*These notes were taken by a County Watch volunteer. Every attempt is made to be accurate. Notes are verbatim when possible, and otherwise summarized. Note taker comments or clarifications are in italics. These notes are published at <https://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 the Okanogan County Commissioners' website at <https://www.okanogancounty.org>.*

**Present:**

Lauri Jones (LJ), Board of Health Director  
Mike Harr (MH), Okanogan County Health District  
Jim Wallace (JW), Health Officer  
Jon Neil (JN), County Commissioner, BOH board chairman  
Chris Branch (CB), County Commissioner, BOH board member  
Andy Hover (AH), County Commissioner, BOH board member  
Kait Schilling (KS), attorney  
Mariann Williams (MW), BOH board member  
Jim Wright (JWr), BOH board member  
Sara Bates, Director of Community Data, Thriving Together Northwest  
John McReynolds, CEO, North Valley Hospital  
(A Public Health nurse)

*Time stamps refer to three Zoom recordings on the County Watch website.*

**Summary of Important Discussions:**

- *State audit results in two minor findings*
- *Community assessment planned*
- *Tim Hargraves, Jody Ogden and Jill Gates to receive pay grade increases*
- *Pay scale and longevity hikes approved to ensure retention of qualified workers*
- *Medical officer says Covid numbers stable, one recent death; Increases in RSV and flu reported by State, new vaccines target high-risk populations, no "mass-vax" events planned; discussion on broadening water testing for diseases in sewage systems, Omak might benefit; need for more efficient renewal of certification for long-term care-givers*
- *November meeting scheduled for third Tuesday instead of second*

*LJ asks to add to the agenda a discussion on the employee handbook and on adjusting the salaries of three employees.*

7 :59 - Financial Report - *A state audit resulted in two minor findings : procurement policy not up to date—there hasn't been one for a long time, LJ has asked the State for help—and the form for OPEB (other postemployment benefits insurance, which the department hadn't had until changing insurance companies) needed to be signed. LJ says other districts report the same thing.*

*AH (asking about \$64,000 for Village Reach) : So it's an MOU (memorandum of understanding) to conduct a community assessment ?*

*LJ : Yes. They'll use the same contract as Chelan-Douglas.*

*MW : And professional services (with the law firm) ?*

*LJ : It's legal consultation for the employee handbook. The Treasurer's July report shows a beginning balance of \$2.2M and an ending balance of \$2.1M.*

AH : We have lots of cash on hand.

0 :50 (recording 2) - LJ : The Public Health District pays for annually required Public Health licenses for nurses and on site sewage inspectors. *She hadn't realized that they were among the few who weren't paying for them. MW says they've paid for ongoing education. They discuss State code requiring they provide personal protective equipment including boots every two years for environmental health inspectors,*

1 :44 (recording 3) - *There is a discussion on certification, an amendment to a resolution. KS qualifies licenses required as « any required license to complete the function of the job. » The Board needs more time to review this and will take it up again at their next meeting. LJ is happy about progress made with the attorney on the new employees manual.*

LJ : We have a cleaner version.

KS : We included last meeting's changes, all the (things) we need to follow. *A motion is passed to approve this new version of the manual.*

LJ : I appreciate Mariann's attention to detail. It looks a lot better now.

MW : We improved the layout and made substantive changes. It's readable, usable.

LJ : There's so much to keep up with on employment law.

17 :00 - Grade adjustments - *LJ asks the board to raise three employees one salary grade each : Tim Hargraves, communicable disease specialist, notary public and « public person» for the department ; Administrative Assistant/Support Services Specialist Judy Ogden, and Executive Secretary/Fiscal Coordinator Jill Gates.*

LJ : Public Health lost a huge part of our work force with the pandemic. *(We need to be able to) retain a professional work force.*

AH : You've put more duties on them.

LJ : Yes. Jill's control is immense. Tim is also our harm reduction support when one of the nurses is not available.

22 :25 - CB : He works well with staff. *He asks about the procedure of raising the grades, if a resolution is necessary. LJ prefers getting the board's blessing, which is consistent with the employee handbook, rather than asking for authorization to make these decisions alone. The cost increase will be \$500 a month in total. The board approves a motion to raise these positions.*

29 :15 - Pay Scale Raise - *AH says the Finance Committee decided the 8-step pay scale requested by LJ represented too many increases. They preferred aligning with the county's 5-step scale. LJ says there should be increases of 7% next year and 3% the two following years (compared with 2% for the county as medical staff requires more training) as well as increases in longevity : 7% after seven years, 10% after ten, 12% after 15 and 15% after 20.*

AJ : Lauri has been doing a lot of comparing.

KS : There's a lot of competition.

MW : Just ask how many workers are travelers. *She mentions an environmental health worker living at the RV campground at the fairgrounds.*

36 :22 - Medical Officer's report - JW (calling in from a public health conference in Wenatchee) : We're preparing for a heavy respiratory illness season, working on improving data collection systems for reporting Covid, encouraging people to report... One Covid death was reported in the past week . There has not been an increase (in these numbers) but the State Department of Health reports an increase in RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) and the flu... I'm working with schools, businesses, to get

reports of absenteeism (*which*) hasn't been heavier these past few months... Vaccines are coming in. Contact Public Health (*about the three vaccines*). (41:06) The new vaccines (*are for*) higher risk settings—health care, nursing homes. *He talks about the conference he's attending where they discussed all-newborn screening for rare diseases which are easy to catch. Says no new rules for non-Puget Sound water systems. They discussed current water testing for lead in schools, studies and simulations for bird flu, wildfire smoke, aging at home, aging and brain health, rural health and impact of maternity service closures, and impacts of Naloxone (overdose treatment) vending machines.*

47:30 - MW: Is there any work being on quicker ways of testing for Covid in a group aggregate way, like your work with the Brewster sewage system?

JW: More and more municipalities are adding on to it. Wenatchee is now reporting and there are several more on the dashboard. The respiratory illness dashboard that I referenced does still show wastewater data from the sites within Washington. The more municipalities that are added the more effective, the more specific it's going to be... Over time as we continue to monitor that we'll have better and better reliability...

LJ: The State only has the capacity to add one more site from Okanogan County so we'll be (seeing if) we can get Omak on line.

MW: It's unreliable to count on individual reporting. Is Okanogan County going to continue to give individual vaccinations?

JW: Not at this point in time unless there is a large shortage anywhere... *MW asks about elderly people being cared for at home by people who have CNA certification (for long term care) but are having difficulty getting information about ongoing education requirements and validity of their certification.*

MW: People are not able to take advantage (of long term care-takers) because they're not able to prove certification.

JW: There are some groups around the county who are trying to find solutions. I'll try to connect with the presenter and dig into this.

52:4 - Administrative Update - LJ: We would like to purchase a vehicle. We have five quotes from dealerships. It's for the local emergency response coordinator that we're looking for. We'd like to look at state surplus as well. *AH will talk to Jerry about that.*

LJ: we don't have applicants yet.

*The environmental health director has nothing to report. MW asks if he's going to the Barter Fair. JL says they'll be providing Narcan (antidote for overdoses) to the workers. MH says he's sending staff there.*

59:58 - *Meeting adjourned until October 26<sup>th</sup> for budget hearing and fee schedule.*

*The next public health meeting will be, exceptionally, the third week of the month on November 21<sup>st</sup>.*