

**Board of Okanogan County Commissioners**  
**Tuesday October 17, 2023 AM**

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 published at a later time, see:

[https://okanogancounty.org/offices/commissioners/commissioners\\_proceedings.php](https://okanogancounty.org/offices/commissioners/commissioners_proceedings.php).

Time stamps below are in real time. To locate specific topics, a clock 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:

- No Public Comment.
- Discussion of healthy sustainable economical food system with Blue Sky Minds founder Maria Hines; local farm to table options.
- Finance Committee: Coroner found a 2<sup>nd</sup> car that money has been earmarked for - 2022 Chevrolet Silverado \$39,702 -approved. Investment income, budgeting strategies, more budgeting on Wednesday.
- Public Works: grading roads and culvert cleaning – readying for winter. Current and planned projects.
- Adjourn for lunch – 11:34.

9:00 to 9:12

No audio

Board going over previous proceedings 10/2,3,9,10, & 11.

9:15

No public Comment

9:20

Approved proceedings/meetings

9:30

It was moved, seconded, and carried to approve the Consent Agenda:

1. Interlocal Grant agreement -ARPA \$250,000 Slope Stabilization - Town of Nespelem
2. Award – Two Tandem Axle Dump Trucks & Equipment Resolution 136-2023
3. Resolution 136-2023 \$500,000 ARPA funds for Broadband Project – Ok County Electric Coop

4. Joint Resolution 23-110-CC appointing Melva Calloway to Board of Trustees of NCRLD - Grant County.

9:31

Maria Hines (MH) – Founder and Executive Director of Blue Sky Minds explains the work she is involved with regarding economical, sustainable, equitable distribution of food in Ok County, Colville Reservation. They have received 2 different grants. She expects Ferry County to also be part of this group, eventually. MH – My background is I've owned 3 different restaurants in the Seattle area that were farm to table restaurants. She has acquired knowledge and experience of the struggles of farmers and small businesses. She has spent a lot of time in restaurants and in the food retail business, which is not an easy business to be in. There is usually a 95% failure rate in the first 5 years of a new restaurant business. Because of working with farmers here in Okanogan County for her Seattle restaurants, it drew her here to live. Wants to analyze the “food system” to utilize local growers, address food shortages.

JN believes there is a vast lack of knowledge of where food comes from. The education isn't out there. AH also shares that the number of beef cattle in Okanogan County has really dwindled. It's really wearing on ranchers. AH – I hate to be dependent on South America for beef. JN – there is quite a difference between the average size of farms in Canada and here.

AH noted that Wyoming passed legislation that individual farmers could sell directly to consumers.

MH – When the passes are closed, I remember when we had distribution problems during the pandemic. Money is available in grants for farm to school programs. We are talking a lot about ways for schools, restaurants, etc. to purchase food locally.

MH – I started an Okanogan County food system roundtable with about 90 stakeholders such as farmers, tribal members, other community members discussing the challenges and opportunities. The 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting is November 2, at the Colville Tribal Center. I try to move the meeting location around the county. Wants to conduct an assessment. I've also partnered with WSU, students of technical writing, and hired an indigenous foundation, Life Foundation, on the Colville Reservation to perform a food system assessment on the reservation. We will blend the two assessments. This should be done by the end of the year. The assessment is guided by the roundtable discussions. Once this is complete, I plan to work on a 10-year action plan. Determine who are the decision makers. Where are the food shortages. Who has land to farm? What does the plan look like. Who can implement the plan? I'm young, I'm a hardworking, I'm pretty dedicated. We'll see how this all goes.

JN explains to MH that there was an abundance of cherries this year, maybe something could be done with those. MH is interested in a robust gleaning program. JN will forward a couple of names to MH. CB talks about the custom, cultural, traditions of Okanogan County and notes there is already a movement of people interested in this and will share that information with MH.

MH thanks the BOCC for their time and hopes to be able to schedule another time to meet with them.

10:08

Finance Committee Meeting; Treasurer, Pam Johnson (PJ), Auditor Cari Hall (CH), and Finance Manager Lisa Schreckengast (LS). Dave Rodriguez (DR) Coroner and Gene Davis (GD) Deputy Coroner.

DR begins by telling the BOCC that earlier there were earmarked funds for 2 vehicles for the Coroners Office. We purchased the first one locally but couldn't find what we needed for the second one. We finally found what we need at a dealership in Lake Stevens. We were looking for low mileage. The one we'd like is a 2022 Chevrolet Silverado for \$39,702.50 + taxes, licensing, and equipment. We just need your approval.

10:13

It was moved, seconded, and carried to approve the purchase, and designate the Chair to sign.  
*DR and GD leave after approval of the purchase.*

PJ begins the finance committee discussion. Are there any questions about cash on hand or investment returns?

AH -Is the investment interest still going up?

PJ – yes, not sure though.

PJ brings up the Lake Irrigation District that has been over budget by \$100,000.

Lot of other budgeting discussion.

10:35

PJ – we also need to re-visit the investment policy. CH talks about the 'small and attractive' definitions for different office equipment. AH would like to look into this after completion of the budget. CH would like to get it done sooner.

11:16

Josh Thomson (JT), County Engineer reports on maintenance and roads: currently, there is grading and culvert cleaning. Also, most all of the bridges in the County have gotten their sealing completed.

JT to update on current and upcoming Public Works Construction projects; The West Fork of the Salmon Creek - will be meeting with Wa Dept of Fish & Wildlife. Upcoming guardrail projects. The Cameron Lake Road is taking a long time. - still no word back from the Tribe. The Twisp River Road project is about Federal funding. Public Works has incurred costs.

On the Loomis-Oroville Road – We do have our right of way through BLM (Bureau of Land Management). The Hwy 97 plata to Ophir is close to being completed. There is a Chesaw drainage project and Guardrail project for 2025.

11:35

There will be more budget work on Wednesday. Adjourned for lunch. There is still work to do in the PM.