

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Tuesday, August 29, 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 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.

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:

- Public Comment: Isabelle Spohn explains minimal public input on Multi Hazards Mitigation Plan (MHMP). Too short of notice. Isabelle asks about the Emergency Management meeting scheduled for tomorrow – will there be public input there? She received the Public Records regarding Community Fire Plan and MHMP. Ruth Hall notes this rain should bring fire risk down and help with current firefighting efforts. Ruth asks about whether tomorrow's meeting might be good for input from the Chiliwist Firewise Group regarding ingress and egress in case of fire.
- HR/Risk Manager/Auditor Update- Increasing long term employee's pay grade.
- County Fair Issues: Stella Columbia, Maurice Goodall, the Chris Branch for chain of command. BOCC voted to give CB authority to make decisions regarding fairgrounds. The last couple of years, the fair has cost more money than it has taken in – BOCC trying to build up the fair – as celebration of Okanogan County.
- District Court Staffing- struggling to keep staff, staff burnout. Discussed increasing pay grades, overtime budget. Will compare with other counties for ideas.
- Public Works: Public Meeting held with residents of Barnholt Loop Road to consider decreasing speed limit to 25 MPH from 35 MPH – County Engineer instructed to prepare for a public hearing.
- Adjourns at 11:58 until 1:30 in the afternoon.

9:00

CB asks JN about the last Transportation meeting. JN states it was pretty typical – reaching out to the communities and they haven't announced the Regional Director yet. CB thinks whomever it is should reside in the region.

Not much conversation, AH looking at revenue reports.

9:15

Isabelle Spohn (IS) has a couple of questions in regards the Multi Hazard Mitigation Plan (MHMP). The first opportunity for public involvement was in 2021 during the Cub Creek & Cedar Creek fires. People were busy with the fires and the public comment period was too short. The next public comment period was in 2022, and by the time it was sent to the newspaper of record, it was too late. Therefore, public involvement has been minimal. IS – Also, I don't think the meeting tomorrow will help with (public comment) due to the short time for notice once again. I recommend that you take a look at it again, because nobody has commented when in the middle of a fire. IS asks if there is anything more about tomorrow's meeting? CB is looking. JN states that it is his understanding that it is a meeting with all the players in the agreement (Fire Chiefs, County, City, Tribal, etc.) IS- I filed a public records request regarding both the MHMP and the Community Fire Plan and see the payments made to NW Management but nothing has been updated.

CB reports that the Emergency Management Committee meeting (scheduled for tomorrow) - he's not sure it's an open meeting and is not being run virtually. IS states that she thinks Nancy Farr is the representative from our area (The *Methow Valley*). There hasn't been hardly any notification – no zoom.

Ruth Hall (RH) comments that the rain is sure welcome and hopes this will help with our fire risk and also the current firefighting. After hearing the previous question, she had wondered whether tomorrow's emergency meeting would be a good time for the Chiliwist Firewise community to be involved to discuss ingress and egress but was told this is a committee and not a public meeting. It was for all holders who signed on to the Emergency Management Plan. JN states that he was a part of this group when he was the Mayor of Oroville.

CB notes that officials need to take into account the MHMP and Community Fire Plan when making decisions regarding road vacations.

CB states that on that note, the BOCC should explore how to help the public be involved.

The next agenda item; tentative discussion – District Court staffing issues has moved to 10:30
LJ reports the Conservation District will not be available to discuss Title 3 funding.

BOCC takes a break

9:40

Shelley Keitzman (SK) HR/Risk Manager and Cari Hall (CH), County Auditor in to discuss moving an employee in the Auditors Office up to a Step 5. They have the knowledge and experience and have been with the County for 8 years. It was moved, seconded, and carried to approve Resolution 114-2023 increasing the employee's wages to step 5.

9:46

It was moved, seconded, and carried to go into Executive Session under 42.30 110 I I for ten minutes with Esther Milner, Civil Deputy.

9:53

CB states that everyone is positive at the fairgrounds. AH reviews chain of command – Maurice Goodall or Stella Columbia before coming to the BOCC.

CB went through the list of things needing to be done at the fairgrounds with Maurice.

JN makes a motion giving CB, BOCC Chair authority to make decisions at the fairgrounds. This was seconded and carried. I don't like to do some things without all the BOCC input states CB. CB notes that crazy things may come up. AH notes that sometimes, the FAC can't agree, and CB would need to step in.

It was moved, seconded, and carried to approve contract with Keona Kendle for Saturday on the Main Stage in the amount of \$398 + 2 fair passes.

10:00

CB asks about how the finances came out after last year's fair. AH states that we lost money. We had to put more in the budget AH – we had some good gate money but still not what was needed to keep the fair afloat.

AH reminisces when he was a boy going to the fair. He never took animals, but really enjoyed the equipment.

AH – 2 years in a row – each year \$250,000, but we are trying to build up the fair. CB states we need to be able to relay the purpose for our investments in the fair. It is a celebration of Okanogan County – our way of life. CB – one additional item. Maurice also talks about how the fairgrounds is also used for emergency management.

10:30

District Court Staffing- Darla Schreckengost (DS) – we normally have 7 office staff and we're down one and struggling to keep the part time position. We've lost 3 staff and need to be able to retain. We are asking for an overtime budget. DS is worried about burnout of staff, and she too is burned out.

AH asks what the job title is LPA-2. LPA-1 is entry level. We would like to bump our civil person up to a 3 position. CB asks if their budget can handle this, since they have been down staff.

DS – the next question is, since everyone is court all the time, would like to increase the 3's to 4's. AH suggests that DS discuss options with SK, HR and check to see what other counties are doing.

DS – I will work with HR

CB suggests creating a structure that works for you.

10:42

DS also wants to look at administrative wages. Judge Short is worried about filling her positions when she leaves. DS- the last 9 years have been such horrible stress for me. I am totally burned out.

10:45

More discussion regarding fair needs; Canopy rentals need to be decided.

Vouchers are paid.

11:00

Josh Thomson (JT), County Engineer updates on maintenance and road conditions. Hoping for rain. JT has talked with DOT regarding the Rodeo Trail Drive. Working on the Foster Bridge in Mazama. CB asks if the DOT is accepting comments. The shop projects are moving along. Tonasket is getting their siding and roof on.

JT reports there are some Public Works positions open in the office.

11:11

It was moved, seconded, and carried to approve the consent agenda as presented.

1. Approve purchasing Bulk Salt from LTI, Inc. - Public Works

2. Award pond 1 upper liner Replacement contract to NW Linings & Geoflexible Products, Inc
3. ARPA Request #2 Methow River crossing design – Town of Winthrop
4. ARPA Request #5 Salaries, Equipment, & Supplies - Community Action Council
5. CDBG Ps Grant request #13, Public Services & General Administration -CAC
6. CDBG CV 1 Grant request #13 Admin/Subsistence payments/food banks – CAC

Moved, seconded, and carried to approve Resolution 115-2023

11:30

Public meeting – discuss Barnholt Loop Road Speed Limit change from 35 MPH to 25 MPH
the BOCC had sent out a mailing to add Barnholt Loop Road residents to request they come to a public meeting. It was well attended with lots of participation. The consensus appeared to be that 35 MPH is too fast for the kids, dogs, horses, and people walking on the road.

AH asked whether widening it would help. JT and others stated that if a road was widened, then people drive faster.

It was moved, seconded, and carried to direct the County Engineer to set up a public hearing on the speed limit change. CB thanked everyone for coming and giving input.

11:58

Meeting adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.