

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners Tuesday May 9, 2023 AM

Present:

Chris Branch (CB) – BOCC Chair, District 1

Jon Neal (JN) – BOCC, District 3

Andy Hover (AH), BOCC Vice Chair, District 2 (Not in attendance)

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:

- BOCC in process of appointing a position for the Health District Board.
- Public Comment Period: questions about cattleguard franchises, and victim of 2020 fire asking for 911 fee waiver,
- Planning Director in to discuss process for changing address & naming a road when there are enough residences that require this.
- County Treasurer updating BOCC on finances/payments of taxes-foreclosure notices sent for nonpayment of property tax, interest rate on investments raising to 4.5%,
- County Auditor-one position open, business has picked up since Covid, working with vendor to transfer data to new computer system – may need to change 'going-live' date.
- Public Works: Cattleguard franchise application approval, Bid opening for Twisp River Road Bridge repair (2 bids received).
- Adjourned 12:05.

Meeting opened at 9:00 with JN and CB in attendance.

LJ reporting that she received a letter of interest from Denise Varner for the open position on the Public Health Board. BOCC appoints this position, Health Director wants to know if BOCC will appoint, does there need to be some solicitation. Per LJ, BOCC appoints these positions based on Agency recommendations.

JN would like to talk with OCOG regarding this open position.

LJ brings up that there needs to be an agreement between Okanogan County and the Cortner Contractor. A number of invoices have been submitted to be paid. The contractor has located the

utilities.

LJ also reports that the MJ Neal contractor will be coming to the BOCC meeting this PM.

JN wants to know where the liquor license being requested will be used. LJ states at Twisp River Ranch – contact person is Janie Moore Tieton for June 9th & 10th.

9:17

Public Comment Period: Ruth Hall asks questions about cattle franchises in general. Who owns them and maintains them? Is there any County responsibility other than to permit them? CB states that the rancher owns and maintains them. There is no other obligation to the County unless they are removed. Peter Goldmark (PG) reports that he lost his entire ranch, house and all in the Cold Springs Fire in September 2020. He explained that he has been paying taxes to the County for 60 years and has done a lot of volunteer work for the County such as on the Planning Commission. He is asking the BOCC if they could waive the 911 fee due to this hardship. He had spoken to Gene in Planning who stated that he could not waive the fee. PG has been working with the Tribe on clearing debris and other things associated with the fire. He will be needing to move the location of the house to a fire-resistant place. PG states this fire was a terrible tragedy for them – no trucks came to help at all. He states his request is more ceremonial than anything else.

Both JN and CB expressed their concern and willingness to do this if they are able to do this. JN states that some public funds, we are unable to do a waiver. CB explains how the County waived the dumping fees at the landfill for victims of this fire and PG acknowledged this and thanked them for this. CB also asked if PG's taxes have been adjusted due to the fire. PG was unaware of any changes in taxes. CB states that he will see if he can waive the 911 fees or not. Due to the change in the home location, the address will probably be having to change also. PG thanks the BOCC for their consideration, time, and service.

9:28

Pete Palmer (PP), Planning Director has been asked to come to the meeting. She is not really sure but believes it has to do with addressing. CB states we could talk about the process. PP sent an e-mail to Bud Gardner, after talking with the Civil Deputy, regarding the need for the road to have a name now that so many people live there. If he wants to keep the same access to his home, he would need to work with other property owners in order to name the road. This would require 60% of them to agree on the name and then, a \$190 fee. PP – our goal is to make sure emergency services can get to them. One resident, Mr. Blackstead is willing to pay the fee. There is no fee if the County names the road.

10:11

CB explains that he is familiar with Grants when he was on the Community Action Board. CH – A lot of grants have a high percentage of administrative costs. I've been working with the Sheriff's Office on their grants.

10:14 CB states he has gotten other complaints regarding the time it is taking get a site analysis. PP – doesn't take complaints lightly. I try to explain things to people who call. We're under a lot of pressure in our office. We are telling people what they can and can't do with their property, and people don't generally like this. With staff, having a good attitude matters CB -Yes, that can have a domino effect. Just do the best you can.

9:45

PP – We'll get it taken care of and smooth it over. CB – I just wanted to let you know that I got the message.

9:55

Pam Johnson (PJ), County Treasurer – We are now down to 3 bags of mail from tax season. Most taxes are paid. CB – How are things going with the TV Districts? PJ – I haven't pulled up a list of those yet. PJ – We have sent out foreclosure letters (*to people who have not paid their taxes timely*) about 400. We still have the one person not paying her 2020 year on the Lake District. CB – So, we're on the verge of foreclosure? PJ – She said that she would not pay the extortion again. PJ-I hate to do it, but it is what we have to do. I want it in our records to show our due diligence (*numerous phone calls*) CB- It is on us (BOCC) to let her out of this, but it would make quite a precedence. PJ – Other than that, things are going smoothly. Next week we have a finance meeting. JN asks PJ about interest on investments. PJ – Interest is raising to 4.5%. PJ- “they” are still anticipating some recession but don't know the future. No crystal ball. PJ – People ask about County finances in the banks, but cities and counties can only bank with banks that are 100% collateralized. They have to be solid. We have to be in solid investments.

10:05

JN asks if all revenues are looking normal. PJ -Yes, we can start looking at how revenues are coming in.

10:08

Cari Hall (CH), County Auditor begins by explaining how overtime looks under different grants. A lot of the work is done by exempt employees. We track our time and fully loaded rate. Sometimes, a stipend is utilized

CH – Generally, overall things are looking good in the Auditors Office. We have one position that is open. I have been interviewing and am hoping to have the position filled this week. CB -we're also starting to pick up a little bit (*since Covid slow down*) We're now seeing a line-up at certain times of the day. Our quarterly payment from licensing went down because of slow business, but the business is coming back to normal.

CH- No April election this year. In finance, we're moving along. Lisa Schreckengast is doing our Department, which is all done by spread sheets. CH -I received an e-mail from the State Auditor's Office – Okanogan County is on deck for the 2 year accountability audit. I'm always open to that. We have a new lead this year. On the federal and financial, that falls on PJ and I.

10:19

CB question what did we do with ARPA funds that was so easy? Purchase of buildings or equipment? I'm curious how the ARPA report came out.

CH -Looking at basic guidelines of the grant. I like audits because we don't know everything. It's guidelines.

10:28

CH – We've started our new accounting system – MUNIS, and we had decided early on that we did not want to do this gradually, but we wanted to be ready to go online January 2024. CH has been unhappy with the Vendor suggesting to go through stages/tiered, and she does not want to do it that way. It is too difficult for staff. CH wants to be sure BOCC is supportive if she pushes back to 'going-live' date so that everything can come on at once. CH -It's not like we don't have a workable system right now. *Both JN and CB are supportive of whatever CH determines is best. They trust her.*

10:47

LJ runs by some e-mails, and other ordinances with JN & CB (*I was unable to hear just what they were referring to.*)

10:54

CB got an e-mail from PP and states that maybe they should go into executive session with Civil

Deputy. JN & CB decided 11:45 might be best as there is a public hearing coming up on a cattleguard franchise and bid opening with Public Works.

11:00

Public Hearing on a Cattleguard Franchise application (Res.#01-2023) for OC Cattle Co LLC on Fancher Road.

Anna Randall (AR), representing Public Works explains a little about the cattleguard franchise process. AR states there are 300 cattleguards throughout the County. They are owned and maintained by the applicant and are up for renewal every 5 years. Sometimes, the specs change and some are grandfathered in. The County may help move them in cooperation with the owner. Public Comment: Ruth Hall thanks AR for her explanation.

11:08

Moved, Seconded, and Carried to approve Cattleguard Franchise

11:15

Bid Opening for CRP No. 9114-06 Twisp River Road Bridge Deck Repair. Public Works is represented by Shasta Stidman. There are 2 bids:

Razz Construction for \$897,851 and Combined Construction for \$940,612

CB notes the Engineer's estimate was \$530,000. Contract award subject to Public Works review.

11:30

JN & CB review May 1st minutes. Moved, Seconded, and Carried to approve 5/1/23 minutes.

11:39

Maurice Goodall (MG), Emergency Manager, talks with BOCC about different areas where there is flooding, etc and he has taken picture of; Bonaparte Creek, Preston Road, Conconully, and the Methow.

11:45

Moved, Seconded, and Carried to go into Executive Session under RCW with 110(i), with Esther Milner (Civil Deputy) and Pete Palmer (Planning Director) until 12:00

12:05

Adjourned