

**Board of Okanogan County Commissioners**  
**Tuesday March 26, 2024 AM**

Present:

Jon Neal (JN) – BOCC Chair, District 3

Andy Hover (AH) – BOCC Vice Chair, District 2

Chris Branch (CB) – BOCC, District 1

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://okanogancaounty.org/offices/commissioners/commissioners\\_proceedings.php](https://okanogancaounty.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.
- Carelon Behavioral Health Organization (BHSAO) representatives in to explain to BOCC their contract with the Wa State Health Care Authority (HCA) for Crisis (Substance Abuse and Mental Health) Services in three County groups in the State of Washington; Spokane (which includes Okanogan County), Southwest Washington, and Pierce County. Carelon is a for-profit nationwide organization – part of Elevance health. Okanogan Behavioral HealthCare (OBHC), which is a subcontractor of Carelon also joined the discussion.
- Public Works: poor road conditions coming out of winter in Chesaw & Havillah, also, Libby Creek Road, Foster Bridge Road Repair. Landfill cleaning out, green waste program, Whistler Canyon trailhead, and possible kiosk in Loomis area. Report on progress of new county shops.
- Adjourned at 11:57

9:15

No Public Comment

9:30

Carelon Behavioral Health representatives; Leah Becknell (LB), Christal Eshelman (CE), and Brad Backus(BB) – lobbyist. This is a for-profit organization that is contracted through Wa State HealthCare Authority (HCA) for crisis services in 3 regions of Washington; North Central Region/Spokane – Okanogan County included, Pierce County, and Southwest Washington.

LB stated they came to share the history of this organization and to share what they do for crisis services in the State. Their colleagues from Okanogan Behavioral Health Care (OBHC) are also in attendance. OBHC subcontracts with Carelon to provide crisis mental health/substance/homeless services in Okanogan County. Carelon is a nationwide company affiliated with Elevance Health. They have been serving Washington State for 7 years now. The crisis services began just a little over 4 years ago, when they were awarded the contract. *They shared a slide show of their purpose and services*

*provided by their organization, in conjunction with their local contracted services.*

AH asks questions regarding their relationship with OBHC, because the County authorizes \$900,000 per year to OBHC for their MH/Substance Use/Homeless services.

LB stated they have a great need for qualified Direct Crisis Responders (DCR), especially in the cities where it is needed most. They also contract with a crisis hotline to meet crisis calls. They are working under the new integrated managed care model for services. Carelon, however, is not a managed care organization.

JN stated that he watched the news this morning from Spokane and they are making it mandatory for people that have been determined to need Involuntary Treatment (ITA's) to go to treatment. LB isn't familiar with that requirement and wonders about the legality.

BB gives an overview of how he works to educate the legislature on the need for these services. He talks about how the legislature is focusing on Fentanyl and other substance use disorders in particular, along with Mental Health.

AH is interested in funding questions – especially if funding is earmarked and asks LB if there are more funding sources that the County or OBHC hasn't tapped yet.

*This discussion with Carelon went until 10:52 when they brought the OBHC members to the table to join the discussion.*

10:52

AH asks what they need for crisis services here in Okanogan County.

Dave McKay (DM) responds about what OBHC is doing so far. DM – OBHC has 3 DCR's and a Mobile Crisis Team. If we were to be able to do this 24/7, we would need funding for 3 more Mobile Crisis Teams. However, we do need to maintain civil liberties vs taking it away with an ITA, when possible.

Other OBHC staff responded that there is a need to prioritize staffing, not just get more DCR's. They are looking for practical solutions. “We can ITA someone but it is very difficult to engage someone in services and sometimes, they get ITA'd quite a few times. (*with no progress*). The most ITA's we've had in a month were 12.

AH – We have an old contract with the County & OBHC and we need to revise to be more current.

11:23

JN – This has all been a good discussion. I learned a lot and I hope others – those on-line did also. AH notes that having these (mentally ill, and substance abuse) people in the County jail is really difficult.

OBHC staff member notes that Carelon has been a good partner.

11:26

Josh Thomson (JT), County Engineer updates on Public Works

JT – the landfill needs cleaning up, and the Environmental Protection Agency wants to do a cultural resource study.

JT-there has been a problem with the green waste program. We are unable to take plastic bags which

has the waste in them. We need to get the word out, because the Cities has green waste in plastic bags, but under this program, we are unable to take it in plastic bags.

AH asks whether anything has been done up Libby Creek yet. JT states they have been waiting for winter to thaw out. The crews are up in the area and I will be going up there to see what can be done. AH wants to know how much over-run there will be for completing the 2 shops. JT thinks around \$50,000.

JT reports on Foster Bridge repair – we need to go through the easement process and permitting. JT also reports that the \$\$ from the (unused) Cameron Lake Road repair has been transferred to STP Chip Seal project but is having some problems with DOT on this. JT will see how it goes.

JT – The Whistler Canyon Trailhead project is happening with vegetation management right now. We have a quote for a permanent toilet of \$50,000, but it only costs \$1000 a year for porta potties. We might look around for grants.

CB heard from Dale Swedberg about putting up a kiosk sign in Loomis about the Sinlahekin Trail.

AH – We can look at some right of ways that we (*the county*) have. JT – The only county owned land is right of way, other than the little fire station.

CB states it would just be a 6x6 sign with a roof over it.

11:47

Crab reports have been submitted per JT.

11:49

The Board approves the Certification of traffic diversion for law enforcement and road fund expenditures for fish passage/barrier removal.

JT – the only thing on the Consent Agenda is cattleguard renewals.

CB reports that he had a call about Shellrock Point rocks in the road. This is for DOT to maintain.

11:55

CB also notes the 'leaning' Pateros sign needs to be fixed.

11:57

Meeting adjourned