

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Tuesday February 11th, 2025, 3:30 p.m.

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Present:

John Neal (JN), BOCC District 3
Andy Hover (AH), BOCC District 2
Nick Timm (NT), BOCC District 1
Stacey McClellan (SM), Deputy Clerk of the Board

Time stamps refer to the time on the wall clock. An AV Capture archive of the meeting on this date is available at:
https://okanogancounty.org/departments/boards/live_streaming_of_meetings.php

Summary of Important Discussions:

- Commissioner Hover expresses dismay that local groups not meeting criteria expect rate reductions for events at fairgrounds; \$2M spent on improvements in recent years and County running \$300,000 deficit; asks clerk to temper his "abrupt" remarks in 2-27 meeting minutes
- Commissioner Timm say he and Fairgrounds Manager Nick Bates have plan to bring in stage, line up acts, put Agriplex on map for Seattle-Spokane travelers
- Hover, evoking possible jail closure, suggests people might go in for safety tax
- LTAC (*Lodging Tax Advisory Committee*) "at large" position candidates approved.
- Contract for Opioid settlement money, \$14,000, sent out
- Commissioners sign partnership agreement for Tunk Mt. communications tower
- JN mentions land use bill he learned about in Olympia, is suspicious about EPA involvement

3:28 - AH: I want to clarify something. The other day when I was gone someone commented that I said no to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the Mule Deer Foundation as far as giving them a break on stuff. I want to make sure the two of you know that when I voice my opinion it's my opinion and staff a lot of times will take it for "that's what the

commissioners said". If you don't agree with me, *(say it)*. ...I love the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the Mule Deer Foundation. I just happened to say "Figure out how much half the *(Agriplex)* rental is, maybe I'll donate some to you to make up for that BUT in the government aspect, everybody and their brother asks us to reduce fees over there. ...We're running on a \$300,000 deficit over there so we can't just give away things to people...

NT: ...About a quarter of his budget disappears every year from the rentals, 20% we gave those back as in-kind donations-

AH: Because they fit the criteria: either you do something for the poor and infirmed-

NT: That's what I mean. We allow the lower pay rate.

AH: They meet our requirements of a reduction. Those are the only reductions we can make. They do a great job, habitat... *(but)* you can't just give certain entities a reduction to a fee, that's why people got in trouble prior to us...

NT: ...We're trying to raise the rates again.

JN: It's kind of a Catch 22, it kind of looks worse than it is, because all the security for the events, it comes out and doesn't really show it. Hard to follow unless you figure it out.

AH: So when I said no, and it was abrupt, it was because I was pissed. How are we going to keep that thing going, for these people to even have the use of it, if we keep giving reductions? *NT agrees, thinks they would understand that. JN has no problem with helping with things that "fit in there", AH says things like Special Olympics or Spay and Neuter Clinic.*

JN: Wish there was some way we could prioritize the clientele, because there's people that come from all over who can duly afford it, and take advantage of it.

NT: Some people rolled up there in Teslas, with Seattle plates. No joke.

JN: That's a rabbit hole I don't need to go down.

AH: ...I speak my mind. But it's not a decision of the board when I open my mouth. Either nobody says no, and they're in tacit agreement, or it's no, and we want to go some other way.

JN: That was her issue with it, there wasn't much discussion *(referring to fee reductions at the Agriplex for the fore-named organizations)*. *AH says he's been through this issue time and time again, not giving breaks to those who don't meet the criteria.*

NT: Realistically to keep the fairgrounds open we're either going to have to do something like reducing or eliminating the fee reduction in the very near future, Nick (*Bates, fairgrounds manager*) and I had a good discussion. We've got a plan to keep it going, got a stage coming in there, a lot of good acts coming in, making this like a stop for people going from Seattle to Spokane. We aren't going to get anybody coming in here from Okanogan, but if they want some gas money coming through, we can do that, and we're trying that.

AH: We put in probably 2M dollars a couple years ago for a new arena, new bucking chutes, footing, new track, new track railing, we put in that much to make it a good place for the county and guess what people want? They want it for free. They can't afford \$20 a day or \$50 a day. And they want it groomed every day.

NT: That doesn't math.

AH: They feel that it sits as a county-owned deal and we should be just shelling out money for kids to do that. And then we've got a jail that we're talking about maybe closing, and public safety issues, people complaining (that we) don't give the sheriff enough money. What would you like us to remove?

JN: Or raise taxes on?

AH: They might get on board with a public safety tax. I know sometimes I'm short and crass but- They take a look at their agenda, approval of January 27th meeting minutes, and talk about rewording AH's "no" to the Mule Deer and Rocky Mountain Elk foundations' request for fee reduction, to make it sound less emphatic and to refer to the criteria of the fee schedule. They have a discussion on punctuation, where NT is in favor of the "oxford comma" (placed before "and" at the end of a list) but the other commissioners are against. They talk about AI.

JN: Hopefully AI is smart enough to filter out what I'm thinking.

SM: You do realize that AI is going to have projected an image of ourselves based on everything and it's going to be a screen where our children and grandchildren can talk to us in the future.

JN: So you've seen Futurama. *Laughter.* Mentions of *Star Trek, Terminator.* ... (*Public Works*) told me they're going to put a traffic counter up by Liberty Bell High School, once the snow is off. *NT suggests more editions of punctuation, says he's a writer, that's what he does.*

3:55 - NT: I've got two "at large" positions for LTAC (*Lodging Tax Advisory Committee*). They're good dudes. *NT and AH look at the names. The nominees have passed their background checks. They are approved. NT has*

questions about a Tunk Mt. partnership. JN explains it's a use sharing agreement for the communications tower.

4:00 - JN: Speaking of the diversion thing, Commissioner Overbay (*Chelan-Douglas commissioner*)-the contract has been sent out for that (opioid settlement money?), I think \$14,000 for the first portion of it. Everybody on board to do that? (Chief Civil Deputy) Esther Milner had a concern about that, if someone pulls out, the other partners have to fill in that void. But everybody else has the right to pull out at the same time. *JN makes a call to Dispatch Center's Mike Worden to ask about the Forest Service Agreement for Tunk Mt., the need for the Sheriff's office to sign, says he signed his part as commissioner board chair but questioned the other part. Announces that Worden will be by to sign the agreement.*

After signing EMS district vouchers JN, recently back from a visit to the state legislature, tells AH he's forwarded him a couple of land use bills; one is under the GMA (Growth Management Act).

JN: Some of the details on that are kind of- It gets the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) into it, which is never a good thing, through the water use part of it.

4:17 - *Meeting adjourned.*