

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners

Tuesday, April 2nd, 2024, 1:30 p.m.

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Present:

Andy Hover (AH), BOCC District 2
Chris Branch (CB), BOCC District 1 (*via Zoom*)
Jon Neil (JN), BOCC District 3
Laney Johns (LJ), Clerk of the Board
Shelley Keitzman (SK), Human Resources/Risk Pool
Stephan Wolak (SW), Chief Corrections Officer
David Bowen (DW), Dept. Ecology Regional Director
Robert Grimm (RG), Superior Court judge
Maurice Goodhall (MG), Emergency Manager

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:

- For \$84,000, heartbeat detector and ankle bracelet monitors to help depleted jail staff deal with health crises; corrections officer training on the rise, Okanogan awaits graduates
- Records Coordinator position to be reinstated, Deputy Board Clerk will apply
- County administrator discussion revived
- What to show in refreshed version of county website video
- Regional director from Ecology forecasts 60% to 70% water availability, AH recommends meeting between Methow Watershed Council and Ecology, sediment study results awaited before dismantling Enloe Dam, Commissioner Hover asks about funds for water bank and Aeneas Lake irrigation district
- Resigning Juvenile Court/Superior Court administrator to be replaced by two employees
- Courtroom renovation discussed amid uncertainty over courts' eventual location
- Emergency manager must transfer hundreds of sandbags to new storage site

1:30 - SK: The Risk Pool is going to reimburse each county \$25,000 for some of these (*she shows a picture*) detection devices for the jail.

SW: There's two different types of (complementary) technology—

AH: What are they detecting?

SW: One would be installed in holding cells and are modules for both men and women that are in high risk medical cells... it measures changes in heart rate. *This can be used to give an alert in the event of a suicide attempt, which can happen when one is in a cell alone. It would cost \$84,000 to put these in three men's and three women's holding cells.* The other would be used with people who we are aware are having medical issues (*hunger strike, coming off fentanyl...*). *It's an ankle bracelet that monitors eight vital signs.* There is the potential that the person could manage to remove it. Seven units with the control module: just under \$25,000. Each one is set to the person's normal signs and alerts personnel to any changes including if the inmate removes it. He passes out the promotional material. There is only one company in the US that is producing these so AH says they wouldn't need a competitive bid. Wolak has seen Chelan's installation, the first in the state, it works well and they plan to expand.

SW: It doesn't do a diagnosis but alerts the staff to any change, which is incredibly is very valuable give the very sick individuals we have in our facility... AH wonders about \$50,000 in LATC (Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency) funds allocated to a court microfilm project that hasn't started yet, considers the reimbursement.

JN: It would minimize some of our liabilities.

AH: Because of the staffing shortage, they'd be able to cover more ground. He mentions a certain 160 fund for juvenile corrections and jail, says they really need to hire an RN for the jail.

CB: Instead of this?

AH: We could do both.

CB: Is there the potential the Risk Pool would consider reducing our (insurance) rates? (Laughter.)

SW: We all know that there's been some unfortunate circumstances in the jail. We've also had three attempted suicides that have been caught by the staff. A staff member just happened to see one on a camera. These are the sorts of circumstances that have been keeping me up at night, given me an ulcer. *This is the sort of reasonable solution he has been hoping for. CB thinks it would be cost effective. The human cost too, says SW.*

CB: I would move to—you can figure out where you're going to get the money (laughter) —purchase this. *The LATC fund interest might even cover it.*

AH: Laney, would you see what the ending fund balance for that is?

CB: The nurse thing, that would just be one?

SW: ...The tendency is two... (covering) 12-hour shifts seven days a week. There is a nursing shortage. CB suggests asking at Aging and Adult Care what a competitive salary would be. CB finally moves to approve the purchase of monitoring bracelets using LATCF (Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency) funds, directing the Chief Deputy of Corrections to do the necessary budget work. Motion approved. CB asks about staff situation. We have three remaining open positions, three in pre-academy

FTO (*field training officer*); the state is going from four to nine correctional officer training academies this year... until I get everyone through the academy I'm very limited as to what I can do with them. *He says two employees are quitting for family reasons. Because others share the same staffing problems, north central Washington jails are considering setting up their own academy and getting it accredited in order to "reduce the backlog".* If everybody got the staffing they were asking for, it would take sixteen years to get everybody through the academy. It's not just an Okanogan problem.

CB: Are any leaving to go to law enforcement? *They have had some go to the sheriff's office. Some agencies require law enforcement to start by working in corrections. SW says they're not having people leave because they're discouraged with the department. We're making progress over where we were a year ago. He leaves.*

1:52 - SK talks about a rise in insurance of what she thinks will not be over 15% for liability, 5% for property. Everything's worth a lot more since the reassessments. CB remarks that since they are improving their buildings it's normal the rates would go up. SK says *finding re-insurers is a little easier this year than last year. I would like to ask that we reinstate the public records position.* The volume and types of requests we are getting are taking a long time to fulfill. Some of the departments are really struggling. It's taking more and more of (Deputy Commissioners Clerk) Cameron's time. When we put together the grant application for records retention we spent some time down in the basement. It's really going to take some time to get some of these documents purged. The less we have on-site that we're keeping, the better. Nobody's had the time to take care of this. For this year we asked for boxes and shelving to organize. We have to identify what can stay and what we send off. I've prepared a resolution to re-instate this position and rescind resolution 133-2-23 which combined it with the deputy clerk position.

CB moves to approve resolution 53-2024 to reinstate the public records coordinator position. SK will work with the tech director to get in this year's budget instead of next year's. AH says if they can't get money from budget line items that they will take from the contingency reserve fund. It's going to have to be a little bit of an egg hunt. Motion approved.

LJ: Since the position is reinstated, Cameron will apply to fill it, leaving the position of deputy clerk. So my office will down two people so I will have to spend an incredible amount of time training people. I do have two people for the administrative secretary position scheduled to be interviewed tomorrow so we'll see how it goes. *It will be advertised "in house" before going to the general public.*

SK: We've had some discussion of the need for a county administrator. The number of grants, just all these different pieces is drawing a lot of us in different directions. I personally am not as effective when I get pulled in too many ways and I think Laney's probably feeling the same way. I think there's a lot of resources that could benefit the county and the citizens if we had somebody with the time and the energy to go after those types of things. A preliminary would be to get a committee together to look at the eight million job descriptions I have to see where the need is and how we can do a position that might pay for itself through grants. Things are getting pretty thin.

AH: I think that's a good idea, to get a committee together of elected officials and department heads and start the conversation.

2:03 - Things have changed, with all the capital projects and different things we've got going, and one individual or us that have other positions can manage all of these. Would you like me to have a meeting with department heads?

CB: Yes but actually we need to think of it from a strategic planning standpoint. We have a goal identified that we need a person like that but we need to explore what the options are. Strategically we need to do that... We look at what we lose out on if we don't have one and what the risks are and go through it from that standpoint, to have something that's solid.

AH: Going through the negotiation is tough when the commission changes. ...Having an administrator provides consistency.

CB: It was my belief before this but when I went to that session of the WA Leaders Conference there were several of them that talked about what they did, who couldn't understand how counties could do their business without. ...Commissioners set policies. It doesn't give you the time to think out the policies that you set, that are long-lasting things. We need to set a firm personnel policy but we don't have the time to do that. *SK offers to sit down with CB before getting a committee together. She leaves.*

David Bowen from The Dept. of Ecology arrives. They must wait until 2:30 to discuss because others want to attend. CB says he saw him at the Hollywood Squares at the Columbia River Caucus, agrees it's better to see someone in person. The commissioners approve vouchers and the consent agenda. LJ talks about an agreement with the Dept. of Agriculture on Fair Safety Grant, and also she reached out to the Dept. of Revenue so they would have access to the first and second 2% lodging tax from the county. The chairman must sign a confidentiality and non-disclosure form. Motion carried to authorize the signature. CB asks about how a session went, it turns out this had to do with the refreshing of the video that's on the countyweb site. AH assumes they will need a new introduction to the commissioners with JN present. The last video talked about positive points about living there, like health care. He thinks they should highlight the farming and ranching, more outdoor recreation. JN volunteered to take the film crew to some trail heads, thinks they should talk about the Blues Festival and the Stampede. CB wonders about, rather than making it a tourism brochure, maybe pointing out ways people can get involved in their community, cultural opportunities like the PAC (Performing Arts Center), "quality of life" issues.

AH: Is the over-arching message "Hey, here's Okanogan County and this is what we have to offer"? A lot of people complain about living next to agricultural stuff but then they see the benefits of living next to a field that's not going to get developed.

CB: I'm figuring out if it's true or not, but there's a shift in there. I know in your part of the county there's a shift to smaller, more focused agriculture.

AH: There has to be. A lot of properties just got bought up, developed, and – it's funny, my grandfather did potatoes, and sold (*in other parts of the county*). They rotated their crops, with wheat. You could make money back then on that amount of property. Now we're doing 650 acres of hay and depending on your lifestyle, you're not getting rich. A cheap tractor is \$90,000.

CB: There's a lot more focus on local food systems. You'd be more likely (*to talk about it*) since it's happening.

JN: It's amazing how crops have changed.

AH: We did potatoes up until the dam went in and the basin got water.

JN: Oroville was the largest tomato producer in the nation at one point.

AH: This valley has such a different weather pattern. We used to have a bunch of dairies over there.

CB: On your side there's people that will pay a premium for that.

AH: ...You look at the economy of (the Methow) and you gloss over the homelessness.

JN: There's seven section 8 style apartments available in the entire (*Methow*) valley. I can't even fathom to guess what the rest of the county has. The city of Oroville has about 50.

CB: I had one myself, and eventually people didn't want to go through all that stuff, I was willing to keep my rent to a reasonable level, and even that, I'm sure market rents are really high. *JN reminds them that it's 2:30.*

2:30 - DB: I appreciate the invitation to come up. It's better to know each other before a crisis comes up than during one. I've been with the of Dept. of Ecology for eight years. I started with water quality.

AH: And now you're regional director.

DB: Yes, Central Region Director. As I was driving up here I was noticing the wildfire areas. The EPA has come out with their new particulate matter decision and we realized some of their maps were outdated so we're looking at (a revision of some of the areas). Up here I think the air quality program is going to emphasise wood stove-type exchanges.

JN: On that note, I understand that there's just one air quality monitoring station in the county?

DB: I believe they're planning on installing a few others.

AH: Hopefully— the one they've installed is in one of the most, probably, biggest depression (*landwise*) and everything just settles there so I can't understand giving us a mandate to do a whole bunch of stuff when they've only got one monitor.

DB: I'll take that back, I understand they're installing more, I don't exactly know which counties they're going in but I understand it's north and northeast sections of the state.

AH: I don't mind doing the stove buy-backs, because we've been doing those for a long time in this county, but if there was ever something that came down that said "We want people to stop using wood stoves", it's just, no way. Because we live in a very poor county and for trying to get people to not use wood, even the Forest has made it a free resource, we couldn't do it.

JN: And a lot of people off-grid. *CB remembers a measure that wanted people to give up their wood stoves for pellet stoves which people said they wanted to keep as a back-up; on the reservation it's still an important source of heat.*

DB: I've heated with it all. It's migrated with my wages.

AH: About the drought, we're still in a drought declaration, aren't we?

DB: (Yes), currently in a 60%-70% of forecasted water availability. It's likely that the whole state's going to be under a drought declaration. They're talking now to figure out about either extending the current one and expand it or just let it run out and declare a new one. There may be some benefits (to that). In our water resources department we've had a lot of change-over. Now we're a lot more prepared. If there's emergency drought wells in the region they have an emergency program set up for that to get people to get in their applications and get that rolling much faster.

AH: We have a watershed council in the Methow. ...We were talking in the last meeting of Washington Water Trust being helpful in facilitating, like if farmers wanted to fallow their third cutting, getting funds to them to get water back to users. We were talking about having *(the Water Trust and Dept. of Ecology)* come up to the Methow for a community meeting to kind of let users know that there's a process... get the information out, because we're feeling that the river's going to be low and there's going to be issues.

DB talks about the Enloe Dam, and Conconully dam where they're going to be technical assistants in a federal project. They're doing a feasibility study at Enloe Dam on its removal. DB: So far everybody I've spoke with seems to be okay with its removal so I was going to test the temperature and make sure that was accurate. I understand there's downstream diversions, people are worrying about sediment settling in and causing problems. That is on our radar, ...what sediment needs to be removed above the dam. There's been some soil sampling. ...I talked with the PUD about it and they said "if Ecology is willing to put in writing that you're okay with the sampling that's done, then we're good to go". So I need to make sure that the team is.

AH: The PUD is obviously the people we're going to listen to. If they said it would be easy to electrify it, and we're in an electrical drought as it is in the Northwest we'd probably say, "Let's electrify it." But listening to what they've said, it would be hard, and the electrification is not that much. I just want to be sure it's not going to cost rate-payers and agricultural users, that the sediment isn't going to be an issue.

DB: Ironically one of the first things I come to look at when I come to Ecology was Enloe Dam. I learned a lot about it. With the cost of energizing it, it was way above the engineers' estimate, it became pretty clear they weren't going to go down that path. It all makes sense.

AH: I had heard rumors about Ecology trying to do some adjudication up here?

DB: Not that I'm aware of. The folks who were focused on water rights in the Yakima basin are now refocusing now at Nooksak it sounds like.

AH: When RCW 9094 came down, the Hearst decision *(on subdivisions)* it was put into law that for every well that we drilled in WRIA 49 (Methow watershed) we had to send

\$350 to Ecology. Can you find out where that money's going and what it's being used for? I'm assuming it's for streamflow resoration act and those grants. *DB is assuming it's for that or for purchasing water rights. He'll check.*

DB: Off and on I'm hearing about soil for the cannabis growers and some legislation that went on there. I know the toxic sediment program is tracking that closely and trying to figure what to do with the funds that—

In other regions people were planting in boxes and bringing in soil and here they were using the soil that exists, and that started causing a problem, from what I've been briefed on so far.

AH: We have a water conservancy board here. Does Ecology have any funding—They have a lot of these water rights issues that are taking a long time to get through, so they're having this initial fee, but then it takes time to work through those. It assists county residents in trying to get their water rights transfered quickly, but it also assists Ecology in the manpower, of not having to look at those things. I was wondering if there was some sort of one-time funding for conservancy boards to help maintain them.

DB: I have no idea off the top of my head. You mentioned Okanogan County Conservation District. I was talking to Tom Tim and he mentioned water banking. That's the entity that's working on that. He talked about Pine Creek vs. Sullivan. He recommended that Pine Creek had a broader reach for usability.

AH: The county is doing the Okanogan Valley side of the water bank and the Conservation District was focusing more on the Methow because of how the legislation's written, But we've put in applications for both Pine Creek and Sullivan.

CB: We've just ratified two Sullivan Creek requests, one for ground water, one for surface water. We have a consulting firm that's helping us with the applications for the water bank.

DB: The only other topic on my list was, the EPA put out a proposed listing of the upper Columbia on the national priorities list. There's a comment period that's open now so if it's an issue that's of importance to you, to come look at that. The idea is, there was an industry upstream that's finished work on its footprint. There's lead and other things that have been transmitted into the air and the EPA doesn't have a funding mechanism right now that can quickly address any of that. The idea of listing is to get access for Super Fund funding. Water has been tested okay for recreation and irrigation, no human health concerns there; the real issue is the leads from that activity upstream. There's concern. If you declare it Superfund, it's going to affect the quality of agricultural products. The Department of Ag, Derrick Sandison, is probably the one to address, I just wanted to mention it because there's a comment period.

2:47 - AH: Maybe we should bone up on that one. I don't like declaring things just for the purposes of getting money, 'cause they're declared.

DB: I understand all sides of it. I spent 2005 to 2008 as a commissioner and 2001 to 2004 as auditor of Kittitas County so I was at the tip of the sword when they decided that ground water and surface water were in continuity. *(Laughter.) AH remembers those meetings weren't fun.*

JN: We have this small irrigation district that's struggling to keep going, looking for funding, but, in the process of doing irrigation it actually regenerates the aquifer which is potential drinking water. There's lots of money for drinking water but very little for irrigation, so is there a way to leverage that for potential funding for them? *DB asks, are they on a tributary?*

AH: No, they're on main-stem Okanogan. They have to pump way up so they have two 600 horse pumps and they only have 1,100 acres they're irrigating and their assessed fees are 400 bucks an acre for irrigation. If it gets any higher it's going to be too costly. They pump up into Aeneas Lake, filter it down because of continuity; we want to make them solvent because they've had to put a lot of money into repairs...

CB: They did bring up the issue that Aeneas Lake... it regenerates that lake. A lot of homes have been built over the years. We have another system on Duck Lake and people actually pay to withdraw in two drinking water systems. It's recharged by Duck Lake. I'm going to research a little more (*the benefit of that system*). The question in the study is what would happen there if there wasn't an irrigation system? *DB asks what kind of money they're talking about. CB replies that they're in registered warrants for the county for \$240,000.* They've done some pump work and working toward better efficiency. ...It's hard to see the future for them in terms of getting those paid off unless they raise rates, and those rates can be a little out of reach for those farmers out there. *DB thanks them for reaching out to him as new regional director. JN asks if they could buy fireworks in Kittitas Co. On New Years, says DB. JN says he used to run a stand on highway 15.*

AH says someone from the Watershed Council will reach out to his agency for drought planning.

2:55 - Motion approved for chair to sign grant agreement for county fair program. LJ says she has spoken with Chief Civil Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Esther Milner about a revised Homeless Housing agreement template. It's not ready to send out but the Housing Authority will need it soon for a \$100,000 allocation to the Wild Rose project. It should be ready after the attorney returns from her absence.

Juvenile/Superior Court Administrator position - *RG and SK have come to talk about advertising to hire two different people to do what one administrator has been doing. They have researched salaries and consider the Superior Court administrator comparable to the District Court administrator at \$6,720 per month. They did a salary survey for Juvenile Court administrator and found \$8,500 per month, which SK says is 90% of "the comps". The same as the planning director. SK: We were looking to get somebody hired so we could get someone to cross-train; it would be an overlap of one month, maybe two.*

RG: Denis (Rabidou, the current Juvenile/Superior Court administrator) gave his resignation date as June 5th but said he could stick around a bit longer if need be.

SK: That doesn't give us a lot of time.

RG: Internally I know of interest for one of the positions. If the commissioners sign off on the salary for the juvenile director... it's enough of a bump. Hopefully we'll have internal interest for both positions. AH recommends posting internally for two weeks before advertising beyond.

SK: We don't have time for that. *She proposes to re-write the resolution that had originally combined two positions into one to make them separate again. The District Court administrator position is also opening up. SK suggests these all be contract positions and not step positions. A motion is carried to allow SK to write a resolution.*

AH: If you've got any open positions, use any unspent wages first. *SK asks RG to have the job description ready for the following week.*

LJ: Earlier I talked with the Board about an additional Dept. of Historic Preservation grant and they wanted to talk to you about possible renovations to the courthouse that would be consistent with the types of renovation the department of preservation could fund. It could be interior. The application process starts in June. Are there things we could improve and refurbish in the courtrooms? *AH jokes about cowhide leather benches. LJ wonders if there would be pictures in the museum they could be draw inspiration from. So you (RG) and Judge Short could get some ideas.*

AH: So now are we good with keeping the actual courts in the courthouse?

RG: Where we left off last time (the architects) were going to tell us if it's actually feasible. If it's safe and functional, I'd be happy to stay.

AH: Yes, we were talking about the single point entry. The point of the conversation is there's no reason to renovate if you're going down there (*South 2nd Ave.*). *LJ will forward any information on the grant to the judges. AH says hold off on any grants until they're sure which services they'll be moving to the new building. LJ talks about exterior renovation to harmonize the windows in the annexe and the courthouse. Some of the walkways will also be replaced. They will finish up the painting of both buildings. They make an appointment to meet again the following week.*

3:40 - They discuss where the Emergency Manager is going to put the equipment stored in the Sheriff's locale across the river. (That building and the morgue are being demolished and replaced.) *AH suggests a place in the new building. They will ask him to come in to discuss this. While LJ calls Maurice Goodhall CB talks about trout fishing on Patterson Lake. AH talks about catching all kinds of trout there in one day. MG arrives. JN asks what he'll be moving.*

MG: Two types of stuff. First, what's in the morgue now: good quality sandbags, they should fit in my shipping containers. I have generators. I have stuff I can get rid of. Some haz mat decontamination things that have expired and are just garbage now. We need to move another trailer out. It can go next to the trailer on a hill above the shops across the river. *AH asks if he needs room down at the new building. MG says the sandbags are filthy, he wants to keep them with Public Works things. He doesn't want to have to move them again after that. Says they have animals in them. AH asks if he needs another shipping container. Yes, but he'll needs a forklift to get them out. There are about 25 apple bins worth of sandbags. He wants to protect the best ones inside and could put the others outside under a tarp. MG hasn't seen the design of the metal building on 2nd Ave. He needs to have ready access. He appreciates their concern. AH asks if his tractor could fit in a shipping container (to load the sandbags). Probably. A shipping container would cost about \$3,000. MG leaves.*

AH moves to approve a City of Okanogan building permit application for the window, door and exterior landing at the courthouse. Motion carried.

3:55 - Meeting adjourned