

Okanogan Board of Health (BOH)
Tuesday, April 9th, 2024, 1:30 PM

These notes were taken by a County Watch volunteer. Every attempt is made to be accurate. Notes are verbatim when possible, and otherwise summarized. 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 the Okanogan County Commissioners' website at <https://www.okanogancounty.org>.

Present:

Lauri Jones (LJ), Board of Health Director
Mike Harr (MH), Okanogan County Health District
Andy Hover (AH), County Commissioner, BOH
Jim Wright, BOH board member
Jon Neil (JN), County Commissioner, BOH board chairman
Chris Branch (CB), County Commissioner, BOH board member
Jill Gates (JG), BOH, Secretary
Denise Varner (DV), City Council representative
Jennifer, Support Services Superintendent
County Resident
John McReynolds, CEO, North Valley Hospital (Zoom)
Kait Schilling, attorney, Ogden Murphy Wallace (Zoom)
Julie Ogden, Public Records Officer (Zoom)
Find the Right passion, local resident (Zoom)

Time stamps refer to a recording posted on the County Watch website. (Recording is missing the first five minutes.)

Summary of Important Discussions:

- Local resident renting property with pool asks for “two-pronged” regulating approach, single family dwellings should apply international pool/spa norms
- Commissioner Hover has the minutes changed to reflect a nuance in vaccination stance.
- Health Administrator requests board approval of promoting current employee to fill the Community Health Director position she vacated last year, discussion ensues over feasibility of that person continuing former duties as well.
- Pool regulations brought up to conformity ; further discussion for later meeting
- Health officer reports one pertussis case in county; in Texas avian flu jumped from birds to cows to humans
- Food Action Plan nears completion, features ideas from diverse sectors: farm to school program, gleaning farm produce, freezer cars on trains, local processing facilities for ranchers and orchardists
- Support services supervisor invited to talk about her job

A resident who runs a business on his property brings up a problem he has with renting part of his land. He would like some kind of derogation of the health regulations for his case. Resident: We were left with trying to get a variance from the set of rules. But a variance is a year-to-year process. If you're a business owner investing in a piece of property, it's very difficult –you could get a variant and then the next year be in

the same situation. So I'm here to ask that the board modify the short term rental rules with a two-pronged approach: the first is that you leave all of the pools that have multiple rentals attached to them like Veranda Beach... leave those in the bucket they are currently in and the second bucket is, we would ask that single family residential pools be asked to comply with the international pool and spa standards, which is what they were meant to be regulated with anyway. My wife and I contacted every county within Washington state to ask what they do with short-term rentals and pools. The ones we did hear back from, a lot of them don't have regulations for pools, but the ones that do, those are the regulations that they ask their owners to comply with. They have fence requirements. These are very safe. There's a gray area that hasn't been dealt with here in Okanogan County and we're left, as business owners, who rent (*inaudible*) property... we can't comply with the rules as they are written now and we'll be forced to sell the properties because we don't want to live there, we bought it as a business. I'm sure there are other people in the county who rent their property who do have a pool and (*inaudible*). I've put on the handouts some of the work that we've done on this... *including answers from other counties about how they've regulated short term rentals, the international standards.*

AH: Thank you very much.

CB: We appreciate that.

AH (addressing the Environmental Health Director): Mike, you might have some work cut out for you.

Previous meeting minutes regarding discussion about vaccinations and clinics state the opposite of what he meant, says AH. They mention "his concern with clinics informing the patients that vaccinations are optional." AH: I said I was concerned that they weren't doing enough to offer the options of vaccinations and what people were getting into, so I asked to change it to "his concern with the clinic's not offering patients an option for vaccinations. Minute correction approved.

JG gives the financial report. She explains to the new board members how she records, credit card deposits... Financial report approved.

9:06 - LJ: The Community Health Director post has been vacant since I've been the administrator. I have someone in mind, in-house (for that position). I hope the board will support me. It's level 5. We're not having an added position. We're changing the title of the person who's been doing that job. It will cost an extra \$6,900 for the rest of the year.

DV: The person would continue to do both positions and that won't be too much?

LJ: No. *AH wonders if it's better to plan to fill that post rather than suddenly find the need.* MH: It's not necessary to back-fill, since Covid. *LJ describes the employee who is a public health nurse, and handles maternal-child health "and everything else". She promises to come to the board in the future if they need a community health worker of nurse. They discuss how the staff numbered 24 or 27 in 2004, LJ says many were based solely on grants: I don't want it to be sketchy. I want (continuity).*

CB: What were you doing with 27 people?

LJ: Direct care, vaccinations, home visits. But we had an administrator, a community health director, an environmental health director and a support services superintendent. *They talk about the hiring process; the administrator can appoint these, isn't required to advertise the job. CB questions LJ on succession planning, something he's learned about; she quotes the above directors as her successors.* LJ: With such a small staff it's important that not just one person know how to do something. *AH asks for a motion to approve the Community Health Director and make the necessary budget adjustments.*

29:20 - Resolution 2024-01 - *MH has cleaned up the WAC (Washington administrative code) policy to make it more consistent. KS says he's done a good job on this, which deals with water recreational facilities. AH wants to put the subject of pools on the agenda. MH says he'll put together a "little history with state regulations".*

KS: We could wrap up the issue with the Guns' property.

AH See what the whole outcome is. From time to time we need to talk regulations. some places people have problems getting water in their well and can't build because they can't have a cistern. There are some regs we need to take up... *MH says the last regs were adopted in 2005. In 2008 the Virginia Graeme-Baker Act (for pools and spa safety) was voted in. Some violation numbers have changed.*

DV: There should be a red-lined document.

KS: In this case it would be cumbersome. The procedure is the same, it's just the language that's changed.

AH: We need a month to see a resolution. It gives us time for our questions. I understand some are time-sensitive.

MK: Pool season is starting so we'd have to be sure to do it next meeting.

JN: If it's putting us in compliance with state law I'm fine with it. *CB asks if there's something above and beyond the WAC, MH says not, the difference is that day to day policy is spelled out, something that was needed. In the end CB moves to approve the resolution. Motion carried.*

40:29 - *Health officer update: JW talks about respiratory illness season coming to a close, flu numbers were up over past 3-6 weeks, slight Covid increase detected in waste water in Brewster but much less than before, some Covid outbreaks in long term facilities. He expects less respiratory illness. Pertussis has appeared in Chelan-Douglas counties with one case in the Okanogan. There is a vaccine but it is not 100% effective. Symptoms for a vaccinated person can be those of a cold so it's hard to detect sometimes.* JW: We've had notifications out to Okanogan and Chelan-Douglas counties to look out for it. Two health jurisdictions in the state have reported Measles cases. None here but it requires close collaboration between health care and public health. It's much more contagious. Contact strategies that we've put in place for something like Pertussis will prepare us for Measles. Avian Influenza has been found

to have jumped into dairy and there's a case in Texas of transmission from cow to a human. We don't see a high risk in Washington at this time. Bill Balanz is working as our emergency response coordinator... Close coordination with our neighbors has been real helpful. *He looks forward to working with the board to make changes in environmental health regulations.*

48:05 - "Staff Spotlight" for the month is on Maria Hines who is completing the last round of editing for the 60-page Okanogan Co./Colville Reservation food system assessment. Many gave their aid in completing the document (Krisha from Public Health, the Pascal Sherman school...) She talked with 32 area growers. They'll have a finalized copy by the end of the month.

MH: Now that we've got a good idea of what's happening in food waste, distribution, infrastructure, school lunches, what kind of crops are we growing, we can use that as a guide as we put together this 10-year food action plan in collaboration with the Okanogan Food Council. Part of this is holding some listening sessions... The first one was in Twisp between (*consumers*) and growers. There were 32 growers, food buyers or restauranteurs who showed up at the Grange and 35 who came to an in-person/online Food Council meeting, and a lot of really great things came out as far as what they would like to see on the Food Action Plan. ...A couple things that came up after we broke people up into small groups—there were farmers, people from public health, from the Tribe, the Food Bank—that they'd like to see in the plan are: cold storage on our train here, for transporting food, to create food lockers for communities that can't get to food pantries, getting farmers in touch with the schools... The Okanogan Producers Association would like to sell food here rather than elsewhere so there are opportunities to explore; addressing food waste, gleaning —that's going to farms, community gardens or personal property, when they're invited, to glean fruit that may be (*not conform to commercial standards*)... We did have a program like that in 2011 and we're looking to revive it. Also local processing facilities, from commercial kitchens, refrigerator and freezer space, a space to do value-added products, a space to do meat for ranchers, a processing facility for orchards to save fuel and other costs. Those are just a few things I wanted to share. That's about it. We're on track, moving faster than the track we'd set. *The board thanks her for her work.*

57:35 - LJ says she's organizing a more robust "table top" with Cathy Moses from the Tribe and Maurice Goodhall and Bill, and we'd love someone from the BOH to attend. One thing that came out of our "table top" was, when Bill was setting up the EOC (Emergency Operations Center) in this building, some of the things we would need would be (the space-based communication service) Starlink. ...Having been through avian influenza, a few years back, Public Health's role is basically monitoring when there's been human exposure, so I've got the swabs, we'd coordinate getting them to a public health lab, and monitoring exposure for ten days. Tamaflu is a great prophylactic and/or treatment for that.

59:33 - LJ announces another "staff spotlight", introduces Jennifer, their Support Services Supervisor of two years—the post was vacant for five years before she came—who talks to the board about her duties: "supervising a diverse group of professionals, it covers environmental Health administrative assistant, assistant to Vital Records, (inaudible)..." She lists past experience in retail, the construction industry, a call center, the Oregon Board of Nursing licensing department, then in health care in Okanogan for fifteen years. Her current specialties are "office automation", process

improvement, team-building, and is the liaison with the county's central services department. Her projects include digitizing 30 years of records, incorporating changes in the on-site sewage regulations, doing software for the public health nurses to document their cases, some streamlining of Environmental Health's on-line database... J: I connect dots... do bridge-building. Connect computers to people and people to computers. LJ tells how she needed a very long form condensed into just one page and Jennifer, then working for a hospital, did the work in one day. LJ plugs the documentary "Human Shield" which features Okanogan Public Health.

1:09:50 - MN asks that what he mentioned earlier get discussed the following month.

AH: One or two months, whatever works for you.

LJ: I have invited (attorney) Kait to come next month.

MH: We can even wait for July. *(They work on the next agenda. MH will talk about emergency management and Starlink.)*

AH: In an emergency we're having to do business. *He talks about how departments are going to get shuffled around but they don't know exactly how yet. LJ talks a little about distributing the fentanyl overdose antidote, Narcan, to the departments.*

1:37:58 - Meeting adjourned.