

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners
Monday, May 6, 2024 AM

JN—Jon Neal, BOCC, Chair, District 3
AH—Andy Hover, BOCC, District 1
CB—Chris Branch, BOCC, District 2
LJ—Lanie Johns, Clerk of the Board
MG—Maurice Goodall, Emergency Management
NB—Nick Bates, Fairgrounds Manager
PP—Pete Palmer, Director of Planning
Larissa—Fairgrounds employee
CH—Cari Hall, County Auditor
PJ—Pam Johnson, County Treasurer

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Summary of significant discussions:

- Nick Bates, Fairground manager discusses adopting a new policy on fee waivers. The fairgrounds will also create bi-lingual contracts in the hope there will be fewer misunderstandings about what a contract requires.
- Pete Palmer, Planning Director, and the commissioners have a long discussion about the process the Planning Commission should be taking with regard to changes in the zone code. The Planning Commission would like to create a new document for the BOCC to consider, while the BOCC says the Planning Commission should review the comments received about the changes in the recent BOCC hearing, and make recommendations about the comments, not create a new document. If the Planning Commission wants to recommend a new document to the BOCC, there's a different process for that. The BOCC and the Planning Commission will hold a joint meeting next Monday, May 13, at 7:00 PM to discuss this issue. This is in addition to the special meeting of the Planning Commission on Monday, May 20.
- The County Finance Committee (the BOCC, Treasurer and Auditor) review the county's annual report to the State Auditor and the BOCC votes to submit the report.
- Meeting adjourned for the day at noon.

-3:08:15—Pledge of Allegiance

JN and CB chat about CB's attendance at an auction/dinner. CB enjoyed the auction. CB talks to LJ about his experience is trying to complete the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) report on line. Out of the 28 projects that need to be reported, he was able to complete 9 of them. Often times the website would not let him save the changes he'd made. LJ will give the report a try. LJ says AH called and says he'll be about 45 minutes late.

-2:53:35—No public comments.

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CB and LJ continues to discuss the ARPA report.

-2:38:15—MG—I'm Maurice Goodall, Emergency Management. Not much to report this week. We had the Fire Advisory Committee meeting, attended by Commissioner Neal. The burn restrictions will be June 16 through October 15, and then burn ban when needed by conditions. You may need to do a resolution. Cities can set their own calendars for burning. Okanogan would have used the county's calendar, but they'd already printed up their literature. Next year, they'll use the county's calendar.

-2:35:10—JN—Nick and Larissa

NB—I'm Nick Barnes with the County Fairgrounds.

NB—Larissa is here because she has questions about fee waivers for renting our buildings. She sent the policy to Shelley (Keitzman, Risk Management) who sent it to Esther (Milner, Chief Civil Deputy Prosecutor).

Larissa—The verbiage was only changed a little. There were waivers for minors, adults and different events. Now it covers everything. It's been through HR, Risk Pool and the Attorney and this is what they came up with.

NB—Still working about people who bring their own equipment.

Further discussion of waivers.

-2:22:45—AH arrives.

NB—I took pictures at the spay/neuter clinic. People were arriving to get in line at 4:00AM and they were at capacity at 6:30.

Larissa—They're real organized.

NB—It'll be going on all week.

NB—Saturday night was my first quincereañã. It was quite an experience. Security called me three times. They said they were going to have 300 guests but there were over 450. I told them they had to bring the number of guests down to 300, and they did.

NB—We had hired security people for it, plus they had hired some of their own.

NB—They were cleaning it up bright and early on Sunday morning. Norm and I did the floors and bathrooms. I'll be prepared for the next one.

NB—I'm not going to schedule in 2025 until July 1.

Larissa—Maybe we'll have clearer and stricter rules. Also a bi-lingual contract. Then there won't be a misunderstanding about what the contract requires.

CB—When you get a new form, can you add a footnote shows what the form is and when it was adopted. Then we'll know later on.

Discussion of liability issues with events involving horses and recreational facilities.

NB—Last item is the High School Rodeo people.

Discussion of fee waiver for an organization associated with schools.

NB and Larissa leave.

-1:57:30—PP—I'm Pete Palmer, Director of Planning

PP—We're working to get the updates suggested by the Planning Commission (PC) into the draft and get to the attorneys for review. Then we can get their packets out to them on Friday.

AH—Have they given suggestions already? Are they getting close?

PP—They made about six suggested changes at the last meeting on the 22nd. They'll review those changes but they alluded to more changes coming.

AH—Are they trying to change things that weren't changed in the original document?

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PP—At the last meeting, it was suggested to them that they just stick to the changes that were made.

AH—And let them know that this isn't a be-all and end-all document. Just look at the changes in front of you and give us recommendations. I heard there's stuff they might want to change on the District Use Chart (DUC). They can put that together at a later date. I suggest we take the new things they want to look at in smaller chunks. People at the hearings can be more focused on a smaller chunk, maybe in one zone like MRD-5s. It gets to be overwhelming for people and you lose sight of what you're trying to do.

AH—When are we due to update the Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) and the Shoreline?

PP—We just did the Shoreline review. Back when I first started, the Department of Commerce told us they would withhold funding if we didn't get that update done. So it was slated to be considered along with the Clearing and Grading Ordinance as soon as we get through the review of the zone code. That's next on the agenda for us.

CB—Just to clarify—the PC is reviewing the document that was subject to the public hearing. But rather than making comments and recommendations and forwarding us the comments, they're revising the document for our consideration?

PP—Yes. The PC had some discontent that they weren't able to go page by page and make their own changes and review, but were handed a document that already had changes made to it.

CB—They were handed a document that was already developed?

PP—Correct. We're trying to get them reeled in to the real planning process.

AH—They didn't come up with needed changes on their own. We did that because of things that were going on.

PP—That's what Esther and I tried to convey. This was a different process than what they're used to. This process came from the legislation, not the Planning Department (PD).

AH—CB's comment is on target. Instead of them giving us a revised document, I'd rather have them comment on all our changes, saying if they don't like some particular change we made. A revised document will just confuse the situation. I'd rather just have bullet point comments on the changes we made.

PP—They made motions on each one of their changes they suggested, so I've got that in bullet points.

AH—Good.

PP—They wanted to add multi-family housing back into R-20s as a conditional use.

AH—R-20s?

PP—The other change they're making is remove any changes done to the temporary use section.

CB—I agree with AH. It's a document that went before a hearing and people commented. What to do with those comments still remains. I'd rather not have an alternative document at this point. That's what we thought we'd run into the blue-line document. Any document has revisions as a result of the hearing. The PC may have ideas what to do about the comments, but any should be presented to us in a format that's not changing the code but making a suggestion to us how to change the code.

PP—What I was directed to do by the PC was to make these changes to the document, bring them back another changed document for them to review and possible make more corrections. They want to deliberate the comments that were already deliberated between PD and the legal counsel and make other suggested changes based on their deliberations of the comments.

AH—No. It's pretty simple. Here's the document. Here's the suggested change. Do you want to keep it the same, keep it as changed, or modify it from what it is?

PP—That was the recommendation of the PD in my staff report to the PC.

AH—How do we convey stuff to the PC, telling them here's the way it should be in this process. We're not looking for a revised document. We're looking for comments on the proposed changes.

CB—My thoughts are—it should be conveyed by the BOCC and one of us will have to go there. I want to make sure they understand how the PC and the PD are set up. The verbiage says that is the PD is the PD,

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and the PC assists the PD to achieve the objectives of the PD. Conveying these objectives first and that we're operating within the parameters of the law, by the way. Some of these things wouldn't be such a big deal if we had a good understanding of the map. If I were on the PC and knew some changes being made are applicable in some areas of the county. That might not be understood right now. But going back to this—these are comments just like anybody else. The comments on the document should be separately listed. If they want to make a comment that says we want to throw it out, fine, but it's not very productive.

AH—I'm willing to go the PC meeting if you guys are OK with it. I'd be saying the same thing. I would like to go and have the same discussion we just had. We gave you a document and you might not like it. That's OK. But go through the document and say—this change is OK, that change we don't like and think it should be changed to xyz. Just make the comments on this. If you guys see stuff in this document you want to change, that's a process in itself that you guys can initiate. Then it goes through a different process.

CB—The rationale for the changes should be conveyed to us.

PP—All of those are why Esther and I asked for a letter from you. They're not listening to what we say.

CB—Would it be better to have a joint meeting with them? Then you've got the force of the BOCC behind you.

AH—No, we have to be careful about this force thing. We'd want to make sure we had a mutual understanding of what we're looking for.

CB—Force is the wrong word. But we're the bottom line. When the decision is made, they're not elected officials, and they can do what they want. We're elected to serve the entire county. Bottom line is we were elected to do this work and they're a volunteer group that's there to help us. We look at things differently. We've got the budget in mind, too.

AH—Making sure we're all on the same page is the starting point. We've been silent. Where's the good part of trying to communicate vs people thinking you're trying to impose your will on a body that's trying to make a decision? It's not that. It's just the process. They're recommendation needs to be based on changes to the document. If they want to change other things, that's a different deal. Then they can write code for a public hearing that then comes to us.

CB—There's comments and there's decisions and justifications for doing what we're doing. That's just the way it is. Establishing the process is important. The more we get outside the process—when you say that isn't the way they're used to doing—, we don't want them to get used to a process that doesn't fit.

AH—And there's better understanding by us about the RCW and how it reads about two different paths that can be taken to have official controls.

CB—We were served with the law suit and we have to pay for the suit, born by the taxpayers. That's what our job is. That's why the process is there. It's not meant to keep anybody out. But the process is slow, deliberate. When you make an opportunity for the public to comment, there has to be some sideboards or it gets out of control and not productive.

PP—That's what I feel—we're not being productive. Esther tells them one thing about the two different ways the process can play out and people from the audience make comments about how this is based on the RCWs they cite and this is what your authority is. The PC feels they have that authority.

CB—We call people planners. There are citizen planners and there are planners. They're doing the work they know has to get done and they know the parameters they have to work in. You can spend you timing telling the PC that stuff. We know there's a lack of PC education, and we've got newer members. And we've got documents that took us to court already. That's the deep point. You can do what you believe all day long, but if we find ourselves in court as a result of it, the next set of commissioners will find themselves in court and then it's here we go around again.

CB—It boils down to—do we want to have a joint meeting with the PC? I think it would be helpful.

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PP—Should I schedule it on your agenda to theirs?

AH—Theirs because there are more of them.

CB—It's a special meeting for us as well as them.

PP—Prior to their next regular meeting?

JN—ASAP. AH and CB agree.

PP—I'll ask them and see when the meeting can be and then advertise it.

Discussion of possible meeting dates.

PP—I'll shoot for next Monday at 7:00 PM.

AH—Will it be a special meeting for us? We meet on Monday regularly.

LJ—It's a special meeting for the PC.

PP—But that's only 24 hour notice. I'll get it going.

-1:34:25—Superior Court Clerk Susan Speiker update.

SS—Passport report for 2023, and revenue it's generated.

SS—Odyssey portal has an internet surcharge fee. We haven't increased them since 2018. I'll check with other counties' fees.

SS—My deputy and I both need new laptops because IT says they can't support the old ones anymore. I bought two new ones. Total cost \$2,051.

SS—The LFO (Legal Financial Obligation) grant was renewed and maybe it will be higher in 2025.

SS—Half my staff received training in mental health issues and the other half received the training already. Risk Pool paid 50% of the cost. Some of the people in the training thought the questions were intrusive. MG said the same thing and I told my staff they didn't have to answer.

SS—We'll also be getting training in best practices with victims.

SS—I met with the judges and now the Clerk's Office will close at 3:00 PM on all the three eves in the calendar. Other offices have been able to do this before, but not us.

SS—Tomorrow a group of seniors from Okanogan High School will visit the court. We hope to spark interest in careers in criminal justice. The judges and Albert Lin, County Prosecutor, participate.

SS—We'll be moving from Odyssey to the Enterprise Justice software system when they get all the show stoppers worked out. The training will be OT for the employees, but it's in the budget.

SS—We're using speech-to-text software now in Superior Court and it's come in handy at least once. You can come and see a demonstration if you'd like. The judges like it. We hope to have it in all the courts soon.

SS—I want to get Omnigo, an electronic evidence management system. All the clerks in the state are pushing to have the state pay for it. Everyone would have a log-in. You upload your own evidence and would help with the Domestic Violence calendar and we can run reports about who's looked at what and when. There was a new rule implemented and it would be a struggle if we don't have Omnigo, so we hope the state will implement it. That's all I've got.

-1:05:55—Okanogan Count Finance Committee Meeting with Pam Johnson, County Treasurer, Lisa Schreckengast, Finance Manager, and Cari Hall, County Auditor.

After a long discussion by PJ and CH to review the County's annual report to the State Auditor's office the Committee decides to submit the report.

Meeting adjourned for the day at noon.