

Board of Okanogan County Commissioners  
Monday, January 8, 2024 AM

JN—Jon Neal, BOCC, District 3  
AH—Andy Hover, BOCC, Vice-Chair, District 1  
CB—Chris Branch, BOCC, Chair, District 2  
Cam—Cameron Burnette, Deputy Clerk of the Board  
LJ—Lanie Johns, Clerk of the Board  
PP—Pete Palmer, Director of Planning  
MG—Maurice Goodall, Emergency Management  
TM—Tim Meadows, Maintenance Supervisor  
Raven Aae—RA, commenter  
IS—Isabelle Spohn, commenter  
ES—Emily Sisson, commenter  
CH—Cari Hall, County Auditor  
JG—Jamie Groomes, Chief Deputy Auditor

These notes were taken by an Okanogan County Watch volunteer. Every attempt is made to be accurate. Notes are verbatim when possible, and otherwise summarized or paraphrased. Note takers comments or clarifications are in italics. These notes are published at <https://www.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://okanogancounty.org/offices/commissioners/commissioners\\_proceedings.php](https://okanogancounty.org/offices/commissioners/commissioners_proceedings.php)

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Summary of significant discussions:

- Commissioners discuss the possibility of putting a proposal on the ballot to raise the sales tax rate .3%. The proceeds would be shared between the county and the cities and be used to fund new positions in the Sheriff's Office, 24 hour coverage in two EMS districts and capital expenditures for rural fire districts.
- During public comments, Raven Aae tells the commissioners of her experience as a victim of stalking in the county. She asks the commissioners to create an ombudsman position so that an independent person would handle complaints against the Sheriff's and Prosecutor's Offices.
- Commissioners hold two executive sessions under RCW 42.30.110(1)(g)—performance of a public employee, each for 10 minutes. In the first session, Shelley Keitzman of Human Relations is invited, and in the second, Keitzman and Pete Palmer of Planning are included.
- Cari Hall, County Auditor, and Jamie Groomes, Chief Deputy Auditor, discuss how the office will process elections in the next few months. Signature checking will be done where it's been done in the past, and the ballot processing will be done in the room where Licensing was planning to be.
- Commissioners hold an executive session under RCW 42.30.110(1)(i)—on-going litigation involving land use for 30 minutes and extended to another 30 minutes. Albert Lin, County Prosecutor, Esther Milner Chief Civil Deputy Prosecutor and two outside attorneys (Jenna Mandell-Rice and Charlene Kozki of Van Ness Feldman) are included.
- Meeting adjourns at 12:33.

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**05:11**—Pledge of Allegiance

AH—I was thinking about the sheriff's discussion the other day when I was driving home. There are three things we've talked about prior to JN's election:

1. The number of deputies we have out on the road
2. Trying to fund two EMS districts 24 hours per day
3. Capital expenditures for some rural Fire Districts that can't fund the expenditures themselves

AH—So—Fire, EMS, police. Public safety. We still have .3% of sales tax that's specific to public safety. I think it's entwined with the cities if I remember right.

AH—I've had some emails, not a lot, saying—hey, give the sheriff his budget. I think those three things are high up on the list of people would vote for. If we figure out how it's used, we should put together a proposal for the public and use it to fund an increase in the sheriff's operational capabilities, figure out what it costs for the two EMS districts 24 hours per day, and within some sort of committee, take proposals for capital projects and purchases from the Fire Districts (just like with the .09 money.) Rank the proposals. There's the Loomis Fire Hall and every district has stuff they want to do. New gear, etc. Basically, you just rank them.

AH—That's the only thing I can see to add more deputies on the roads unless we cut other services.

JN—And how do you do that without adversely affecting public safety?

AH—It's not like we can cut Planning. Building has its own fund. The treasurer, auditor and assessor, you can't cut them down any more. They don't have a ton of operational costs. It's all labor. Cut labor and you're cutting service to the public.

JN—Is that the public safety tax like they have in Omak?

AH—Yes. I think Twisp takes some, too.

CB reads from the Municipal Services and Research Center website: *Any city or county may impose a public safety sales tax (RCW 82.14.450), with at least one-third of the revenues used solely for criminal justice purposes (as defined in RCW 82.14.340), fire protection purposes, or both. The maximum rate is 0.3% for counties and 0.1% for cities, and the revenue must be shared between cities and counties. However, the combined city/county rate may not exceed 0.3%.*

AH—If Okanogan and Twisp are taking .1% now, they couldn't get as much if we go out for .3%. It would help the cities that aren't taking it now.

Discussion of different aspects of how this would work if a city contracted with the Sheriff's Department for police service.

CB—There are examples of resolutions in other Washington Counties that deal with sharing the .3%. Kittitas is one.

CB—For me, I'll put any tax up to the voters. If they want it, they can have it.

JN—I think the Sheriff was talking about this, but he didn't have his ducks in a row.

AH—I'm not saying—Give it all to the Sheriff. I'm talking about using it for the three things—24 hour EMS service, fire and the sheriff.

JN—When we were going through Oroville EMS contracts, I think 24 hour service cost \$1,000,000 annually.

CB—24/7 is a pretty tall order.

JN—That's the number that sticks in my head. I think we have the proposal some place. Increasing coverage is good and there are models that show which time periods have the least impact if they're not covered.

CB—The way it's been working with Lifeline, they're backing themselves up. It's a good deal for us.

AH—We'll run into the same situation as wages increase. We'll hit the plateau where we have to back service off again.

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JN—When I was in Oroville, I was reluctant to get as much service as we could afford at the time because we knew we couldn't sustain it. You have to be pretty careful with that.

CB—That's why Kittitas limited itself to seven years. Then they had to revisit. That's not required. The tax can be imposed indefinitely.

CB—Commonly, the county gets .2% and the city takes .1%.

AH—If the city takes the .1%...

JN—We looked at it in Oroville, but the tax base is so small, it wasn't worth it to propose it.

AH—We need more information about this. I thought we asked the Sheriff to get more information.

JN—Yes. You need all the information when you put it on the ballot. I don't think people understand how increasing labor costs take a hit on our budgets.

**19:55**—It's 9:15 and time for public comment. Raven?

RA—I wanted you to see the picture of my daughter. I'm calling from my car office.

RA—January is Stalking Awareness Month. Here are some statistics from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey:

- One-third of women have been stalked at least once in their lives.
- Another organization reports that 76% of women who are murdered by an intimate partner were stalked while 80% of women who survived murder attempts were stalked afterwards.
- 54% of (*inaudible*) victims reported stalking to the police before they were killed by their stalkers.
- 1 in 7 stalking victims were forced to move because of their victimization.
- 86% reported that their personality changed as a result of being stalked.
- 37% have been diagnosed with PTSD.
- 1 in 8 stalking victims loses work time because of stalking.
- 1 in 4 stalking victims has contemplated suicide.

Stalking is a serious crime predictive of other serious crimes to come. The Okanogan County Sheriff's Office is not taking the crime seriously. My daughter and I live in Okanogan County and we've been the victim of gender based crime. I got a protective order against the man who's stalked us since 2020 and the man has repeatedly violated the order. By invoking worn-out tropes such as the witch, the whore, the (*inaudible*) woman, the stalked manipulated the Sheriff's Department into not arresting him, which is a "shall arrest" requirement if the stalked violates the order. He's repeatedly violated the order.

Okanogan County Sheriff's Office leadership, Sheriff Budrow, Undersheriff Yarnell and several others (*inaudible*) me as the victim. Undersheriff Yarnell said "wait until he finds another victim." That's not the solution to stalking. This person has found other victims. As I've shared my story, I found at least 10 other people who have been his victim in the community. Some were forced to move. Some reported him to the sheriff's department. All of the other women have received similar actions by the sheriff's office—being blamed, being told they should be flattered. I personally can't be (*inaudible*). My only choice is to stand and fight for our basic rights.

RA—I don't think our democracy will abandon me. I was raised in a household with my disabled-on-the-job uncle. He was in the State Patrol, and he taught me the importance of law enforcement in our democratic process. I'm far from one of those people who runs around talking about defunding the police. I believe in good policing. We *need* a good, functional Sheriff's Office. But what I discovered was that while most counties have a County Executive or ombudsman responsible for checking the Sheriff's Office, our county doesn't. Our Sheriff's Office chooses instead to shame and blame and ridicule women because they know they're not going to be punished. Under the influence of the Sheriff's Office, the Deputy Prosecutor, (*name inaudible*), who is no more, said they didn't have enough evidence to prosecute him for stalking and that putting a serial stalker behind bars wasn't in the interest of justice.

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I've got a legal protective order against an armed man who stalks children and putting him behind bars isn't in the interest to justice?

RA—I want two things. I've spoken with the Twisp and Winthrop Town Councils, the Twisp and Winthrop (*inaudible*), I've passed a criminal justice training invitation to the Sheriff's Department, I'm being considered for appointment as a Community Member for the Criminal Justice Training Commission. I've spoken with Jay Inslee's office, I've spoken with the Winthrop Town Hall, I've spoken with the Washington State Bar Association and I've spoken with the FBI. It's clear to me that you are the final back stop.

RA—What I want is for Okanogan County to find money in its budget to hire a County Executive (probably out of the question) or get an independent system to field complaints about the sheriff's Office. When I've made complaints about various members of the Sheriff's Office, they go to the Sheriff's Office. They go to the Sheriff's Office leadership. Sheriff Budrow is not going to regulate his own bad behavior and failure to provide modern policing. We need an independent review system of complaints about the Sheriff's Department. As I'm sure you do, any elected official ought to feel happy about submitting to appropriate checks and balances.

RA—I want you guys to meet personally with Sheriff Budrow about his failure to execute his duty to protect the women and children of Okanogan County.

RA—Those are a couple of concrete ideas about how to solve this problem. I want you to know that I'm not alone. This is a crime that shames and blames women for speaking out. There are other women not having their protective orders enforced in the county. The price for a lot of women not being taken seriously is murder. I live without a husband or boyfriend. I don't have a man looking out for me and protecting me. I have a daughter. Who's to say this guy isn't going to roll up in the middle of the night and try to rape, kidnap or murder one of us? It's a serious crime and I will not have my concerns about the failure of the Sheriff's Office to enforce my legal protective order dismissed any longer. The entire state is now watching.

RA—Please take action to support the women and children in your constituency and to make Okanogan County an inhospitable place for stalking and the crime of stalking Thank you.

JN—Thank you. My one comment is that if you don't think the Sheriff's Department is responding to you, you should cc all your requests to us. That way, we'll all know what's happening.

RA—I can share any records with you. They've been dismissing the violations of the protective order for two years now.

JN—We'll definitely check into it. We appreciate you having the courage to come before us.

RA—Yes. It's not easy to do. As a student of Political Science, I understand the part of the government is limited in what they can do. My hope isn't Fire Sheriff Budrow! Or Defund the Police! My hope to re-educate them. My hope is these older officers with a ton of experience and a ton of service can be brought up to date to 2024. Stalking isn't flattering. We don't wait for him to find another victim. It's put the man in jail. Punish him to the full extent of the law.

RA—What records would you like?

JN—We should probably have a conversation about what we need and we'll get back to you.

RA—OK, I'll send my email address. What about a meaningful independent (*inaudible*)? That seems like something the county could do.

AH—Can you send us some of the complaints and who you sent them to? Normally, complaints about a public official would go to the HR Director.

RA—Based on email threads I saw, it looked like they only went to the OCSO. And there was no follow-up after the complaints. I didn't bother submitting complaints about Sheriff Budrow and Undersheriff Yarnell because they're not going to prosecute themselves. What I want is a more robust process. Who do you report to?

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AH—The public. We're all elected officials and the sheriff is, too. In some counties, the sheriff is appointed and that's a whole different course of action. If they're elected, there are only a couple of different ways to challenge them on their policies, etc.

CB—There have been elected officials removed from office by the Prosecutor's Office.

AH—Yes. Or recalled.

RA—The Prosecutor's Office has been in such disarray for years. I don't see them moving on this.

CB—Has the Support Center done any advocacy on your part?

RA—No—The local professional at the Support Center has been lacking. Room One was helpful, but at this point I've studied so much that both the Support Center and Room One say I know more than them about how the process works.

RA—I seem put together today, but it's exhausting. I just want this man behind bars and I want an apology from the Sheriff's Department. It's embarrassing.

**34:35**—JN—Again, we appreciate your courage. Not to cut you off, but we've got others to comment. Isabelle?

IS—First, I want to thank Raven. I hope you take action quickly. This morning I had a message from another person about a stalker.

IS—I have a brief comment. Chris Branch is listed as the official contact for the rezoning ordinance and I haven't been able to get a reply from him. The deadline is a few days from now about the DNS (Determination of Nonsignificance), but the issue is long and complex. I think you should make sure the legal notices are posted correctly, so we have full amount of time to consider the issue and make comments. Thank you.

JN—I can respond to that. After discovering the discrepancy, they decided to re-advertise and extend the comment period.

IS—Thank you very much! Do you know when the comment period ends?

JN—Pete, do you know when it ends?

PP—I'm Pete Palmer, the Planning Director. The new comment period for the project ends February 12, and January 25 for the SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act). Also, Commissioner Neal is the new contact person because he's the Chairman of the BOCC now. The new notice will be in this week's newspaper.

IS—Thanks very much.

**37:55**—JN—Emily, do you have any comments?

ES—Just this—Raven's proposal to get an independent person to handle complaints against the Sheriff's Office is a good one. How can anyone be against that? You shouldn't be investigating yourself.

JN—Right. Lots of communities have an ombudsman and it's something we'll definitely look into.

JN—Staff meetings.

MG—I'm Maurice Goodall, Emergency Management. Nothing much has been happening. We're getting some comments on the Wildfire Protection Plan. Last Friday there were 480. Probably more now. That's good. We're working on a date to meet with the Fire Chiefs.

MG—We'll have our monthly emergency test on the radio in 11 minutes. It's all ready to go out.

AH—A lot of people in the county have SiriusXM. When you say it goes out on the radio, that's just FM?

MG—FM, AM, TV. Also various internet sites. Don't know exactly about SiriusXM. I should check with someone about that. Anything else?

JN—Weather is supposed to get cold?

MG—Yes. Plus windy, too.

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**42:30**—TM—(Tim Meadows, Maintenance Supervisor) Discusses workwear allowance for janitors. They weren't included in the original agreement. Commissioners discuss how to word the resolution that will get them included.

TM—The mail room will be done on Thursday or Friday. There's just the painting to do.

AH—It's the Auditor's mailroom. You put that wall in?

TM—Yes. And a door and electrical stuff.

AH—The Auditor was worried that come election time, the mail room, the signature checking and the ballot processing was all in that one little room. I said, why don't we just put in a wall to separate the mail room. You don't need that much room for the signature checking. She agreed.

TM—She's going to use the space where licensing was going to go to do the ballot processing. There's a vault in there and I'll get the combination changed because everybody knows it. Then they won't have to transfer the ballots.

AH—How about the walls?

TM—We're going to do it in February. Waiting until the plexiglass comes.

TM—Also, we've got new parking lot lights at the Hancock Building. LEDs.

Discussion of the shortcomings of the lights in the parking lots.

**54:55**—PP—Good morning again. I have one more tidbit of information. Regardless of having the link not working in the public notice, all of the documents were readily available in our office and on line in the Planning Department.

CB—Also, to clarify, I didn't see any emails directed to me about the problem, but I was cc'ed emails by the staff and I could see the problem was getting resolved.

PP—Also, Commissioner Branch was chair when the notice was first published, but Commissioner Neal became the new chair in January, and we didn't catch the need to change that in our notice. The new notice has Chairman Neal at the contact.

AH—The legal notice had a link to get to the website?

PP—Yes. It had all the verbiage about how to get the documents as if we didn't have a website.

AH—And we re-noticed it because of the link didn't work?

PP—I received emails from Isabelle, Lorah (Super of the Methow Valley Citizens Committee) and Tim (*inaudible*). We decided to take the least risky path.

PP—It's been corrected. It changed the timeline, and we're keeping on top of it.

PP—The Lake Management District re-creation vote passed 70-31, so the district was created again. I sent you a new resolution to create Lake Management District #1 to control milfoil and other invasive species at Lake Osoyoos.

PP—Following the adoption of this ordinance, we'll publish an announcement in the newspaper that the District was re-formed. People can appeal the ordinance in Superior Court within 40 of that notice.

PP—There was an error on the assessment roles for 2024. I corrected it and there will be a public hearing on January 22. The error involved a couple of parcels.

CB—I move to adopt Ordinance 2024-1 to reform the Lake Management District. Motion passes 3-0.

PP—A few weeks about I sent information about the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP). One item was an amendment to add an additional \$47,000 to the budget. It requires the commissioners' signatures on the amendment. I sent it before the new year, but it didn't get done because of the employee evaluations, etc. The VSP update also includes a new Interlocal agreement between the

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Conservation District and the Planning Department. It removed the Planning Department as the middleman for invoices and the Conservation District could invoice the state directly.

JN—We got it on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

PP—The last thing is an update on the Sheriff's equipment storage facility. I attended a second public hearing for the Shoreline Conditional Use Permit. The permit was approved and that leaves just the building permit and the flood plain permit. I don't see any issues with either one. We hope they will be coming soon.

JN—They did the permits separately on the advice of their planner.

PP—I don't see why the county should have to pay for the separate hearing, but we'll get through it and build something.

JN—Any questions?

PP leaves.

**1:09:00**—LJ—We have a letter to the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board that PP submitted for the BOCC to approve. It's disapproving and objecting to applications listed for marijuana license renewal.

CB—We got an email about it. It's Planning's response to various licenses that weren't compliant with local authority, etc. All the things the Liquor and Cannabis Board have not dealt with.

JN—I was reading over the weekend about a proposed Senate Bill—5753 which would make the state pay a lot more for indigent defense.

PP—I did have one more thing. I prepared a letter to the Liquor and Cannabis Board about a few applications for renewals that weren't compliant with local authorities. (She reads the list.)

CB—I move to approve the letter to be submitted to the Liquor and Cannabis Board. Motion passes 3-0.

PP—We JN comes back will you have five minutes to talk about the invoice I sent about the Hearings Examiner?

CB—Yes. (Pete goes to get the invoice.) Motion approved 3-0.

**1:19:05**—AH—I move to go into Executive Session under RCW 42.30.110(1)(g)—for the performance of a public employee for 10 minutes. Inviting Shelley Keitzman, Human Resources. Motion passes 3-0. Off they go.

**1:22:25**—Commissioners again go into Executive Session under RCW 42.30.110(1)(g)—for the performance of a public employee, inviting PP and SK.

**1:24:20**—CB—Good morning.

CH and JG—Good morning.

CH—I'm Cari Hall, County Auditor.

JG—I'm Jamie Groomes, Chief Deputy Auditor

CH—Thanks for the meeting. I want to give you a heads up about how we'll process elections for the next couple of months. I want to start saying I'm not pointing fingers that things aren't going as quickly as we planned because of supply issues. We the wall installed in the elections room. It's cut the processing area in half. The ballots are going out January 26. Jamie and I looked at the room where licensing is going to move eventually. We think we can use it. Keep the existing room for the signature checkers and have the processers down the hall. I double-checked with the granting source and I'm OK

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even though we'll need two security people because we'll be using two rooms. Logistically, it's not the best. We need one of the elections' administrators down there. I want to make sure you're OK with that so we can move forward because we've got three elections we're doing back to back to back.

AH—Is it the glass not being in yet that causes issues? What would have made it so you didn't have to move to where licensing was going to be?

CH—If the new licensing room had been redone and licensing was down there. Then we'd have room to spread out to process the ballots.

CH—Tim is going to talk to the vendor about changing the vault combination but it's at my direction.

CH—I'm not complaining. Everyone's been great. It's just how it is. We needed to come up with a plan last week.

AH—So this is a temporary stop-gap measure. As soon as the project is done in December sometime, licensing will go down there?

CH—The glass has to be done by June because I have a grant that pays that.

CH—We'll evaluate how well this works out. If it's not an issue that Jamie is in one room and I'm in another, maybe we won't have to move licensing. Ideally, moving licensing would be better in the new place because of the traffic control. But if we have to... The only thing is Eric in IT isn't sure there are enough ports in there for the cameras to work. Cameras aren't required but we voluntarily have them. If you're OK, I'll work with SK about getting two security guards and I'll get IT to start testing the ports. If you're OK, I'd like to start moving forward with that.

BOCC—We're OK with it.

CH—Thank you so much.

CB—What if we'd said no?

CH—We'd need your room then.

**1:30:00**—CB—Briefly on the overview for procedures for an executive session—reads from his cheat sheet about how to describe the reason for the executive sessions.

AH—I need your cheat sheet.

CB—I'll make one for you. In Oroville, we had it on a poster on the wall. It was close enough to read from where we sat.

**1:46:15**—LJ updates the BOCC on the clerk's office.

LJ—I hope I've scheduled enough time to get through everything I wanted to talk about.

LJ discusses a number of issues, including a proposal to amend the old LTAC (Lodging Tax Advisory Committee) awardee contracts with new award amounts, rules for sale of liquor with special occasion licenses, the feasibility study for a new fire hall and equipment storage building for the Loomis Fire District, her attendance at the International Clerk's Conference in Calgary, Alberta in May, and homeless and affordable housing budget.

**2:23:00**—AH—I move to go to executive session under RCW 42.30.110(1)(i)—on-going litigation, for 30 minutes, inviting Albert Lin, County Prosecutor, Esther Milner, Chief Civil Deputy Prosecutor and outside attorneys Jenna Mandell-Rice and Charlene Koski from Van Ness Feldman Law Firm in Seattle.

CB—I'd like some discussion. This is on land use?

AH—Yes.

Motion passes and off they go. Session is extended another 30 minutes.

Meeting adjourned at 12:33.